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OFFICIAL REPORT

SECOND SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
FORTY-THIRD YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SESSION 1993–94

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OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE SECOND SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 27 APRIL 1992]

FORTY-THIRD YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 246**

FOURTEENTH VOLUME OF SESSION 1993-94

House of Commons

Monday 4 July 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

SOCIAL SECURITY

Social Fund

1. **Mr. Bell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the costs of administering the social fund expressed as a percentage of the money disbursed in the last year for which figures are available.

The Minister for Social Security and Disabled People (Mr. Nicholas Scott): In 1992-93, the overall cost of administering the social fund was equivalent to 52 per cent. of the money paid out.

Mr. Bell: I am grateful to the Minister for that reply. He might have continued and said that if one takes into account loans made to claimants, the figure is 35p in the pound. Is he satisfied with both figures? The Social Security Advisory Committee clearly is not—and if it is not satisfied, why is the Minister satisfied? Is there value for money or is money going into bureaucracy? Why does not the Minister give us a full report and undertake a full review so that we can all debate the issue?

Mr. Scott: In my view, the social fund represents good value for money. It provides control over the totality of expenditure in the interests of the taxpayer. It is well targeted on those who need most help and the decisions are made with considerable speed.

Occupational Pensions

2. **Mrs. Browning:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the average value of an occupational pension in 1979 and in the latest year for which figures are available.

The Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Peter Lilley): It is estimated that at 1991 prices, the average value of occupational pensions was £41.90 per week in 1979 and £63.30 per week in 1991—an increase of 51 per cent.

Mrs. Browning: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that occupational pensions will be made more secure by the proposals set out in his White Paper? Will he also confirm that he will implement in full all the major proposals in the Goode report and that Opposition Members who say otherwise—such as the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar)—are simply indulging in scaremongering?

Mr. Lilley: Yes, I can entirely confirm the points that my hon. Friend makes. The changes introduced in the White Paper, which have been widely accepted, will give the new regulator all the powers that the Goode committee recommended. We have implemented all the major recommendations of the Goode report. I believe that as a result, occupational pensioners can have their confidence in their occupational pension schemes fully restored after the problems caused by the Maxwell scandal. We want occupational pensions to go from strength to strength.

Mr. Flynn: Then why is the Secretary of State trying to tempt people from the safety and security of occupational pensions and the state earnings-related pensions scheme into the national lottery of personal pensions? Will he tell the House what his Under-Secretary has told the House —that those on money-purchase pensions who bought annuities in 1990 find that those annuities have dropped in

value by, on average, a quarter? For women, they have dropped in value by a third. If that has happened in four years, what will happen in 20, 30 or 40 years' time? Will the Secretary of State arrange for anyone whom he intends to bribe out of SERPS or occupational pensions to be told of the catastrophic drop in annuity values in the past four years?

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Gentleman would like everyone to retain nationalised pensions. On the question of people remaining in occupational pensions or moving out of them, we have recently made clear to employers the advice that they can give to their members, which they have found helpful. The advice will make clear the advantages of occupational pensions and the way in which they are, in many cases, superior to private pensions.

I propose in my White Paper to increase the flexibility of annuities so that if people want to draw out their tax-free capital lump sum, they will still be able to defer taking their annuity, while withdrawing a sum for their on-going income, until the time when they think that they can get the best terms for their future annuity provision.

Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill

5. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many representations his Department has received about the blocking of further progress on the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill.

Mr. Scott: We have received a large number of representations about the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill.

Mr. McAllion: In a personal statement to the House on 10 May, the Minister admitted that his Department had been involved in preparing amendments which were then used to block the Bill. Four days earlier, on 6 May, the Minister had told the House that no one in his Department had been involved in any way in drafting the amendments. Does he accept, therefore, that his statement on 10 May showed clearly that he was peddling untruths to the House on 6 May? Should not he, as the Minister responsible for this tawdry and discreditable denial of civil rights to people with disabilities, take the only honourable course and resign from his high office?

Mr. Scott: Is that the best that the hon. Gentleman can do? He omitted a key factor in the sequence of events. Immediately I realised that the information that I had given to the House was incorrect, I wrote to the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) setting the record straight.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Does my right hon. Friend accept that his personal commitment to the support of the disabled is widely recognised? Will he accept congratulations on the Government's commitment to consult with a view to preparing anti-discrimination legislation?

Mr. Scott: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. As he mentioned, we have made clear our intention to consult on employment; the impact of the building regulations on access to buildings; goods and services and their availability to disabled people; financial services; and the establishment of a national body that the Government could consult on disability issues.

Mr. Sheerman: Would the Minister accept an invitation to join me and many other hon. Members from both sides of the House at the Trafalgar square rally on Saturday, where he would learn of the bitterness that disabled people and their vast army of supporters feel about the way in which the Government subverted their civil rights Bill? He would further learn that the people who will be there in their many hundreds, if not thousands, on Saturday, believe that they deserve and will get the Bill, the whole Bill and nothing but the Bill—not a Government milk-and-water, watered-down compromise?

Mr. Scott: I shall not be able to join the hon. Gentleman at his gathering. However, I am aware, not least from the correspondence that I have received and representations from hon. Members on both sides of the House, of the strength of feeling in favour of the Bill. I happen to believe that the approach represented by the Bill is the wrong one at the moment and that the approach that the Government have suggested represents the right way to tackle the undoubted discrimination against disabled people. We are determined to tackle it in a practical and workmanlike manner.

Habitual Residence Test

6. **Mr. Lidington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he will announce the details of his proposed habitual residence test.

Mr. Lilley: I shall shortly lay regulations to prevent benefit tourism by introducing a residence test for people who claim income support, housing benefit and council tax benefit. The report from the Social Security Advisory Committee on the proposals, together with the Government's response, will be published at the same time.

Mr. Lidington: Does my right hon. Friend agree that decent folk who pay their taxes to help the needy find it outrageous that foreigners can still come over here and rip off our social security system? Will he confirm that the proposals that the Government intend to implement would bring us into line with the practice of most other European countries?

Mr. Lilley: I can, indeed, confirm that, as my hon. Friend would expect, the proposal is very communautaire. It will bring us into line with our European colleagues. I have always thought that they were more sensible in requiring a residence test to be met before handing out benefits and I am happy to follow their example. Certainly, they think that we are strange for doing what we do. I have an interesting article here from *Le Nouvel Observateur*, which I have no doubt is widely read, expressing amazement that young continentals can come here and pick up benefit with the ease with which they do it at present.

Mr. Rooney: Does the Secretary of State accept that the biggest element of the fraud of so-called benefit tourism is private landlords' exploitation of lax housing laws in Britain that allow hundreds of pounds a week of housing benefit to be paid to private landlords?

Mr. Lilley: That is certainly an issue which we have addressed. As the hon. Gentleman will know, we have changed the system of reimbursing local authorities, which are responsible for handing out benefit, so that they are no

longer penalised but share in the savings that are made when abuses and frauds are discovered in the housing benefit system. Such abuses can result from collusion between landlords and tenants of the kind that the hon. Gentleman describes. We are determined to stop that.

Mr. John Marshall: Would my right hon. Friend care to give a draft of his proposals to the Lord Chancellor so that benefit tourism in relation to the legal aid system can also be brought to an end?

Mr. Lilley: I shall certainly make sure that my hon. Friend's remarks are drawn to the attention of the Lord Chancellor, who I know follows these debates with great assiduity.

Mr. Dewar: In connection with the habitual residence test, can the Minister say a word or two about his decision as it will apply to citizens of the Irish Republic? It is known that he has had discussions with the Irish Minister for Social Services, Dr. Michael Woods. Did the right hon. Gentleman see the report in the *Irish Post* in the middle of last month to the effect that a definitive agreement had been reached which meant that the habitual residence test would not apply to citizens of the Irish Republic, those from the Channel islands and those from the Isle of Man? Can he confirm that that is so? I do not want to disturb his genuine reputation for being communautaire, but if it is, can he explain how that will be squared with his earlier statement that no differences would apply in relation to citizens of different countries within the European Union?

Mr. Lilley: I made it clear in answer to a question at an earlier Social Security Question Time—perhaps it was from the hon. Gentleman—that, in devising the regulations, I did not intend to disrupt the common travel area that exists between ourselves and other parts of the British Isles. Although I do not want to pre-empt my announcement, I hope that it will be possible to ensure that that is the case. The new phenomenon to which I am referring is that of people coming from the continent and taking advantage of regulations whose laxity they can scarcely believe.

Mr. Hawkins: Will my right hon. Friend consider that benefit tourism within the United Kingdom seriously disadvantages tourist resorts such as the one that I represent in Blackpool? The "come and claim your dole and housing benefit by the sea" phenomenon is a serious problem. Will my right hon. Friend consider that matter seriously before he decides the final format of his new announcement?

Mr. Lilley: I know that that issue causes concern in many seaside areas. The Government have endeavoured to deal with it and will keep a close eye on the problem. I have to disappoint my hon. Friend, however, as the regulations will not have a bearing on that problem.

Child Support Agency

7. **Mr. Robert Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of the money paid as a result of maintenance assessments made by the Child Support Agency is benefiting children and families; and what percentage is reducing benefit expenditure for the Treasury.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Alistair Burt): All maintenance is of benefit to children. The payment of regular maintenance can transform the lives of parents with care and their families, and that is widely recognised by their representatives.

A large proportion of maintenance is paid direct to the parent with care by the absent parent. Of the money directly collected, under the Child Support Act 1991, by the Child Support Agency on behalf of parents with care, we estimate that about a third is retained by them and not offset against benefit expenditure.

Mr. Hughes: Does not that answer reveal to the House a disturbing set of figures, and that the Treasury is benefiting much more than anyone else from the activities of the CSA? Why is the hon. Gentleman so secretive about the full figures—the CSA report published today does not carry the information? Does not he understand that if the CSA is to work properly, it must be seen to be accountable and transparent and to be benefiting families and not the Treasury?

Mr. Burt: On the hon. Gentleman's first point, the House always understood that one of the principles behind the Child Support Act 1991 was that it would ensure that taxpayers supported only those children for whom the state should have responsibility, and that responsibility for children should be passed on to parents, as is proper. That is why it is right that the taxpayer should benefit.

As to the hon. Gentleman's second point, the report does, indeed, carry figures. During the past year, it became clear that some information was not as readily available as we would have wished it to be and steps have been taken within the agency to improve that situation. The agency knows how much is flowing through its books in relation to offset benefits. It is not possible for it to calculate all the money that is being paid directly by an absent parent to a parent with care of a child, however, although we are trying to get those figures.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the savings are made for the benefit of the taxpayer who, up to now, has been ripped off by some fathers who have paid little or nothing at all? Is not it high time that they took up their responsibilities? Is not that why the Child Support Agency is a thoroughly good thing?

Mr. Burt: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. In the past, the system had a tendency to underpin separation agreements—unwittingly—through the taxpayer. That is one of the major reasons why the CSA was introduced—to end that discrimination against other taxpayers.

Mr. Kirkwood: Does the Minister acknowledge that earlier written parliamentary answers seemed to suggest that only 2 or 3 per cent. of the money went to children and into the hands of the caring parent, not 33.3 per cent., as he just announced? Would he be prepared to put the documentation that establishes that figure in the House of Commons Library, so that hon. Members can look at it for themselves? While he is at it, will he also say whether he is fighting in the Cabinet to get time for new amendments to the primary legislation in next year's legislative programme, because tinkering with the 1991 Act simply will not do?

Mr. Burt: I should love to be fighting in the Cabinet, but that opportunity has not yet been made available to me. It would be nice if it was, but I must not anticipate any decisions.

I am aware that my initial answer perhaps caused some surprise among Opposition Members, who may not have read carefully the letter from the chief executive to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), which he quoted this morning. I was seeking to say that that letter makes it clear that there are some sums that could not be calculated in terms of benefit saved in relation to the amount of money that had gone to the parent with care —crucially, in connection with family credit.

Now we have those figures and I am able to tell the House and the hon. Member for Garscadden that the figure of £210 million quoted in that letter can now be updated to £310 million, of which some £73 million goes direct to the parents. The increase is due to the calculation of family credit. It was mentioned in the letter that that calculation could not be done, but it is clear that if those family credit figures were not included, the quoted figures would be distorted. Those figures are now available and I am sure that the hon. Member for Garscadden would agree that they make a much better case for the retention of money for parents with care.

Lady Olga Maitland: Will my hon. Friend join me in condemning organisations that seek to undermine the good work of the CSA? Is he aware of the appalling behaviour of Network Against the Child Support Agency, which has sent out hate mail and put up defamatory posters? Does he agree that such behaviour is sour grapes on the part of disaffected fathers?

Mr. Burt: The work of some of the groups that oppose the CSA has, sadly, undermined their cause. There are proper ways of expressing dissent and concern about Acts of Parliament, which many hon. Members have experienced in the form of proper letters from concerned parents. Those groups that have formed themselves deliberately to seek to wreck the work of the agency and which have put intense pressure on individual members of the agency and sent unpleasant and dangerous things through the post should realise that they do their case no good.

Ms Eagle: Does the Minister appreciate that the chief executive of the CSA does her case no good by taking three or four months to answer letters from Members of Parliament? She then fills those letters with drivel and things that we already know. Will the Minister give an undertaking now that the chief executive will improve the service to Members and will deal with the issues that we raise instead of sending out useless propaganda?

Mr. Burt: From some of the questions that I hear from Opposition Members, it seems clear that they need more information, not less.

The chief executive and I acknowledge that the service to Members has not been as good as it should be. Steps are being taken by the agency to ensure that it is improved. The chief executive and I apologise for letters that have been sent out too slowly and we are determined to ensure that the service is better. The provision of information in those letters should be carefully noted by Opposition Members, as it is information which they sometimes badly need.

Housing Benefit

8. **Mr. Alan Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on his plans for housing benefit.

Mr. Lilley: My Department is conducting a fundamental review of all social security expenditure. No decisions have been taken affecting housing benefit since the changes announced in the social security uprating statement last year.

Mr. Howarth: Will my right hon. Friend ensure that housing benefit is paid in future at levels sufficient both to relieve the current poverty trap whereby families struggling to improve their incomes in work are penalised at rates of up to 97 per cent., and to induce investors to finance more accommodation for rent, which is badly needed to reduce homelessness and to improve the efficiency of the labour market?

Mr. Lilley: The growth in expenditure on housing benefit has been great. My hon. Friend knows that it covers 100 per cent. of the value of rents and the withdrawal is simply in relation to people's incomes. If the withdrawal rate were alleviated, the cost would be even greater still. A balance must always be struck between the overall cost of the benefit and its impact in terms of disincentives on those who receive it.

Mr. Raynsford: Does the Secretary of State recognise that the huge growth in expenditure on housing benefit is a direct result of the policies pursued by the Department of the Environment, which has withdrawn subsidy for rented accommodation and forced higher rent levels? Would not it be outrageous if people who were having the greatest difficulty in meeting high rents were to be penalised by cuts in housing benefit, when the Government pledged that housing benefit was there to take the strain of higher rents?

Mr. Lilley: That is one of the factors, but our policy has been to move from subsidising bricks and mortar to subsidising people. As I said, they receive 100 per cent. of the cost. The hon. Gentleman may prefer to subsidise things rather than help people but our priority is the other way round.

Mr. Thurnham: In view of the rising cost of housing benefit, will my right hon. Friend look at ways of administering and controlling housing benefit on an area basis rather than paying unlimited personal benefit, which the Opposition love?

Mr. Lilley: A modest change which I announced in the social security uprating means that, in future, rent officers will be asked to give the level of rents that are too great for housing benefit to be reimbursed if they are given in a particular area. That is to be done on an area-by-area basis and will provide guidance to local authorities on where they should direct housing benefit expenditure.

Incapacity Benefit

9. **Mr. Pickthall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what he estimates the savings will be on his departmental budget arising from the introduction of incapacity benefit in each of the first three years starting with its introduction in April 1995.

Mr. Scott: Our latest estimates are that the net savings in benefit expenditure will be £415 million in 1995-96; £1.2 billion 1996-97; and £1.7 billion in 1997-98.

Mr. Pickthall: Is not it contemptible that the Government should make those savings at the expense of the most vulnerable section of our community, especially in the wake of VAT on domestic fuel and changes to vehicle excise duty? Is not it contemptible that, under the changes, a parent under the age of 40 with two children could lose up to £45 for a period of 24 weeks? Is not the Minister ashamed to put such measures through Parliament?

Mr. Scott: The hon. Gentleman should be as aware as the rest of the House that expenditure on the present invalidity benefit rose from £2.7 billion to £6.1 billion in real terms over the past decade. It was essential to get that expenditure under control. We are committed to retaining proper provision for genuine long-term sick and disabled people.

Mr. Bradley: At a time when the Government are trailing measures to reduce unemployment, will the Minister confirm that, on the Government's own estimates, the cuts in invalidity benefit will result in at least another 200,000 people on the dole queues?

Mr. Scott: I certainly would not deny the figures which the hon. Gentleman has given. I would say that, in the first year, the figure would be about 90,000. It is right, however, that we should have a pattern of benefits that provides back-to-work benefits for those who are unemployed and able to get back into work, and proper benefits for those who are sick and unable to work in the long term.

Post Offices (Benefits Delivery)

10. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what action he is taking to maintain the continued delivery of social security benefits through a nationwide network of post offices.

15. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether benefits will continue to be delivered through post offices.

Mr. Lilley: Customers will continue to be able to choose to receive their pension or other benefits at the post office. I have three clear objectives for the delivery of benefits: to give our customers the choice of where they receive their benefit; to reduce the cost of delivering that service; and to eliminate fraud.

Mr. Arnold: Is not that good news, and does not it contradict the scaremongering at the expense of the vulnerable that we have heard from the Opposition? Does not the continued use of sub-post offices by the Department provide a firm base for those sub-post offices further to extend their business and underwrite the future viability of sub-post offices in rural and suburban areas, which are of great importance and have the strong support of Conservative Members?

Mr. Lilley: The proposals that I announced at the sub-postmasters' conference in Bournemouth to guarantee choice to everyone and automate the payment of benefits through post offices were well received by postmasters there and throughout the country since. They are good for post offices and offer the guarantee that we shall continue that help. They will enable post offices to widen their business by building on the back of those automated services. But they are also good for customers and taxpayers because they will help to eliminate costly fraud.

Dr. Twinn: May I thank my right hon. Friend for his crystal clear commitment to a national network of sub-post offices? Does he agree that the scaremongering by the Opposition serves only further to undermine sub-post offices around the country? Will he now press ahead with automation and identity card systems to make sub-post offices safe places for pensioners and benefit receivers to use?

Mr. Lilley: I certainly can promise to do that. We are seeking the involvement of the private sector to expedite the process because we believe that it can bring in both finance and expertise to the rapid delivery of these complex systems.

Mr. Barry Jones: Can the right hon. Gentleman guarantee no closures of sub-post offices in Wales and in my constituency?

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Gentleman knows full well that no one can do that. But what we have done is to offer a guarantee that there will continue to be a national automated network of sub-post offices which will be much stronger than it has ever been before.

DSS Offices (Staff)

11. **Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement about the numbers of staff currently employed in DSS offices in direct contact with the public.

Mr. Burt: Over 80 per cent. of staff across the Department are in some form of direct contact with the public, providing a caring and efficient service.

Mrs. Roche: Will the Minister undertake to look at the numbers again, given that the Archway Tower benefits office which serves my constituency is often closed for hours at a time without notice? The complacent attitude to the number of staff is not good enough; there needs to be sufficient staff to meet the needs of the public.

Mr. Burt: I will, indeed, look at the particular incidence that the hon. Lady mentions. But I would say that there is no complacency in the Benefits Agency, which continues to turn in good results, providing a good service. This year, it has beaten its target of, for instance, clearing income support claims within four days—it is now 3.5 days—and there is a range of other targets which it meets very well. I am sure therefore that the hon. Lady will agree that the agency does a good job serving all of its people.

Child Support Agency

12. **Ms Quin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what further representations he has received concerning the Child Support Agency.

14. **Mr. Bayley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what recent representations he has received on the implementation of the Child Support Act 1991.

Mr. Burt: I continue to receive representations from hon. Members, the public and interested organisations covering a wide range of views.

Ms Quin: Given that the Child Support Agency has failed to apply the principle of ability to pay, is it surprising that it risks becoming the greatest political fiasco since the poll tax? Can the Minister tell the House how, in cases where benefit is reduced to mothers who do not give information about the father's whereabouts, that policy helps the child, who is often the wholly innocent victim in such cases?

Mr. Burt: There are two points: first, the formula takes account of people's ability to pay, which is why it is weighted in this particular way; and, secondly, although there was a tremendous amount of worry about benefit reductions before the Act came in, the number of such cases has been extremely small. The benefit reduction lasts for only a short period and it need not happen because the provision for good cause enables any woman who fears harm or undue stress to herself or her child to take advantage of that and therefore not suffer the benefit reduction. There have been many more examples of that than of any benefit reduction.

Mr. Bayley: Why is it right for the Child Support Act 1991 to be retrospective in the sense of setting aside clean-break settlements where, for instance, a home has been passed to the parent with care, but, at the same time, it is wrong for it to be retrospective in the sense of allowing parents with care to have their claim back-dated to the time that they made an application to the Child Support Agency? I have heard of delays of six, eight or even 10 months from the time that an application is made to when the Child Support Agency sends the forms to the absent parent. Who compensates a parent with care for 10 months with no maintenance from the CSA?

Mr. Burt: The Child Support Agency is determined to provide as efficient a service as it can. We know from today's first report that the agency has not been able in all cases to deal with the application forms coming in and to send assessments out as quickly as it would like. A compensation scheme is available if particular delays have been caused by an error in the department, but every effort is now being made to improve the speed with which applications are dealt with. Of course, the hon. Gentleman will know that in most cases time begins to run from when the maintenance inquiry form is sent out.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: Is my hon. Friend aware that the 11 reputable charities that form the child support monitoring group recently proposed that there should be a form of maintenance disregard as they feel that that would bring the public very much behind the whole concept of the Child Support Agency? Bearing in mind the remarks made at the weekend by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), who has indicated that he is attracted by that proposal, has my hon. Friend received any specific figure proposed by the hon. Gentleman as to how much that might cost?

Mr. Burt: My hon. Friend poses the right question. We have to date received no idea from the hon. Member for Garscadden of how any proposed disregard might be paid for. As my hon. Friend will know, a disregard of £15 a week would cost the Exchequer about £450 million a year. So before we take serious note of what Opposition Members say, the idea needs to be properly costed.

Dr. Spink: Can my hon. Friend confirm that 205,000 cases have been assessed so far, and that in 60 per cent. of them, an absent father was paying absolutely no maintenance for the upbringing of his children? Will he further confirm that 28,000 of those cases related to feckless fathers who had disappeared off the face of the earth, leaving no address with the children's mother; and that in 96 per cent. of cases the children had been left behind on state benefits? Finally, will he confirm that the absent fathers in question were generally enjoying a better life style than the children they had left behind?

Mr. Burt: My hon. Friend's figures are correct. The point is that much press attention has been paid to certain cases, which have tended to obscure the good work being done by the CSA—which, as my hon. Friend rightly says, is in the main directed towards those who previously did not pay maintenance. We have a record of finding those who, under the former system, would have been able to disappear, not paying the mothers of their children anything and leaving the full burden on the taxpayer.

The agency needs to be seen for some of the good work that it does, as well as needing to face up to some of the difficulties, which I believe it is responsible enough to face up to.

Mr. Llwyd: To return to the original question: if the Minister is right, and there is some reckoning of ability to pay in the system, why did the chief executive of the CSA tell the Social Services Select Committee on 2 November 1993—and I quote—

Madam Speaker: Order. It is not in order to quote during Question Time.

Mr. Llwyd: Why, then, did the chief executive tell the Committee that she did not have any discretion in the amounts being collected?

Mr. Burt: She was entirely right. The formula laid down by the House sets out the amounts that people have to pay, and it is based on a percentage of people's earnings. It does not leave discretion in the hands of the agency. That was precisely the point of the changes introduced by the Child Support Act, based on the recognition that a wholly discretionary system had in the past all too often failed the mother of the child and left her with too little money. What the chief executive said was thus entirely consistent with the law.

Departmental Budget

16. **Mr. Robathan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the projected growth in his budget; and what plans he has to reduce it.

Mr. Lilley: Last year, I published "The Growth of Social Security", which showed that spending on social security was set to increase in real terms by 3.3 per cent. a year up to the end of the century. Since then, I have taken steps to curb this growth so that the benefits system does not outstrip the nation's ability to pay for it.

Mr. Robathan: I am grateful for that response. My right hon. Friend will know that many Conservative

Members believe that the inexorable growth in his budget is one of the greatest problems facing the Government and the economy today. Will he ensure that vulnerable people are not penalised by his policies, but that we continue to bring the growth in the Department's budget strictly under control?

Mr. Lilley: Yes, I can give my hon. Friend that assurance. The purpose of our review is to improve the system, to guarantee the position of those who are most in need, and to make sure that the social security system does not outstrip the nation's ability to pay for it.

Mr. Frank Field: Can the Secretary of State give the House his estimate of what the growth in social security expenditure will be following the cuts that he has announced during the past year?

Mr. Lilley: In response to the request from the hon. Gentleman, I will certainly be giving the Select Committee figures showing how the figures that I gave last year for the growth of social security spending are modified by the changes that we have announced since. These are not of course cuts; there will be continued growth in social security spending. Still, this is a move in the right direction, and I am glad to say that the figures will show some moderation in the expected growth.

Child Support Agency

17. **Mr. Shersby:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment he has made of the criteria used by the Child Support Agency for assessing contributions; and what proposals he has for reviewing the current arrangements.

Mr. Burt: I have said on many occasions that the Government are keeping the child support scheme under close review, and that is still the case. We shall continue to listen to representations from all sources, but we have no specific plans for changes at this stage.

Mr. Shersby: Is my hon. Friend aware that many fathers find it difficult to understand or accept that clean-break settlements already entered into are not fully taken into account by the Child Support Agency? Is he further aware that many young fathers are troubled because the full cost of contributing to their pension schemes is not properly taken into account and nor is the cost of travelling to work, which is substantial—certainly in my part of the world?

Mr. Burt: My hon. Friend makes his points well. We are aware of people's concerns on specific parts of the formula. Each of my hon. Friend's points was answered last year by the Select Committee, which explained that it was difficult to take everything into account in the formula without running the risk of going back to the former system in which priority of payment for the child was low. None the less, I listen carefully to my hon. Friend's points, as do the Government. The commitment to keep the scheme under careful review should also apply to the matters that my hon. Friend has mentioned.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Israel (Scientific Links)

29. **Mr. Merchant:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what measures he is taking to improve Britain's scientific links with Israel in areas of mutual interest.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Mr. William Waldegrave): On 23 June, together with the Israeli Minister for Science, I launched the United Kingdom-Israel Science and Technology Research Fund for joint strategic research projects, for which the UK and Israeli Governments have each made available a sum of £300,000 over a period of three years. These resources are to be matched by another £300,000 from philanthropic sources over the same period.

Mr. Merchant: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his steps to increase scientific co-operation between Britain and Israel. That is especially appropriate as the peace process gathers strength. May I encourage him to look at ways of extending the present programme beyond its initial three years?

Mr. Waldegrave: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his welcome. The scheme will benefit British and Israeli science and many will benefit from the work. The initial calls for proposals were issued today. We had better see how the scheme goes before we extend it beyond three years, but I have every hope that a good start will be made and that co-operation will develop.

Mr. Gunnell: Can the Chancellor of the Duchy assure me that the areas of mutual interest do not include any aspect of armaments, nuclear or non-nuclear? Can he also assure me that the recent change in the Government's position on the sale of armaments to Israel will not affect that issue as far as scientific co-operation is concerned?

Mr. Waldegrave: The announcement to which I have referred is about civil science.

Mr. Batiste: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his efforts in this important initiative. Can he confirm that private sector funding for the scheme has already been made available? Will he also confirm that the initiative, which comes at the end of the arms embargo on Israel, is an important signal to British industry and to academia that this is the right time to enter into new business, trading, research and scientific links with Israel to our mutual benefit?

Mr. Waldegrave: I should like to pay tribute to the contributors from private philanthropic funds who have joined the two Governments in this. The Hanadiv, the famous Rothschild Foundation, has contributed money, as have others. I think that other hon. Members believe that the stance taken by the current Israeli Government is brave and should be supported. As those who follow these matters know, Mr. Shulamit Aloni, the Israeli Minister of Science, has taken an honourable role in seeking to build bridges in the middle east.

Civil Service Morale

30. **Mr. Enright:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what surveys he has made of the morale of the civil service.

Mr. Waldegrave: None.

Mr. Enright: Is not the Secretary of State aware that the continual privatisation and quangoisation of the civil service has reduced it from being the envy of the world to being something like a south American banana republic? Does not he realise that in some of the semi-public bodies dishonesty is ticking away like a time bomb and that it is about time he did something about it?

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman is talking rubbish. The reforms to the British civil service that are being carried through maintain the quality of service but also develop new and much more flexible ways of getting value for money for the taxpayer. That is why people are coming here from all over the world, including the United States, to consult us about taking forward similar reforms.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: Can my right hon. Friend confirm that the civil service code expressly prohibits civil servants from taking part in surveys that reflect their attitudes or opinions of political and policy matters? Is not it right that those rules have been in existence for successive Administrations and that they are essential to maintain the integrity and independence of the civil servant?

Mr. Waldegrave: I believe that my hon. Friend is right and that the rules, which have been maintained by Governments of both parties, should be respected and maintained.

Mr. Meacher: But is it surprising that morale in the civil service has now slumped to an all-time low when, for example, only in the past few weeks, it has been reported that there is to be a political crackdown on the Home Office research unit because its research findings do not square with the prejudices of the Home Secretary; when 10,000 jobs are likely to be lost by the administrative transfer of the job seeker's allowance from one Department to another; when consultants are brought in at a cost of £500 million to the taxpayer, because Ministers no longer trust their civil servants; and when senior civil servants are now expected to compromise their neutrality by advising on the political network to rebut criticism, for example, of the Government's Green Paper on homelessness? Are not those the real and shameful reasons why the right hon. Gentleman will not allow a survey of morale and attitudes in the civil service? Is not he making an absolutely farce of his role as Minister for open government?

Mr. Waldegrave: As on the occasion when he brandished a leaked letter demonstrating the superior confidentiality of the public sector, the hon. Gentleman seems to me to have demonstrated in what he said exactly why the rules, which were originally set out by a Labour Government, are wise, because he would not have the good sense not to exploit any results for party political purposes, thereby putting the civil service right in the middle of the political firing line. He is the exact embodiment of why we are right to stick to the rules that were laid down originally by a Labour Government.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: Does the Minister nevertheless agree that fundamental changes are taking place in the role of civil servants and the role of appointed bodies in the way in which the Administration is now run in this country? Is not it time for a commission of some sort to be set up to look at the relationship between those areas and Ministers, the political nature of that relationship and its accountability to the House?

Mr. Waldegrave: I do not think that we need another quango to do that. The Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee is looking at those matters. It is no secret; we have announced that the Government are about to publish a White Paper that will cover some of the same issues. The House and the Government can deal with the matter without setting up new commissions.

Engineering

31. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he last met the Institute of Civil Engineers to discuss the role of engineering in the economy.

The Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Service and Science (Mr. David Davis): My right hon. Friend last met the institute for discussions of that kind in September 1993.

Mr. Marshall: Will my hon. Friend pay tribute to the success of the civil engineering industry in winning contracts abroad? Is not that good for jobs in Britain and for the balance of payments?

Mr. Davis: I certainly join my hon. Friend in paying tribute to that industry. He referred to its success abroad, but on our doorstep we have an even bigger symbol of that success—the channel tunnel, which is the largest civil engineering project this century. The lion's share of the work was won by the British construction industry. It is because of the success of that industry that we have one of the Foresight panels on construction, with three members of the institute that he mentioned on it.

Dr. Moonie: Can—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear.] Can the Minister confirm that it is not the role of the science budget to cover up for deficiencies in spending in the Department of Trade and Industry? Will he confirm, as the Secretary of State did a few weeks ago, that peer review will remain the sole criterion for allocation of resources within the research councils?

Mr. Davis: In light of the rather desultory cheering from the Benches behind the hon. Gentleman, I am surprised that he is keen on peer review. The answer to his question is certainly yes. The Department of Trade and Industry is changing its emphasis from the generation of new ideas to the exploitation of technology and technology transfer, which is as it should be.

Charter Mark

32. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement about the eligibility of trade unions to receive a charter mark; and how many unions have received them.

Mr. David Davis: Trade unions are not eligible to apply for the charter mark. Eligibility is confined to public sector organisations and privatised utilities that provide a service to the public.

Mr. Riddick: Does my hon. Friend agree that as a result of this Government's employment legislation over the past 15 years, trade unions behave in a far less irresponsible way than they did in the dark days of the 1970s? Does he agree that if trade unions could be awarded charter marks, neither the National Union of Teachers, with its disgraceful boycott of school tests, nor the Rail, Maritime and Transport union, which is holding passengers to ransom with its wholly unreasonable demands, would stand a cat's chance in hell of being awarded a charter mark?

Mr. Davis: My hon. Friend makes his point in his own inimitable way and I do not quarrel with it. Although one hears all the time criticisms from the Opposition about shortfalls here and there, one never hears criticisms from them of the RMT, NUT or any other of their trade union sponsors that mess up the interests of the public and undermine the country's economic interests. That is the best indicator of their commitment to public reform.

Mr. Skinner: Is it nothing short of disgraceful that 250 Tory Members of Parliament criticise signalmen and others who are fighting for an average wage when many Tory Members have four, five or six jobs moonlighting? They are not satisfied with their £31,000 a year, but prop up tin-pot charter marks and pay Railtrack's boss £120,000 a year for a three-day week. That is nothing short of contemptible.

Mr. Davis: One can see the sponsorship of the National Union of Mineworkers standing there. The truth is that the RMT is behaving in an irresponsible manner and holding the public to ransom. We never hear criticism of that union —be it from the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) or the ever-absent hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair).

Public Services League Table

33. **Mrs. Lait:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in what way the introduction of league tables in public services is helping to raise service standards.

Mr. Waldegrave: Publication of comparative information is of immense value to those seeking to raise standards in their public service organisation, such as schools and colleges. I much welcome the recent publication of tables on the performance of hospitals and ambulance authorities. I am sure that the national health service will respond in a positive way to that important development.

Mrs. Lait: Does my right hon. Friend agree that all hospitals will respond to that information and improve standards? Does he further agree with a leader that appeared in *The Guardian* last week, which called the publication of those tables a milestone and commented that both main Opposition parties had made fools of themselves?

Mr. Meacher: What about *The Daily Telegraph*?

Mr. Waldegrave: In spite of the allegation by the distinguished classicist, the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), I do read *The Guardian*. I not only read the leader to which my hon. Friend referred but one published the week before, which predicted the Opposition's response:

"Predictably, MPs from both main Opposition parties (as well as the BMA) are lining up to make fools of themselves."

As my hon. Friend rightly said, they did make fools of themselves.

Mrs. Anne Campbell: Is not it ironic that a hospital that received a five-star rating for its waiting list last week has as one of its patients Mrs. Megan Thompson, one of my constituents, who was told that she had to wait until 1999 before she could even get on a waiting list? Does not that imply cheating somewhere?

Mr. Waldegrave: As usual, such cases need to be looked at extremely closely. If it turns out that that case is as the hon. Lady said, something has gone seriously wrong. As the hon. Lady rightly said, the hospital in question has an extremely good performance record. It is most ironical that, as always, even the hon. Lady—who often knows better—is doing what *The Guardian* rightly described as seeking to stop patients having important information that they have a democratic right to know. Why does the hon. Lady do that?

Mr. Mans: Does my right hon. Friend agree that publishing league tables for hospitals and other services is not about finding winners and losers, but about bringing everyone's standards up to the best standards in that particular service?

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend is right. There are many examples that I could cite. Last Friday *The Oxford Times* said that the health authority's immediate response was to take action to improve the standards in the league tables which, in one or two respects, were not good enough. That is the right response. Information must be published and action taken to put right cases, such as that mentioned by the hon. Member for Cambridge (Mrs. Campbell), where standards are inadequate.

Charters

34. **Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many charters there are currently; what plans there are to increase that number; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Davis: Some 39 charters have been published under the citizens charter. New charters covering further and higher education in Northern Ireland and London Buses will be published later this year. We revised three of the existing charters in the past month, and we plan to revise six more by the end of September.

Mr. Llwyd: Given the current position in the farming industry throughout the United Kingdom, particularly Wales, where many tens of thousands of farmers have their premiums and support payments paid nine and 10 months late, will the Minister agree to have a word with his right hon. and hon. Friends in other Departments to see whether there is a case for a farmers charter?

Mr. Davis: I am aware of the hon. Gentleman's interest in the subject. He will find that the agriculture department of the Welsh Office is to publish a charter statement later this year. That statement will include subjects such as the

administrative turn round on applications for grants and the handling of those grants. I think that that should meet the hon. Gentleman's worries.

Mr. Rowe: Does my hon. Friend agree that the majority of work on charters is done behind the scenes? Does he agree that the raising of standards is often achieved by boards meeting to ensure that they comply with the charters? Will he commend the Kent fire brigade and Kent police for winning charter marks and for their tremendous efforts in trying to persuade other public services to do the same?

Mr. Davis: I commend my hon. Friend for securing his question earlier than it appears on the Order Paper. He is absolutely right: the people who make the charters work are the public servants who deliver the public service in this country today. He is fortunate in that Kent has at least six charter mark winners who do a good job, not only in improving their own public service, but in running a charter network that enables other people to copy best practice and devise best practices for their own parts of the public service. Kent is an extremely good example for the rest of the country.

Mr. Winnick: There should be a new charter mark for particular excellence given to the Bishop of Birmingham for his excellent remarks yesterday about the way in which the health service is being constantly undermined. Would not it be appropriate for the Minister in charge of charters to write to the Bishop of Birmingham to congratulate him on the manner in which he stood up for, and spoke in defence of, the health service which, as he said, is being constantly undermined by the Government?

Mr. Davis: I should be delighted to hear from the said bishop about what he has to say to the 1 million extra patients who have been treated in the health service since the reforms. I should also like to hear what he has to say to the 40,000 people who were waiting more than two years for an operation before the reforms. That figure is now down to fewer than a few hundred. I should be interested to hear what the bishop has to say about that.

Citizens Charter League Tables

35. **Lady Olga Maitland:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what response he has had in relation to league tables provided under the citizens charter initiatives.

Mr. David Davis: There has been great interest in the tables on the performance of schools and colleges, with more than 1 million copies distributed each year. Parents, pupils and employers value the information and the informed choices that it enables them to make. Patients of the NHS will quickly find the new tables on hospital and ambulance performance similarly useful.

Those who use or pay for public services are entitled to know the performance of those services. Under the citizens charter, more and better information about the performance of public services in being provided, to make them directly accountable to the people who pay for them.

Lady Olga Maitland: Is my hon. Friend aware of the *Financial Times* leader which welcomed the league tables and said that they were a spur to a better service and discipline? The *Financial Times* also stated that the Labour party had no policy on comparisons for customers.

Mr. Davis: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. So far today, the *Financial Times* and *The Guardian* have spoken on our behalf, but I suspect that I should lead with the views of the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), who has said:

"parents should have as much information as possible . . . parents should know how well their kids are doing . . . the kids should be properly assessed".

At some point in the future, the hon. Gentleman will have to back that up with some detail—a feature which has been eminently missing in the past few weeks.

Mr. Barnes: May we have a league table for Ministers? Would any of them score any points, and could they all be relegated in one fell swoop?

Mr. Davis: The Conservative party does not elect a shadow Cabinet, which is just as well, in view of the results.

Statutory Instruments, &c.

3.30 pm

Madam Speaker: With permission, I shall put together the 14 motions—

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West) *rose—*

Madam Speaker: Order. I am on my feet. I thought that the hon. Gentleman was aware of that.

With permission, I shall put together the 14 motions on statutory instruments.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.)

RATING AND VALUATION

That the draft Alcan Aluminium UK Ltd. (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1994, be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft British Gas plc (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1994, be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft British Telecommunications plc. (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1994, be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Caledonian MacBrayne Limited (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1994, be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Electricity Generators (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1994, be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Forth Ports plc (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1994, be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Glasgow Underground (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1994, be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Lochaber Power Company (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1994, be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Mercury Communications Ltd. (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1994, be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Railways (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1994, be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Scottish Hydro-Electric plc. (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1994, be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Scottish Nuclear Limited (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1994, be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Scottish Power plc. (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1994, be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Water Undertakings (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1994, be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

Question agreed to.

Madam Speaker: Now, let me deal with the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks). Perhaps he will not be so impatient in the future.

Mr. Banks: I cannot necessarily guarantee that, Madam Speaker.

On a point of order, Madam Speaker. It actually concerns you: I am rather worried about you. I do not know whether you read in the newspapers over the weekend and today about the alarming deterioration in the quality of London's air. You may have to breathe more central London air than the rest of us, who can retreat to our leafy constituencies in places such as Newham. Given, however, that we have Health questions tomorrow, and given that the matter involves you and your health, could you arrange for an appropriate Minister to make a statement about the quality of the air in London and elsewhere? We should probably all have to be dead before the present Government recognised the existence of even a slight problem.

Madam Speaker: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will do his best to catch my eye tomorrow. As far as I am concerned, the air at Wimbledon this weekend was fine for me.

Opposition Day

[16TH ALLOTTED DAY]

Child Support Agency

Madam Speaker: I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

Because of the great interest in today's debate, I have had to limit speeches to 10 minutes between 6 pm and 8 pm. I ask hon. Members who speak outside those hours to exercise some voluntary restraint; then I may be able to call them all.

3.32 pm

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): I beg to move,

That this House believes a parent has a duty to contribute to the maintenance of his or her child, and that duty must be at the heart of any system of child support; recognises the anger and dismay felt by many families whose lives have been adversely affected by the activities of the Child Support Agency in its first year of operation, the collapse of public confidence in the system and the ever-increasing administrative problems besetting the Agency; and calls for an urgent and fundamental review to eliminate injustice by tackling key areas of concern such as the inflexibility of the financial formula, the failure to recognise, in calculating maintenance, financial and property transfers at the time of divorce or separation, the lack of an independent appeal procedure and the need to protect the interests of children in whose name the system was introduced.

The Opposition tabled the motion, and devoted a day of Opposition time to the Child Support Agency, because we feel—and I suspect that our feeling is widely shared—that we cannot allow the situation to drift. Discontent can be found on every side, in every constituency in the land, and support for the agency is vanishing at an alarming rate. Tolerance is in increasingly short supply; public confidence is collapsing, and public anger is rising. I believe that any Government who pursue a "wait and see" policy at this point are fuelling the crisis and playing a very dangerous game.

When we have tried repeatedly to raise the matter at Question Time and during debates, the reaction has been unsatisfactory. To be fair, the Under-Secretary of State —who occasionally gives a good impression of the White Rabbit, running around in anxious confusion—has shown worried concern, but in the background has been the glacial silence of the Secretary of State for Social Security.

This morning, we have seen the agency's annual report and business plan. It is remarkable that it is here at all: on 22 April, the agency's chief executive told me that it would be published by "late summer". It would be extremely unfair, however, to complain about its arriving earlier than expected. I think that there has been some honesty about the report, and credit has been given for that. The agency admits that it has made mistakes, that its performance is substandard and that it will have to do better. Mrs. Ros Hepplewhite writes in the foreword:

"Many things went well"—

which is questionable—

"but there were other areas where we needed to make improvements. Overall our standards of service did not reach acceptable levels and we did not achieve some of our key targets. We apologise to our clients for the difficulties they have experienced because of our shortcomings."

It is unusual for such a note to be struck in an official report. Indeed, the evening papers carry the headline "Child Agency Says Sorry". Many people will feel that an apology is merited, but that that is not enough in itself and that there must be changes to the way in which the system operates.

The annual report is unsatisfactory because it gives remarkably little information about what has been happening and, in some ways, adds to the confusion. In a number of areas, it contradicts what we had understood and had been told to be the position. It gives an incomplete picture of the agency's financial results and activities. It is inadequate, and it mirrors the chaos that is convulsing the system. I and, I am sure, many other hon. Members looked for fundamental facts—what one might describe as backbone statistics—such as how much maintenance the agency had collected in its first year of operation and how much had been paid by parents as a result of assessments that had been levied.

Despite the interesting intervention by the Under-Secretary of State for Social Security during Question Time, few of us will have any confidence that we have a clear and definitive picture of the position. It is very much through a glass darkly, and a great deal of confusion reigns. I give notice to the Minister that we will pursue the points that the Under-Secretary made and we shall be looking for a very full response.

Let us not forget that it was estimated originally that, in the first year of operation, £530 million would be paid in maintenance, £480 million of which would go in benefit reduction to the Treasury. That £530 million collected was translated, rather mysteriously, into £530 million-worth of benefit savings—a fact which was drawn to my attention by a parliamentary answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) on 28 March.

In reply to another parliamentary question, this time from the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood), which appeared in *Hansard* on 12 May at column *235*, we received another set of figures. Benefit savings were to amount to £335 million, but probably more because at least some, to use the jargon of the moment, would be scored retrospectively.

The scene was further complicated by the fact that £195 million of that £335 million came not from CSA assessments but from assessments carried out by the liable benefits section in the previous year. We now hear that benefit savings will be £418 million. It is important that we know to what extent that hides a figure that is not the responsibility of the agency. I am sure that either the Secretary of State or the Under-Secretary can supply the answer.

Mr. Jonathan Evans (Brecon and Radnor): The hon. Gentleman said earlier that he was looking for facts, and I agree about the need to do so, but he also condemned the wait-and-see attitude. He has adopted such an attitude. He has been telling many groups that he supports the maintenance disregard. How much would be disregarded by the Labour party? Will he give the House the figure, rather than adopt a wait-and-see attitude?

Mr. Dewar: I shall deal with the matter. [HON. MEMBERS: "Ah."] The hon. Gentleman thinks that he has made a devastating point, but we shall come to it in a minute or two.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his courtesy in giving way. He said in the House on 2 February:

"Opposition Members must live with the fact that implementation is not easy and will inevitably cause problems and difficulties. I entirely accept that; there is no way that we can escape from that."—[*Official Report*, 2 February 1994; Vol. 236, c. 949.]

Does he stand by that, or will his speech amount to an escape from it?

Mr. Dewar: The answer to the last question is no. I have never retreated from the fact that there would be real difficulties in introducing this system, just as I never retreated from the fact that parents have a duty to contribute to the maintenance of their children. I know that the hon. Gentleman appreciates the difficulties of being unpopular, and I have been booed off more platforms on this issue than on any other because I have tried to stand by what I have said and the difficulties that I have anticipated. I am not ashamed of that. I accept that there are problems, but it seems that they are being worsened because of a persistence with parts of the system that are clearly causing injustice and difficulty. We must therefore move on constructively to find answers to those problems.

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford) *rose—*

Mr. Dewar: I owe it to the House to push on.

As I said, the original prediction was £530 million, which then became £335 million; but the agency's letter of 27 May, which has been in the newspapers a great deal as a result of my activities and which was put there in good faith, suggests that the expected total collected would be £210 million, of which £203 million would be benefit savings—£3 million would go to children, while £4 million was unallocated.

In my defence, I stress to the House that I spoke twice to the office of the CSA's chief executive, and it stood by the figures. The Minister has now popped up and put a very different complexion on them. I want to examine the matter carefully, but I am still deeply sceptical about the amount of money that is going to children, simply because the system as it stands insists that those children most at risk economically, of whom there are a very large number living in households dependent on income support, are very unlikely—I put it no higher than that—to benefit financially because of the £1 for £1 clawback.

I recognise that there are a few cases in which the family will be floated off income support and will benefit from the probably small amount of maintenance over and above the income support level which they can retain. I make no apology for saying that I do not know how many are involved, because when I tabled a question to the Secretary of State on this issue, I was told that the figure was not available and could not be obtained except at disproportionate cost. I regret that, because it is a fundamental figure, especially as Ministers have repeatedly paraded the fact that a certain number of families are being taken off income support as a primary justification for the system. Against that background, it is especially unfortunate that we are not being provided with figures to illustrate the truth or otherwise of that point.

I want to finish with the statistics on an important point. I am sure that hon. Members have studied the report that has just been published and will have seen that £210 million—the figure that I was given on 27 May—has suddenly become £310 million. That is still substantially below the figure given earlier in May to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood). It may be because the £310 million excluded any revenue from assessments under the liable relative section. However, there are many discrepancies, and a better explanation must be given before those figures carry any conviction.

I ask the House to consider an important point. The report states that not only is the estimate of the amount of money being paid under assessments £310 million—£100 million up on what I had been told so recently—but that only £14.8 million has been handled by the agency itself, which seems an astonishingly small amount when measured against the £310 million. We are also told, without any explanation, that the savings in benefit arising from the £310 million collected amount to £418 million. At the very least, I should have thought it important to explain how £310 million paid in benefit under assessments could result in benefit savings as high as £418 million—it is a saving not just of £1 for £1 but of well over £1 for £1.

It may be—I want to be fair to Ministers—that the figure refers to the number of assessments that were not completed because of the withdrawal of claims for income support. I accept that some of those may be what, in the jargon of the day, are called collusive desertions, but it seems implausible that the extraordinary gap between the money collected and the benefit savings can be explained in that way. I very much hope that the Minister will make a fist at an explanation, because the figures read peculiarly at the moment.

Mr. Michael Stephen (Shoreham): The hon. Gentleman seems to think that there is something wrong in the Department of Social Security being reimbursed out of recoveries made by the Child Support Agency. Surely he accepts that, if a child is on benefit, the right person to support that child is the absent parent and not the taxpayer? As we all know, many taxpayers are themselves on low incomes and have their own children to bring up.

Mr. Dewar: The hon. Member for Shoreham (Mr. Stephen) is being very kind to me by asking an extremely easy question. I merely have to repeat what I have said on almost every occasion when I have addressed the issue. I accept, of course, that there is a duty to pay maintenance and, as I have always said, there is a legitimate interest on the part of the Treasury, or on the part of the taxpayer, if the hon. Gentleman prefers to put it that way—Ministers do, understandably. What I object to is that the whole pot is scooped—to use a betting term—by the Treasury and little is left, particularly for the children who are most at risk. That is the point that I have repeatedly tried to make.

The Minister has said today, for the first time, that something short of 30 per cent.—but still a quite significant figure—is being retained by families. I do not believe that that is the right balance, but it is a lot better than any of the figures previously produced. I find it extraordinary that such an important matter was not mentioned, as far as I can recall, at any point in the report published today. It is an absolutely basic factor which we should take into account, and I am sorry that we are considering the matter on the hoof when we had the benefit of the report this morning.

Mr. David Willetts (Havant): The hon. Gentleman has accepted that there is an obligation to pay maintenance. In the light of that, will he take this opportunity to condemn the activities of organisations such as the Network Against

[Mr. David Willetts]

The Child Support Agency, which clearly engage in intimidation and threats, and undermine the work of the CSA?

Mr. Dewar: I make it perfectly clear that I have no sympathy with, and offer no comfort to, those who demonstrate violently, those who deface private residences and those who harass staff of the CSA who are only doing their job. None of that conduct has been, or will be, defended by me at any point.

The hon. Member for Havant (Mr. Willetts), however, must accept—I suspect that he does—that much of the anger can be traced to difficulties in the system and to areas of concern that are proper and well founded, but which the Government have not addressed. In just a minute, I shall turn to some of those.

Mr. Burns: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dewar: No. I realise that the hon. Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) is a very keen interrupter in debates, but in this case, fair shares for all means that he will be excluded.

The other basic question I ask the Minister to address, for which information is not available, is how much maintenance should have been paid under the assessments that have been levied. That, too, is a fundamental parameter to the argument. I understand—perhaps the Minister can confirm this—that the computer system is being adapted to gather that information at some future stage. I find it remarkable that the information is not available at the moment, and I am sorry that it is not.

I conclude on the organisational side by saying that a vast organisation has now been built up which employs 5,200 people in Great Britain and 686 in Northern Ireland, who have been missed out of the graph that is provided in the annual report and for whom no figures appear to be supplied. Those figures represent a massive work force and I understand that 700 are to be added. Perhaps the Minister can confirm that.

I fear that one of the difficulties is that, for many people, dialogue with the CSA has become a dialogue with the deaf or the dead. It certainly is a dialogue that has brought no satisfactory responses. I know that Ministers are seized of the point that we must bring about improvement, but I hope that we shall see that improvement quickly.

I have no particular importance in these matters, although, tactically, correspondence with me may come to the top of heaps just to save trouble. I have found that letters that I have written in April have been answered in June. I know that that is speedy service compared with the experiences of many of my constituents. The Secretary of State in a radio studio today sitting at my side—a most unlikely scenario into which nothing should be read—described this year as a very difficult year. I think that one can say that again, and say it again.

Another important matter is the plans for 1994-95 which are attached to the annual report. Ros Hepplewhite described them in the media at lunchtime as challenging. In some ways, I find them a little depressing. I have four points to make about them. First, I notice that the net expenditure this year of £106 million—well below expectations; we ought to be grateful for that—will increase next year to £184 million. That is a spectacular increase in costs by any standards.

Secondly, the target for client satisfaction remains the same in 1994-95 as it was in 1993-94, at 65 per cent. I note from the report for 1993-94 that the satisfaction index achieved was 61 per cent. I greet that with stark disbelief. Even if it is a genuine figure, 65 per cent. is not exactly a dramatic improvement on it. That is disappointing. Can the Secretary of State assure me that exactly the same basis of calculation of the satisfaction index is used for the CSA and other Government agencies and other parts of the public sector? That is a fairly technical question, but I put it briefly to the Minister. Satisfaction ratings are a common form of machinery. I want to be satisfied that the satisfaction index is calculated in an exactly comparable fashion.

Thirdly, no more than 40 per cent. of outstanding maintenance applications are to take more than 91 days or 13 weeks. That is a serious matter. At present, 42 per cent. take more than 100 days. So the target for next year is not a dramatic change. The Minister knows that the problem with the extended time limit is that arrears mount up frighteningly. Many people can find themselves setting out on a career as a client of the Child Support Agency with £800, £900 or £1,000 of arrears. I immediately recognise that some of the most difficult cases have an element of non-co-operation which has contributed to the problems. However, it is essential that we get the processing time down if the Minister is to stand by the present arrangements under which the till starts ringing on the day the inquiry form goes out.

The fourth point is the £460 million benefit saving. It is down from £530 million last year. That is perhaps realistic. Again, there is no target figure for benefit collected and no target figure in percentage or money terms for cash going to the families and children in whose name the system was introduced. I put it to the Minister that that is a sad and important lack.

I am anxious to move on to some of the changes that we should like to see made to the Act.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dewar: No, I intend to move on.

Ministers are determined to be unhelpful about the changes that we should like to see. Let us make it absolutely clear that the starting point was that the system was designed to help children. Again and again, the right hon. Member for St. Albans (Mr. Lilley) has referred to more money from more parents for more children. Despite the improved figures that have been thrown into the debate in the past half hour or so, I do not believe that a system advertised as giving help to children is meeting its target.

I noticed that, in an interview rather wittily called "Doing What Is Right", which the Secretary of State gave to a magazine called *Third Way*, which aims to present biblical perspectives on a wide range of current issues, he said, I thought rather prophetically and acutely, that the Child Support Agency was

"not proving as popular as some people imagined."

I will not fight about that. He went on to say that it is men who are complaining and that

"a lot of the articles are written by journalists who themselves .. are recipients of demands"

from the CSA. I thought that that was a little fanciful. He continued:

"We are now getting protests from the corresponding 30,000 women who receive less money"—

because of the changes last February. He then said:

"we hear very little at all from the children, who are the people who have to be our ultimate concern."

I agree with the Minister. In this system, the children were always to be our ultimate concern. It was to be child-centred—that was the phrase that we heard time and again. It is not child-centred, judging by the figures available to us, and I do not believe that it is child-centred judging by the figures that the Under-Secretary of State just produced.

Will the Under-Secretary of State say whether he is satisfied? He gave us a figure that was below a third—on the figures that he mentioned, it was probably not much more than 25 per cent. It would be interesting to hear from the Minister whether he regards that as a sensible and satisfactory equilibrium. We do not, and that is why we have always argued that a disregard should be on the agenda.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr. Dewar: No, I shall not give way. Will hon Members just sit down?

A disregard should be considered. It is of particular importance to the people whom the Minister looks to for support and help—the Child Poverty Action Group, the National Council for One Parent Families, Gingerbread and a large number of people who want some recognition of children's needs.

If the Minister is not prepared to consider the principle of the matter, he might at least consider the tactical advantages of making a concession that would make the system seem relevant to the people who are caught up in it, and win him many friends—friends he badly needs.

In principle, the disregard should be on the agenda and in any package. I do not know what the cost figures will be [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] Let me tell the House why.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): The hon. Member is avoiding stating an amount.

Mr. Dewar: No, not at all. I cannot get the figures from the Government. The Under-Secretary of State may recall that I got a parliamentary answer, which was presumably based on the assumption that the Child Support Agency was meeting its targets and would ultimately produce a collection of around £900 million. Now, none of us knows what the agency is producing, or the figures.

Clearly, the smaller the amount of money that it produces, the less the cost of a disregard. If one had a disregard on the basis that everyone on income support and in a position to apply actually applied, and an assessment was levied and paid, one would be in big money—at both ends of the equation. What is ludicrous and intellectually dishonest is to apply that assumption to the figures that are being produced.

I would certainly be prepared to consider and discuss with the Government the sort of figures that should be forgone, but that would have to be on the basis of practical examples and the reality. That is just one of the matters that should be dealt with, but it is by no means the only one, and I shall mention the others in short order.

One problem is that in some cases—I am not saying it is an enormous number, but it is an important number—there is a growing gap between the demands made in maintenance and a person's ability to pay, which poisons people's perceptions of the whole system.

I repeat—my views are known to the Government—that we should take a long hard look at how we can make the system a little more flexible. In some cases, charges that have to be met by the parent who does not have care of the child are relevant to the child and to the break-up of the partnership. Those include the cost of access to children; mortgage payments, when the father may be paying for a house in which his children live, but he does not; disability in the family, either of the child or another member of it; and debts incurred jointly during the partnership that have to be met entirely by the father.

Some more controversial considerations should at least be looked at—including, for example, travel-to-work costs, which I know are of particular importance to Conservative Members, because it is in no one's interests that anyone should be driven from work. Child care costs are also important.

Mr. Oliver Heald (Hertfordshire, North): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dewar: No. I have a great deal of sympathy for the hon. Gentleman's constituency problems relating to the CSA, and I hope that he supports many of my points. I am sure that he does. Should he be fortunate enough to catch Madam Speaker's eye, I look forward to the hon. Gentleman expressing his support not just from the Conservative Benches but in the Lobby.

Certain considerations should be imported into the formula. Apart from that, an independent review system of the kind that is familiar in other systems should also be introduced. It is of basic fundamental importance in terms of justice that those who feel that they have a grievance or have been hard done by should have some form or system of redress. That does not mean, of course, that they will receive redress, but they should have a constitutional right to put it to the test. At present, there is no such right.

Mr. Andrew Robathan (Blaby): The hon. Member talks about people who feel hard done by having redress, but, as a taxpayer, I feel hard done by and so does the nation. *[Interruption.]* It is interesting to note that the Opposition do not want to listen to this. Yesterday, we heard a lot of talk about social and civil responsibilities, but I see little responsibility from fathers who will not pay for their children. They expect everyone who walks the streets or travels on the Clapham omnibus to pay. Does the hon. Gentleman believe that individuals should live up to the responsibility of fathering children?

Mr. Dewar: I am very sorry to say to the hon. Gentleman that I found that a rather tiresome intervention. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman does not have the humility required, but it is not too difficult to construct a mainstream CSA case—many of his hon. Friends would agree with me—in which one puts oneself in the place of a man who has been asked to pay, looks at his circumstances and his second family commitments. One can then at least understand that man's feelings of frustration. If the hon. Gentleman cannot do that, he displays a level of intolerance and lack of sympathy that are not much to his credit.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): The hon. Gentleman is right to refer to a review body, for which

[Mr. David Ashby]

I have a great deal of sympathy. I believe that, to an extent, he is right. Given the inflexibility of the rules, what will that review body be able to do? Are we not talking about going back to a domestic court, which would give a proper decision, having taken everything into account? Surely that is how the review would operate.

Mr. Dewar: I know that the hon. Member is learned in the law, and he should consider the Australian and New Zealand examples, in which the areas against which an appeal can be tested are defined and criteria laid down that must be met. That could and should be done in this case.

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dewar: No, I am getting into trouble. I will conclude my speech quickly. I am conscious of the need not to take any further interventions, because it is not fair to the House.

An independent review procedure is important, but I understand from press speculation and heavy briefing that reform is likely to be granted on what are sometimes inaccurately called "clean break" settlements, under which substantial property or financial transfers are made. They are intended by the parties to influence maintenance, but they must be set aside and ignored by the CSA. That seems to be ludicrous.

I know that, in his broadcast this morning, the Secretary of State sheltered behind the fact that, in its first report, the Select Committee on Social Security sympathised with him about the difficulties encountered. It is not for me to anticipate what may emerge from the second report, but it is likely that there will be some rethinking on that point —to my mind, for what it is worth, there should be. What has happened to many people has been an offence, and one which could be corrected without too much difficulty.

I do not suggest that a disregard, an independent appeals procedure or a clean-break settlement will sweep away all the problems that we face. I read the fetching little press release put out by the Under-Secretary of State after his discussions with heads of the CSAs from New Zealand and Australia. It sounded like a comfortable set-up between a collection of old lags, but I know that it was not.

I recognise all the difficulties and know that, after a reform package, the sun will not shine every day and the Secretary of State will not be everyone's favourite uncle. But I seriously believe that this House has a duty to tackle people's concerns if we believe that they are justified. Hon. Members on both sides of the House have reached that conclusion in large measure and the Government would be extremely unwise to refuse to recognise that point. We should take the complaints seriously.

I was genuinely surprised to see an article in a local newspaper in the name of the Under-Secretary of State —he may not have written it himself—that produced the pet food theory. It said that there could be no form of discretion because, in the old days when we had discretion, people met the cost of their pet food before meeting the cost of feeding their children. That is not a helpful thing to say. I noticed that, in the subsequent correspondence columns of the same paper, his remarks were described as "offensive". I agree that they are offensive. We do not need to go to those extremes in building a little justice into the system. I hope that we shall make some progress on that.

The system needs friends, because disenchantment and disillusionment are growing. The Child Support Agency needs allies and must have public confidence if it is to survive. If the Government do not change the rules and the rigid framework in which the agency operates, I fear that it will not survive. Those who have looked for benefit have found none, and many of those who have looked for justice have been left waiting in vain. Too many of the demands that have been made begin to look detached from the ability to pay.

Laws rely on consent. We are near the point—complaints made by Ministers about non-co-operation make this point—at which consent is being withdrawn and the law will become unworkable. It may surprise Tory Members to know that I do not want to reach that point. I have tabled this motion because I believe that we must make that point forcefully. The worst may still be to come, because the recent interim assessments have the power to reinforce demands. The last figure that I saw showed that only 2,600 deductions from earnings orders have been made. There are thousands more to come and the temperature is likely to rise. The House would be irresponsible if it did not take that into account.

Action is needed fast. I pressed my colleagues for this debate because of a brief exchange that I had with the Under-Secretary of State in the House on 16 May. I asked him whether there would be a statement about the Government's intentions before we rose for the long summer recess. I asked him whether changes were on the way and whether the Government had decided to introduce a reform package, but he could not assure me on either point. I hope, for the sake of the good order of our maintenance system, that the Secretary of State will be more forthcoming when he replies to this debate.

I said the other day that there is a danger of an embarrassment becoming a disaster. It need not happen, but it can be prevented only by building confidence and giving a genuine impression that the House and, perhaps, the Government care. I tabled this motion not to be provocative or partisan but as an opportunity to reflect on the concerns felt in every corner of the land and as a chance to press in the House and, I hope, in the Lobbies, for reform which all of us believe is necessary. It would be widely misunderstood if Parliament rose for the summer recess and hon. Members dispersed to their constituencies without debating this subject and expressing our opinions on it.

There are many people—whether they are parents waiting for news, vocal parents struggling with a formula that they do not trust or children who, as the ultimate beneficiaries, have not yet seen any benefit—who want some sign of hope and some news. I believe that great damage will be done if we do not respond to that. The ultimate price would be if we ended up undermining the very principles of responsible parenting which the system was set up to defend. It is because I do not want that to happen that I commend the motion to the House.

4.10 pm

The Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Peter Lilley): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'reaffirms its support for the principle, to which the Child Support Act 1991 and the Child Support Agency give effect, that parents should support their children where they are able to do so; accepts that the taxpayer should only have to provide this support when

parents cannot afford to; welcomes the help the Agency has already been able to give many parents with care and the support it has received from organisations representing lone parents; condemns deliberate attempts to obstruct the workings of the Agency; recognises the changes introduced in February and the urgent steps being taken to improve the service the Agency gives parents; and acknowledges the continuing concerns over child support issues and therefore welcomes the Government's commitment to continue to keep the scheme under scrutiny and to bring forward further changes should these prove necessary.'.

I begin by welcoming the fact that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar)—despite his criticisms and his desire for change—has maintained and reiterated his support for the Child Support Agency and the principles on which it is based. I know that he has been under pressure to abandon that support, and I respect him all the more for sticking to his principles.

The Child Support Act was passed by the House on 18 July 1991 without a single dissenting vote. It has always had cross-party support. Despite all the controversy over the past year, I am still struck by the broad agreement on two key points: first, virtually everyone now accepts that parents are responsible for supporting their children and that taxpayers should be involved only to the extent that parents do not have the means to support their children; secondly, nearly everyone accepts that we cannot go back to a system which failed children, parents and taxpayers in the past.

I recognise, however, that there are deep concerns about how the new system has been working in practice—concerns both about the impact of the formula in particular cases and about how the formula has been administered. Because of those concerns, we responded immediately to the first report of the Social Security Select Committee. We accepted the bulk of the recommendations and went further in some respects than the Committee advised, and we implemented those changes as speedily as possible at the beginning of February.

At the same time, we made it clear that we would keep the new system under review. That is no empty form of words: my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has reaffirmed that we are prepared to make further changes if and when we are persuaded that they are necessary. Moreover, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Social Security, whose sensitive handling of this very difficult issue has won universal respect, has been consulting a range of organisations involved in the area of child support.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Lilley: Perhaps I may make a little more progress. I will certainly give way in a moment.

The Select Committee is also carrying out a further review in the light of the first year's experience. I shall not predict the Committee's recommendations or prejudge my response, but I can give hon. Members two assurances today: first, I shall continue to uphold the principles on which the agency is based; secondly, I will consider ways positively to strengthen those principles so as to improve the agency, to ensure that it is fair and to make it more acceptable.

Mr. William O'Brien: I appreciate the opportunity to intervene. Will the Secretary of State take into account a serious anomaly in cases where an absent father is prepared to maintain his children but is aggrieved because he also has to maintain his former wife in addition to his new family? Is the Minister prepared to adjust that to ensure that the absent father does not need to maintain his former wife?

Mr. Lilley: Obviously, spousal maintenance remains covered by the courts. The changes introduced for the Child Support Agency affect only child maintenance, and the Child Support Act does not cover the issue of spousal maintenance. However, I am happy to look at all the detailed points that hon. Members continue to put to me and to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, and to approach them in the light of the assurances that I have just given.

Those assurances apply not least to improving the operational performance of the agency. There is no doubt that the response of our constituents to the requirement to pay maintenance has been aggravated by delays, problems of communication and other difficulties that have arisen in the first year.

The report published today sets out very frankly the scale of those problems, their origins and the steps that we are taking to set them right. There are three reasons why the problems have arisen. The first is the sheer scale of the task which, after all, had defeated the court system. Every part of the process is new, and we needed to create a wholly new organisation.

We are not alone in experiencing the difficulties that have cropped up during the first year. The hon. Member for Garscadden lightly dismisses the difficulties that other countries have had, but the director of the New Zealand Child Support Agency said in London last week:

"Our first year with the Child Support Agency was extremely difficult. Faced with a reluctance on the part of many absent parents to meet their obligations and the difficulties of settling in entirely new business processes, we substantially missed our targets. Only now as we enter our third year are we beginning to turn things around."

So our problems are not unique.

The second cause of the delays in Britain was the changes that we introduced in February. I believe that the changes were necessary, and they were widely welcomed, but they inevitably delayed most other work, as the agency had to review every assessment already made.

There is, however, a third reason for the problems of the agency and one which should shame all those responsible for it. The agency has been the target of organised groups deliberately trying to disrupt its work. I have no objection to people voicing criticisms of the agency and seeking to influence the Government by legitimate means of persuasion. Indeed, I have had constructive talks with groups of absent parents, from Sheffield to Plymouth and from Bradford to Bournemouth. But there are other organisations which do not seek simply to lobby for their cause. Their undisguised aim is to undo the legislation passed by this House by undermining the agency that carries it out. Their weapons are disruption, harassment and intimidation.

One such organisation is the Network Against the Child Support Act, NACSA. In its January newsletter it called on its members to

"delay co-operating with the CSA . . . make it as hard as possible for the organisation to work . . . fill in the assessment form with information missing . . . swamp the CSA staff".

Even worse than non-co-operation are the campaigns of harassment and threatened violence directed against innocent civil servants carrying out the duties laid down by this House. I quote from a leaflet issued by another of these organisations:

[Mr. Lilley]

"all CSA and DSS workers are targets . . . you can hit their homes, cars, personal lives . . . put them under extreme stress . . . ring every time you can . . . remember to harass, insult, swear".

I pay tribute to the courage and dedication of Ros Hepplewhite and all her staff for carrying on in the face of such attacks. No one can tolerate people who send hypodermic needles, razor blades and excrement through the post to innocent officials.

I am glad to say that the Select Committee did not stand for it and the hon. Member for Garscadden, to his credit, has not stood for it either. I welcome the hon. Gentleman's repeated opposition to it today and I give the House and CSA staff my promise that we will not stand for it. The Child Support Agency will not be deflected from its task by these groups.

Ms Liz Lynne (Rochdale): No one would condone the sort of attacks that the right hon. Gentleman has been describing, but I should like some reassurances from the Secretary of State for my constituents. Besides the people who are setting out to destroy the agency, there are many others with perfectly genuine cases. Some of my constituents have been waiting several months for their appeals to be heard. Meanwhile, they are experiencing a great deal of difficulty supporting their second families. One mother has been waiting since October—

Madam Speaker: Order. I remind the hon. Lady that interventions are for asking questions or making brief comments. I fear that she is trying to jump the gun and make a speech. If she wants to catch my eye later, I suggest that she brings her comments to a close.

Ms Lynne: What is the right hon. Gentleman doing about the Child Support Agency? My constituents are extremely worried.

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Lady is right: a lot of people who are behaving perfectly lawfully have concerns. Those concerns are aggravated by delays, which are made worse by campaigns of non-compliance. Those matters are all interlinked; that is why we are determined to ensure that the campaigns of non-compliance, harassment and intimidation do not work.

Dr. Spink: Before my right hon. Friend moves away from the subject of non-compliance campaigns and wilful obstructors, may does he agree that we need more interim assessments and attachments of earnings so that we may care better for the mothers and children who are left without maintenance?

Mr. Lilley: Yes, we certainly want to do anything that will bring about better compliance. We are doing that, and greater use is being made of direct deduction from earnings. I shall explain in full what we are doing to try to cope with the problems.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr. Lilley: I shall give way when I have answered the points already raised by hon. Members.

The emerging operational and compliance problems became increasingly apparent before Christmas. Therefore, with Mrs. Hepplewhite, I took steps to strengthen the management structure, appointing a new senior operations director and senior managers seconded from leading consultants. The agency then developed a plan to get its operations back on track. That plan aims to restore to the service the speed, effectiveness and sensitivity that parents and hon. Members have the right to expect. I approved that and secured the necessary resources, and the first steps were implemented in February.

The plan involves more staff, streamlining the handling of inquiries, and better working practices. It has five main points. First, we are giving staff better information technology support. Secondly, we are hiring new staff and putting 400 staff on a dedicated service to handle telephone inquiries. That will mean a better service for parents and for hon. Members without disrupting maintenance work. Thirdly, we are deferring the take-on this year of 100,000 existing income support cases while we tackle the backlog. Fourthly, we are setting up specialised teams to clear the backlog. Fifthly, and finally, we are copying the best practice in each of the six Child Support Agency centres and making sure that it is used in all of them.

Mr. Ashby: My right hon. Friend will understand that I should like to dissociate the organised opposition about which he spoke from the opposition in my constituency, which is constructive, helpful and useful to me. A topic which comes up time and again is the benefit fraud by many wives. When fathers reasonably try to tackle that fraud they are told that there is not time to do it now and that it will not be tackled until September. Benefit fraud is not being dealt with at all. Once we tackle that, we shall tackle many of the objections to the Child Support Agency.

Mr. Lilley: I agree with my hon. Friend and I dissociate ordinary law-abiding people with legitimate and often strongly held complaints from those who indulge in organised disruption. My hon. Friend makes a valuable point about the aggravation of concern in cases in which one parent thinks that the other is fraudulently claiming benefit. In the past two months, 2,200 such cases have been referred by the CSA to the Benefits Agency which says that that is resulting in a significant number of benefit cases being altered or withdrawn. I shall deal with the full scale of that problem in a moment.

Mr. Jimmy Wray (Glasgow, Provan): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Lilley: Perhaps I may be allowed to make a little progress between interventions.

We have evidence that our changes are beginning to work. We have provisional figures for the first quarter of this year—April, May and June. Compared with last year, they show that we are completing maintenance assessments twice as fast. We have doubled the number of cases in which we are enforcing maintenance. Hon. Members will particularly welcome the fact that we have cleared more parliamentary correspondence in the first quarter of this year than in the whole of last year, although it is still not being cleared as speedily as we would wish. We intend to get back to our targets by the end of this Session.

The organised campaigns against the Child Support Agency have failed, and such campaigns will not stop us delivering the results that parents deserve and hon. Members expect. We have a long way to go and I am sure that this will not be the last debate before we get there. But performance is improving and more maintenance is at last being paid.

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): Although I deplore what has happened to members of the Government—people sending things through the post—I am extremely concerned that my constituents cannot afford medicine which keeps them alive. I have letters from constituents who cannot afford the medicine because of the amount of money that the CSA is taking off them. Surely to God that is not right. We should leave people with enough money to survive on and at least have their medication. I will provide the Minister with the letters, but I am sure that I shall still get the same reply: nothing will be done.

Mr. Lilley: I will certainly look at any correspondence that the hon. Gentleman sends me on that, but he must be aware that, because of the protected income system, virtually every absent parent and his or her second family will be at a standard of living significantly above that of the lone parent caring for his or her children and dependent on income support. Some 1 million lone parents are dependent on income support, and remarkably little concern has been shown by Opposition Members for the steps that we are taking to ensure that those parents receive adequate maintenance in future.

Mr. John Watts (Slough): Does my right hon. Friend agree with some of the figures announced recently in *The Economist* showing that the proportion of lone mothers receiving support from the fathers had halved during the past 10 years, and that that trend shows no sign of tracking the levels in unemployment? Will he say something about free will in all this? If the CSA did not exist, would we not still be seeing in our surgeries the mothers of the first families who do not receive support? Whether the CSA existed or not, going for a second family, having abandoned the first, surely means opting for a life of comparative poverty. We would then see the casualties in a different set of circumstances.

Mr. Lilley: I agree with all those points, and they should be borne well in mind by those who think that justification inevitably lies with all the complaints that we receive.

There is no doubt that concerns about the work of the agency have been exacerbated by a number of misconceptions about its work. Some people have claimed that it has been tackling only parents who have been paying maintenance. That is untrue. In some 60 per cent. of cases taken on so far, the absent parent was paying no regular maintenance at all. Others have claimed that we have done nothing to track down the so-called "feckless fathers". That, too, is incorrect. We have traced 85 per cent. of absent parents for whom the parent with care had no address. That is 32,000 people.

There are, of course, also cases in which we are asking fathers already paying some maintenance to pay more. The 1990 White Paper spelt out the fact that one of the aims of the new system was

"to produce maintenance payments that are realistically related to the costs of caring for a child."

That was not happening before the CSA was set up. There is no more conclusive proof of that than the fact that 96 per cent. of the children for whom we are seeking maintenance have been dependent on benefit, whether or not they were receiving a modicum of maintenance.

As has been mentioned, a number of hon. Members have found that their constituents' resentment of the agency is heightened when one parent believes that the other is fraudulently claiming benefit. I can assure the House that the Benefits Agency investigates such claims, but for reasons of confidentially it clearly cannot report the outcome of specific cases to the parents who reported them. Those claims are being investigated at the rate of more than 1,000 a month, which is leading to a significant number of benefit alterations and withdrawals.

There is no doubt, too, that the agency's work has had a beneficial impact in reducing the level of fraudulent claims in the first place. In the first year, some 44,000 parents withdrew income support claims within a month of being contacted by the agency. In some cases, that would have been just a coincidence. In others, however, the parent may have been claiming as a lone parent while living with the child's father or with someone else, or was receiving adequate but undeclared maintenance and realised that that would emerge if the claim was pursued. It is estimated that those withdrawn claims alone result in savings for the taxpayer of £138 million.

Ms Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): Does the Secretary of State accept that the voice of the absent parent has been slightly louder in this debate than the voice of the parent with care? If the agency is to succeed, there must be a sea change in public attitudes. Too many quite well-meaning absent parents, provided that they saw their children regularly and paid pocket money, were content for income support to bear the brunt of the real costs of bringing up their children.

Mr. Lilley: I am glad to have the hon. Lady's robust support. She echoes the views of many organisations which represent lone parents. I remind the hon. Lady of their belief that there should be no further changes, and that they would entirely reject the motion. The hon. Lady must consider whether or not she will vote for it.

Of course, criticisms of the agency are not just the result of misunderstandings or operational difficulties. There has been strong criticism of how the policy bears on particular groups and circumstances. In response to those concerns, I introduced a package of reforms in February. The changes nearly quadrupled the margin above income support below which the income of a second family would not be allowed to fall; they extended phasing so that, normally, no one with a second family would face an increase of more than £20 a week above their previous agreement; they sharply reduced additional payments; and they progressively cut the carer element when the youngest children reached the age of 11 and above.

Those changes have given more help, more rapidly to more people than many anticipated during our debate at the time. Some 43,000 absent fathers immediately had their maintenance bills reduced. Contrary to what the lobbies assert, those reductions were quite substantial. Maintenance bills previously received reduced on average by 20 per cent., excluding the impact of phasing-in. Typically, that reduction was worth more than £450 a year to the absent parent. A further 4,000 parents will receive small reductions of £50 or less at their annual review. Any assessments starting since February have automatically been at those markedly lower levels.

Needless to say, the changes have not ended complaints about the system, but the volume of correspondence from

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hon. Members has fallen markedly since the changes were implemented, despite the rapid increase in the number of assessments made and enforced in recent months.

The Opposition motion seems to want the House to commit itself to specific action now, before the Select Committee has completed its work—but the Opposition have not fleshed out their own proposals. The hon. Member for Garscadden again calls for some sort of discretionary appeals mechanism. He knows that that was considered and rejected when the Bill was going through Parliament—and he knows why. Nobody wanted a return to an open-ended, discretionary system. If a court or tribunal is given open-ended discretion to give other costs priority over the cost of maintaining children, it will do so. It is always easy to transfer the cost of child support back to the taxpayer.

In our last debate, the hon. Member for Garscadden tacitly recognised that problem and called for narrow gateways and restricted grounds for appeal. Today he suggested that anyone who feels hard done by should be allowed access to the appeal system. The hon. Gentleman had several months to think about how to limit access to the appeals mechanism, but he has not produced any proposals. We need to hear what would be the grounds for appeal and, more importantly, what grounds he would not allow if access were narrowed in the way he previously assured us that he would do.

Mr. Dewar: I cannot in one intervention canvass my argument in detail, but I am anxious to put the record straight. If I gave the impression that there should be an open-ended, totally discretionary appeal system, which simply second-guessed the formula in every case, I did so unintentionally. I said that there should be grounds against which an appeal should be measured and that those criteria should be defined in statute. It is important to make that point as the Secretary of State has—unintentionally, I believe—misrepresented my position.

Mr. Lilley: I take the hon. Gentleman's clarification. In the past, he has said that the system should be narrow. I was surprised at his later form of words, and I obviously put the wrong emphasis on it—I accept what he is now saying. We now need some indication of how he intends to keep the system narrow. What grounds will he not include? If he does not give those grounds, he will be suggesting to all absent parents in this country that their cases are open to appeal while saying that in the small print that they will not. If he does that, he will be trying to sell us a pig in a poke.

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): I think that hon. Members on both sides of the House seek an element of flexibility and a recognition that commitments were entered into between the parties during their marriage and when they divorced. There should be a recognition that the second family is also entitled to a certain standard of living. Provided that that element was built into the reforms, the system would give great benefit.

Mr. Lilley: I entirely accept the point made by my hon. Friend and the widespread feelings that he expresses. I am not here today in the business of ruling in or ruling out specific proposals. It would be premature for the House to commit itself to vague proposals about an appeal mechanism based on experience in New Zealand and Australia, where the gateways are narrow and the formula more rough and ready than here. Such a system could well result in more arbitrary treatment of, for example, housing costs, which are not allowed in the New Zealand and Australian formula. Only very few people there are granted set-aside to allow for high housing costs.

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): I appreciate that my right hon. Friend is handling the subject with skill and judgment and does not want to be rushed into decisions or to anticipate the Select Committee's report, but will he at least consider that one of the grounds for appeal might be when the Child Support Agency assessment is in excess of the total agreed and established disposable income of the father or mother?

Mr. Lilley: I find it hard to see how those circumstances could arise, but I will happily consider the point made by my right hon. Friend. It is only possible for the assessment to be 50 per cent. of the assessable income, after deductions have been made from the net income of the household. However, I shall happily consider the point raised by my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Wray *rose—*

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe) *rose—*

Mr. Lilley: I will give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) later.

The hon. Member for Garscadden suggested that something should be done about past property settlements, but he is unspecific about what he wants done. If Parliament wants to give further recognition—we must remember that the formula automatically gives some recognition, often to a greater extent than is the case under the Australian system, as a result of transfers of housing resulting in increased housing costs and reduced maintenance requirements for the absent parent—some formidable difficulties would first have to be overcome.

How would the house in the past property settlement be valued—at its present value or its original value? If the latter, what would happen if no valuation was made at the time? How would it be possible to know what trade-off was intended by the court between the transfer of the house and the amount of child maintenance set? If the hon. Gentleman expects his ideas to be taken seriously, he must at least address those questions before further progress can be made.

Mr. Jim Lester: All of us who have handled many such cases recognise that interpreting the variations requires the wisdom of Solomon. It is possible to fall into the trap which lies between the comparative rigidity of the formula and the difficulty of feeding in the variations involved in individual cases; that applies particularly to retrospective court orders.

Mr. Lilley: I entirely agree. However, if the Opposition are serious about the narrowness of the grounds for appeal that they propose, and if they are basing their proposal on experience in New Zealand, which is very similar to ours, they should bear in mind that for as long as that system has operated—somewhat longer than ours has—it has allowed only 1,200 appeals to be heard, which have resulted in some 500 departures from the formula. That really is a narrow system. If that is the kind of system that the hon.

Member for Garscadden is proposing, he should inform those outside who are expecting him to offer an easy way out.

Mr. Dewar: I have never represented the easy way out to anyone, as the right hon. Gentleman knows. I think that I have now been slightly misrepresented at both ends, as it were. Having persuaded the right hon. Gentleman that I did not want a completely "open door" discretionary system, I am now being accused of trying to do a camel-through-the-eye-of-a-needle job. In fact, there is a via media, if that is not too much of a mixed metaphor.

Does the Secretary of State not accept that it is possible to define in statute a number of the grounds that I mentioned as at least serious considerations? I thought one or two of them self-evidently sensible, while one or two others, being controversial, would require discussion. According to the last figures that I saw, 12 per cent. of cases had gone to appeal in Australia and 6 per cent. had resulted in variation of maintenance awards. If we apply those figures to the many hundreds of thousands of cases in our system, it is clear that we are not talking about a negligible number.

Mr. Lilley: There are rather more cases in Australia, but they tend to result in increased maintenance assessments because many involve parents with care protesting that the income of the absent father is higher than has been suggested.

Mr. Wray *rose—*

Mr. Lilley: I will give way to the hon. Gentleman, in recognition of his persistence.

Mr. Wray: The Secretary of State is finding it difficult to convince the House of what he is saying about the Child Support Agency, which has created nothing but havoc and misery. If its purpose is to trace absent parents and make them pay, why did it send out a memo saying that those who have already paid should be targeted? Why are Members of Parliament receiving thousands of letters from people baring their souls about all this misery? Why have the clean break agreements been thrown aside, regardless of the Minton *v.* Minton agreement?

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Gentleman must be as much opposed to the views of those on his own Front Bench as he is to mine if he believes that we should abandon the CSA, and if he denies that pursuing our current course is preferable to reverting to the old court system.

A third change was mooted by the hon. Member for Garscadden, who called for a partial disregard of maintenance in the setting of lone parents' income support. No Opposition speech would be complete without a spending pledge, and there it was. Again, the hon. Gentleman refused to cost his proposals; he now says that he wants to assess the costs not on the basis of a steady rate, but on the basis of the early days when the number of maintenance assessments is smaller.

Mr. David Shaw: My right hon. Friend may be suggesting that the Opposition could find a way of avoiding the costs. Have not Labour Members been saying that social security benefit rates—on which many payments by absent parents are based—are too low in relation to children? Surely if a Labour Government raised those benefit rates, absent fathers would pay more. Perhaps that is how Labour wants to achieve a "nil savings" result.

Mr. Lilley: There is certainly a disparity between the attitudes of some Opposition Members to the level of income support received by lone parents and to income support when used to assess the maintenance requirement.

I question the case for a maintenance disregard because it would cost the taxpayer money. The hon. Member for Garscadden has mentioned a figure of some £340 million for a £10 per week disregard. Not a penny of that would go towards reducing the burden on absent parents; perversely, it would mean that a lone parent receiving maintenance would be better off than a widow looking after children and dependent on income support—and, indeed, better off than other lone parents receiving no maintenance.

The case is distinctly weakened by the figures given earlier by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, which showed that about a third of the maintenance paid in the past year has increased the incomes of parents with care, many of them on family credit. Low-income households have benefited significantly.

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Lilley: I should like to proceed, if my hon. Friend will forgive me.

From time to time, the hon. Member for Garscadden has claimed that his proposals would be a step towards the Australian system. Australia does indeed have a limited appeals system and a maintenance disregard, and excludes settlements made before the establishment of the agency. The hon. Gentleman, however, should not delude himself —and none of us should imagine—that such a system would empty our surgeries or our postbags.

When I met the deputy commissioner of the Australian CSA last week, he told me:

"even after six years, Australian Members of Parliament receive more complaints about child support than any other issue".

Australia's CSA is also currently the subject of a Select Committee review, as is New Zealand's. The Australian Committee has received more submissions on the subject than have been received by any other Select Committee in the history of the Australian Parliament.

The lesson is not that we should abandon our principles or our determination to make the Child Support Agency work better, but we should recognise that anything to do with children, family breakdown and money is bound to raise strong emotions. We must handle such matters sensitively and with patience, and we should not imagine that there is a simple cure-all that will make the issues go away.

It is right to listen to the genuine concerns of absent parents, but we must also remember the 1 million lone parents on income support. Before the agency existed, three out of four could expect to receive no regular maintenance, while others usually received small and uncertain amounts.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell (Blyth Valley): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Lilley: No, I must make progress.

Lone parents increasingly resent the attention given to complaints from absent parents, almost all of whom have a standard of living well above benefit level. We must be careful that we do not empty our surgeries of absent

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parents, only to fill them with angry lone parents. Mothers have been understandably disappointed by delays which result in part from non-compliance with the agency.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Lilley: I hope that my hon. Friend will forgive me if I complete my remarks so as to allow the debate to proceed.

That is why I place great emphasis on restoring the level of service, and on ensuring effective and speedy payment of maintenance. That is also very much in the interests of absent parents, as it reduces uncertainty, problems with arrears and punitive levels of interim assessment.

We must not put the improvements in performance that we are achieving at risk by introducing unnecessarily disruptive changes; nor must we revive the belief that those who delay will not have to pay. However, we shall continue to keep the system under review, and we shall study the Select Committee's forthcoming report very closely. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister himself promised, we are committed to making further changes if we are persuaded that they are necessary, and we shall continue to improve the working of the system. Above all, we shall keep in mind the interests both of absent parents and of lone mothers, of children and of taxpayers—but those of the children most of all.

4.49 pm

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): I have said before, but I say again because it is important, that in discussing the Child Support Agency we are discussing the most significant change in the welfare state since 1945. The House therefore wants answers to a couple of simple questions: is the agency succeeding, or does it look as though it is doing so? If that question cannot be answered, does it appear to be working?

The plain fact is that we cannot answer either of those two crucial questions, which we need to answer today. At the end of the debate, Conservative Members will have to decide whether to vote with the Opposition or quietly to express their concern about the agency to Ministers. Like Opposition Members, they will be forced to base their judgment not on available information but on what they feel is happening with the agency. They will have to put together the information that they have received from their constituents. They will have to have a feel for what they think is happening to all the people who never complain when something is going well, and they will then have to make a judgment.

I sympathised with the Secretary of State for Social Security in his efforts to provide us with increased information over the past few days. Despite that, I believe that he feels that a big question mark remains over the working of the agency.

The Select Committee report will be ready when hon. Members return after the summer recess; it may or may not be radical—that is for the Select Committee to decide. It will be important that hon. Members keep an open mind regarding the extent of reform that may be necessary and that, although they may be loyal to the Government tonight, they make it clear to the Government that they believe that the jury is still out.

The increased information given in the past few days does not tally with other information that we have received. Hon. Members will have noticed the caveats—"This is estimated" or "The projection says". We can say almost nothing certain about the agency. The crucial information that we want is who is benefiting and how much mothers and families are receiving, but we cannot answer those questions.

I should like to compare the way in which the debate would have been conducted 100 years ago with the way in which it is being conducted today. Local government board reports in the age of quill pens, before anyone had dreamt of computers, were different from today's. Shortly after the end of each year, the most detailed information was gathered on subjects of interest to hon. Members. I have read reports on the poor law period. Riots in Peckham or Birkenhead were covered in reports at the end of the year. Hon. Members could be told what their constituents in the workhouses were eating on particular days.

We should compare that with our search for information on how the agency is working. The paucity of data is extraordinary. The unit responsible for establishing the agency, which set the computer programme on what information should be collected, should be sacked very quickly. Ensuring that the unit does not get its sticky fingers on the next project that the Government may establish is in the interests not only of the Government but of all hon. Members.

I do not want to state my views now because if I did, people might think that I was trying to bounce the Select Committee into making a report—and everyone should know that that is the last thing that I would want to do. I do, however, want to raise two issues. First, we must decide what proportion of income the agency may take from the second family. We are assured that families are left with 70 to 85 per cent. of net income, but none of us has met anyone whose experience tallies with that figure.

It has been impossible to obtain the most basic information from the agency—such as why a constituent has to fill in six application forms. It takes the chief executive three months to reply to such queries, let alone more detailed questions. If we can obtain information on how much money is being taken from net income, we shall be able to make a judgment in the autumn on whether we should try to get every penny from the second family or whether we should take a more rounded view and have a formula that delivers an appreciable sum that will regularly be paid and which mothers caring for their children will know will be paid, particularly if they have opportunities to work. We need that information badly and we will need to return to that important point in the autumn.

The second issue relates to the nature of the formula. I know that he is not listening to me, but the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) is probably the only person in the Chamber who understands how the formula works. If I asked hon. Members how many of them understood and could explain the formula, no one would ask me to give way. If we do not understand the formula, how can agency officers, constituents and employers cope with it when they try to work out contributions?

In the autumn, we shall have to make a crucial second decision: do we want to modify the existing formula, which none of us understands, or should we choose a simple formula that exempts income and levies a rate of tax that all of us, including our constituents, can understand?

The Select Committee has asked the agency to explain the formula. We have been told that we must set aside at least two hours for an explanation. Last week, officials from Australia and New Zealand wanted, sensibly, to speak to the Secretary of State. They managed to explain their formula not in two hours, but in two minutes and most, if not all, the members of the Select Committee, understood it.

The other question with which we must deal in the autumn is this: will we solve matters by having a byzantine formula, believing that, if we can only add a little bit more to it, it will work, or should we go for a simple formula? We cannot sensibly propose reform until we get the formula right. We cannot think about introducing an appeal system if the formula is believed to be so unworkable that 6 million people will use that system. That would swamp and destroy it.

Mr. Stephen: We all accept that a simple system is more desirable than a complex one. But does the hon. Gentleman accept that the simpler the system is, the more chance it has of working justly in individual cases?

Mr. Field: That is a good intervention and it helps to underline the point that, when we debate any proposal for reform of the formula, we shall have to decide how much money will be taken from the first family. When we have set the level, we shall have to decide whether to hold the line on exemptions. We may have to set the figure at a level that will not deliver what we thought the present formula would deliver but that will be workable and accepted in the country. There would then be no sympathy for those who did not pay, because most people would understand the formula and would say that such a proportion of income should be paid.

I conclude by saying that—

Mr. Thurnham: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Field: No. In spite of my respect for the hon. Gentleman, I shall not give way, as many other hon. Members wish to speak.

It is extraordinary that none of us can answer the crucial questions: does the agency look as though it will be a success, and do we know much about how it is working? We have a feeling about it from our postbags and from what our constituents have told us but, at the end of the day, and in the absence of hard facts, we shall be called on to make a judgment. Even if Conservative Members cannot accept our motion, I hope that they will make it plain to the Secretary of State as they go through the Lobby that the jury is still out on this issue; that we shall have to return to it in the overspill session after the summer recess; and that we shall not act decisively until we have the information that we need to enable us to judge who is being affected, and to what extent, by this important reform.

5 pm

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): A debate on the Child Support Agency can give the House an important opportunity to discuss fundamental pressures on society and how they can be dealt with; or alternatively it can descend into special pleading and an unconnected string of demands designed to avoid responsibility.

I believe that, in the face of huge pressure, it is vital that the Government stand firm on the core principles encompassed by the creation of the CSA. There has been a campaign of vilification against the agency and especially against my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary, the hon. Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt). Both of them have handled the issue with courtesy and care, and I especially congratulate my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary who has replied to all the questions that I have asked on behalf of my constituents, some of whom I took to see him a few months ago. I very much hope that my right hon. Friend and he will continue the work that they have begun and will not cave in to special pleading and the unparalleled campaign that has been waged against them and their officials.

I support the principle behind the agency, which is that one cannot evade responsibility for one's own actions; one cannot shuffle off responsibility to some convenient repository of all problems—the state—working on the myth that the state does not comprise other people with a need greater than one's own.

We all subscribe to the theory that fatherhood is for life, but I want to explore what that means. Do we have the moral courage to accept its literal meaning? Surely it cannot mean that, if a father loses his first family, he is entitled to insist on the state—other people, strangers—taking on a share of the care of the children of his first family because he wishes to start a second and can do so only if other people take on the burden of providing for the first.

It may not be his fault that he lost his first family—he may be entirely blameless, although other people will perhaps never be able to make an entirely fair assessment of that—but, whatever the circumstances, the first family remains his complete responsibility.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): I know of a case in which a couple divorced after having two children. The young man remarried and took on two of his second wife's children. He and his second wife then had a fifth child between them. But that young man is still only a trainee nurse and manifestly should not have taken on additional responsibilities and placed extra burdens on other parents who are also bringing up children.

Mr. Leigh: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's intervention because she makes my point precisely. We have to stand firm on this principle. It would be easy for us to shuffle our responsibility on to the state, but we must not do so. We should support my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to the hilt and not make a series of concessions that will weaken the principles behind the CSA.

It is often said that a court order should in no circumstances be overruled—a point often put to me by my constituents. I have some sympathy with that view if two equal, separating partners decide to divide their assets and incomes in such a way that the state is not in any way involved. However, I do not believe that a court order can be defended if it is predicated on the fact that the state will take on part of the burden of looking after the first family. I know from my experience of practising in divorce courts many years ago that, in the past, many maintenance orders were finely tuned to ensure that some convenient third party—the taxpayer—picked up a substantial part of the burden.

Mr. Heald: Does my hon. Friend agree that in such cases both parties often receive—or used to receive—legal aid and advice in making an agreement directly against the

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interests of the state? Nobody stood up to speak for the ordinary taxpayer who was often on a low income and unable to afford high taxes.

Mr. Leigh: Again, my hon. Friend makes my point. I well remember that, during my pupillage, my pupil master advanced the same argument, but he was very skilled at ensuring excellent settlements for his clients and used to laugh at how idiotic the state was to pick up the tab.

At first sight, the philosophy that I am expounding may seem to be pretty hard-nosed as far as the father is concerned; but it is not, because I believe that the full financial responsibility of the father should be balanced by full access, care and control rights. That is central to the debate. Absent but responsible fathers—my constituents—never complain to me about what they are required to pay for their children, but they do complain about what they are required to pay for the carer with whom they no longer live or to whom they are no longer married.

Philosophically, I want to try to resolve the dispute by making the absent father more responsible and less absent. I regard the absent father—I hate that phrase and would prefer to say simply "the father"—not as a distant sugar daddy required only to pay the bills but as an ever-present part of children's upbringing.

Parents may regrettably divorce in the sense that they refuse to live together or can no longer do so, but, if they have children, they cannot divorce their lives. Society should state that clearly and boldly. There can be no clean break. Young people must realise that parenthood is a lifetime system of care.

Of course the Child Support Agency mechanisms need to be reformed—that is inevitable with a new organisation—but not so that fathers are let off the financial hook. They should, if anything, be impaled on it more securely—but only on the basis of continued access to, care of and involvement in their children's lives. If they want to act responsibly, they should be considered equal to the mother in being allowed to bring up the children.

Equal time may not be feasible or wanted, but children need to be made aware of the traditional concept of their father having to be absent some of the time in order to work to earn money to care for them. Only if the father refuses to act responsibly, takes himself off and refuses to visit his children is the state entitled to view him as the impersonal source of child support and child minder taxation.

I accept that my argument flies in the face of much modern thinking to the effect that life is entitled to involve nothing but the pursuit of happiness, pleasure and self-fulfilment, and that relationships with other people and their children can be discarded when they cease to be a pleasure or mutually acceptable—with the sole proviso that a bill from some distant impersonal bureaucracy, together with a demand for a cheque, may fall with a thump on one's doorstep. Such a society degenerates into a mechanistic or even a cruel one.

If what I say is discounted as an unrealisable myth or as romantic poppycock, my reply is that, although it may be difficult, it is true. So many of the problems associated with the CSA are due to the fact that we have lacked the intellectual courage and clarity to state that complete personal divorce between parents is impossible where children are involved. We have required a Government agency, based necessarily on inflexible rules and procedures, and necessarily remote, to pick up the pieces that parents working together should have to hand.

I see the CSA evolving as a much more individualistic and personalised structure, evaluating individual needs and resources and committed to bonding parents more closely to the children whom they have brought into the world. Implicit in that view is that the CSA will have to maintain links between parents who may have fallen out with each other and who may not sleep under the same roof, but who must have a continual and continuing relationship based on the children.

Society has made divorce far too easy and it has made marriage far too easy. It has fostered the dangerous delusion that relations with children can be dissolved; they cannot.

The debate about the CSA is an interesting pointer to a wider debate about society as a whole. The 1980s may have been an era of dismantling inefficient, distant state structures. The problem with that was that people drew the wrong moral from the story. They came to believe that individuals could divorce themselves from each other and from society. Society came to be seen as a disparate collection of largely professional and expert groups. That view goes right through society. Business is first regionalised, then internationalised. The Army is seen as a professional elite divorced from society and the Territorial Army. Involvement in the community is downgraded in many parts of our society. It is bureaucratised, and not enough credence is given to individuals.

The real villain of the piece is social security policy, in assuming that we are all strangers to one another and to society. A vast churning process involving £80 billion of expenditure has erected a vast, rule-ridden, depersonalised bureaucracy in which the CSA is just one particularly painful cog, taxing and dispensing, often to the same people. Social security, including the CSA, is a convenient repository of problems, whether divorce, the underclass or single parents, which we would rather not solve ourselves as individuals.

When, at some distant date, our social security policy, including the CSA, is debated, it will be looked on in much the same way as we now look on Dickensian England. We should make the CSA and social security generally more personal, more human and more designed to empower people out of dependency and back into family, rather than state support. People will then have more faith in our social security system.

People may say that the Government and the Opposition lack a vision for the 1990s. Our disputes on the nature of ownership may be coming to an end. Surely one vision that we can share is the restructuring of social security across the board into something that is much more personal and positive, and that will ensure that we provide for our children in the way that they deserve in the next century.

5.12 pm

Mr. David Chidgey (Eastleigh): I begin by paying tribute to my predecessor, Stephen Milligan. Stephen's sudden death was a shock to the many people in Eastleigh who had come to know him as a hard-working and enthusiastic Member of Parliament. Stephen and I campaigned against each other in the 1992 general election. Although we disagreed vigorously on many aspects of policy, Stephen always argued on the issues. He

never tried to gain advantage through personal attacks on his opponents. In this, he set a fine example which is all too rarely followed in political life today.

Stephen worked hard for his constituents. He was proud of Eastleigh and, I would add, with just cause. Eastleigh is unique among towns along the south coast of England in that it owes its origins to the expansion of heavy industry. With hon. Members' indulgence, I shall follow tradition and take a few minutes to talk about Eastleigh before I come to the points that I want to make about the Child Support Agency.

In the 1890s, the London and South Western Railway Company moved its wagon and carriage works out of London to a convenient railhead in Hampshire, and thus Eastleigh was born. In the 20 years that followed, Eastleigh's population increased sevenfold. With its excellent rail links, Eastleigh beckoned to industry and so a tradition of a wide range of manufacturing and engineering skills was established.

In more recent times, Eastleigh's factories have played a major part in the development of Britain's aero industry. Avro, Hawker Siddeley, De Havilland and Supermarine are just some of the famous names in British aviation associated with Eastleigh. Today, Hamble Aero Structures is Eastleigh's major employer. The tradition of railway engineering has continued in the railway maintenance works at Eastleigh, while in Woolston, the most westerly ward in my constituency, Vosper's shipyards continue to lead the world in minesweeper technology. In rail, sea and air transport, Eastleigh's industry continues to play its part.

Even today, almost a third of Eastleigh's work force are engaged in manufacturing industry. With the M3 and M27 motorways complementing the rail network, more than a quarter of all jobs in Eastleigh are in the distribution sector. If the much needed investment can be found to complete the development of Eastleigh airport, thousands of jobs could be provided to replace those slipping away from our traditional industries. Furthermore, investment in high-quality training for local people could ensure that they grasp these opportunities.

People in Eastleigh, however, feel insecure, not just about the operation of the CSA. One third of those unemployed have been out of work for more than a year. Many young families who bought their first homes in and around Hedge End in the 1980s' boom are now bust, trapped by negative equity. Energetic, able men and women are unable to move to take up better jobs and advance their careers because they are shackled to houses with values that are now far less than their outstanding mortgages.

People are worried, not just about the operation of the CSA, but about increasing crime in their area. It has increased by more than 20 per cent. in some places over the past few years. They do not understand why their chief constable's request to recruit 223 more officers just to bring the county force up to strength has been turned down.

People in Eastleigh are worried about career prospects for their children. They want investment that will guarantee high-quality education and training to provide young people with the skills they will need if they are to make their way in the modern, highly competitive world.

Hon. Members will know that by-elections bring into sharp focus the mood of the people, and Eastleigh is no exception. The people of Eastleigh have taken the opportunity to tell the Government that they want policies that recognise their concerns. I remind the House that the overturning of a Conservative majority of almost 18,000 in the 1992 general election to a Liberal Democrat majority of more than 9,000 just two years later is a powerful message from the voters of Eastleigh. It is a message to the Government that they should listen to the people and change their policies.

Of all the concerns of my constituents, the need to review and change the operation of the CSA is the greatest. Hon. Members will know from their own constituency postbags the extent of the anxiety and sense of injustice caused by the activities of the CSA. There is broad support from my constituents for the principle of the Child Support Agency—that both parents should be responsible for the maintenance of their children. However, the draconian operations of the CSA and the clear evidence that it is the Treasury—and not the children—that is far and away the major beneficiary only serve to underline the need for urgent and fundamental review of the current system for the collection of maintenance.

Just such a case concerns a constituent in Eastleigh. He divorced his wife seven years ago. He made a clean break settlement through the courts, with agreed maintenance payments for his two children. Two years later, he remarried, taking on the financial responsibility of two stepchildren as well as caring for his elder child, who by then had decided, again through the courts, that he wished to return to live with his father. Another three years passed. His first wife, who had also been married and then divorced for a second time, was required by the Department of Social Security to seek an increase in the maintenance paid by my constituent for the child still living with her.

The courts reviewed the case and determined that the original maintenance award was fair and just and should stand. This year, some seven years after his divorce, my constituent was contacted by the CSA. He sought its guidance on how to respond to its questionnaire. He was shocked to receive, instead of guidance, notice through the post that an interim assessment was about to be made. The assessment was estimated to be some seven times greater than the level of child maintenance that he is currently paying. It was some seven times greater than the amount set by the courts, subsequently re-examined by the courts and judged to be just and fair.

How can it be right for a Government agency to be able to overturn judgments made in the courts with no right of redress and no right of appeal? I believe that to make the CSA acceptable, far more radical reforms than those supported by the Government will be necessary. Formulae will have to take into account the father's necessary expenditure—for example, the cost of travelling to work. Calculations should be based on disposable income rather than gross income. Provision should be made for the costs of absent parents' access to their children. The CSA cannot be in the child's interests if a father's maintenance payments mean that he can no longer afford to visit his children.

Finally, there must be some mechanism whereby parents can challenge demands. No system can claim to be infallible. The very high number of mistaken demands shows that the CSA is no exception. It has been said that allowing for an appeal would simply mean a return to the previous discretionary system. However, there must be some place for discretion in a system which so directly influences people's lives. The Australians have established a successful appeal system, so there seems no good reason why it should be impossible to do so in this country. To

[Mr. David Chidgey]

provide no possibility for appeal is seen by many, not only in Eastleigh, to be in breach of natural justice. I urge the Government to make the provision of a facility of appeal for parents a top priority when they come to review the operations of the CSA.

5.23 pm

Sir Donald Thompson (Calder Valley): I did not expect to be called so early in the debate. I am glad that I have been because it gives me a chance to thank the hon. Member for Eastleigh (Mr. Chidgey) for the gentle way in which he referred to our colleague Stephen Milligan. Both Conservative and Opposition Members thank him most sincerely for that. We are sure that in the next year or two we shall hear one or two more of the hon. Gentleman's speeches. We look forward to that.

The hon. Member for Eastleigh is fortunate to be here on an important but not a cantankerous political day. He has heard the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) and the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), the Chairman of the Select Committee, make excellent speeches. The hon. Gentleman can be sure that they will read his speech in *Hansard* tomorrow because they will read their own speeches and will come across his in the course of events.

The hon. Member for Eastleigh has also heard my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State make a very good speech. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will join us in voting for the amendment tonight, which concludes with the words:

"acknowledges the continuing concerns over child support issues and therefore welcomes the Government's commitment to continue to keep the scheme under scrutiny and to bring forward further changes should these prove necessary."

I am sure that, when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and his able Under-Secretary say that, they mean it. I am sure that when the Select Committee has reported, changes will be made.

Marriage or parenthood is not a limited liability contract. One is not married as a limited company. One cannot put a limit on that. Nor is it an unlimited contract as at Lloyd's of London. When I got married 40 years ago, we were told, and we have been told ever since, that when a man gets married he gives his wife half his property and a third of his income for life. She can cash that in whenever she wants to walk through the door with the children, for whatever reason. That has always been so. It was so under the courts and it is so now.

Children are the responsibility of us all in the last resort. As my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) said, for the rest of the time they are the responsibility of their parents. Initially, they are the responsibility of their parents and they continue to be the responsibility of their parents whomsoever they live with afterwards.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State told us that two thirds of absent parents contacted by the Child Support Agency in the first year had not been making regular payments. He also said that 96 per cent. of the families of those absent parents had been supported by the state. He said that 90 per cent. of the absent parents whose whereabouts were unknown and for whom the agency looked had been found. That is what the House hoped for and it is why we almost unanimously voted for the system.

However, many of my constituents are unhappy. It is my job to report as succinctly as possible their grievances. They are not violent or nasty. They come to my advice centres as sensible and reasonable men with problems such as the hon. Member for Eastleigh outlined. One young man said, "You daren't even go to t'disco and say owt to do wi't'CSA now." We all know exactly what he means.

My constituents say that the Child Support Agency must cost more to administer than the old system. I am not sure about that. The old system cost between £230 and £1,000 for every legal aid case. The lawyers are £80 million down, so no wonder they are complaining. I shall mention some of the objections of my constituents, bearing in mind that they will read every word of the *Hansard* reports that I send them and comb out every word. As we all do, they will agree with what they agree with and pooh-pooh what they disagree with.

The first thing that my constituents say is that clean-break settlements ought to be accepted or at least taken into account, especially where there is benefit fiddle or perhaps where they say that the wife does not deserve the £40 a week spending money that the formula directs. Secondly, my constituents say that the formula is too rigid and should allow for personal circumstances.

Most controversially, or perhaps least controversially, they cite the cost of access. No one automatically allows access to children by fathers. It is often, if not always, opposed because people say that access by fathers disturbs the children. It is better if the fathers are not there. My constituents have been advised to complain that their children have been molested by their father rather than to allow access to the children. My constituents also say that the formula ought to include an allowance for the cost of travel to work.

My constituents ask for more flexibility. I cannot see the difficulty in allowing more flexibility. Everyone in the House of Commons will have a different motor car insurance policy. Those policies will cover a range of special exclusions, special experiences and the lot. They will cover motor bikes, beginners, old people, young men aged under 23 and the rest of it. Such policies are put into being by a computer system with no difficulty. It may take a year or two to achieve flexibility in the CSA, but the systems are already available and could be used.

My constituents want a faster response to their correspondence and telephone calls. That includes both women appealing to the CSA to be included in the system and men appealing to be excluded. They need to be told more quickly, sharply and precisely where they are and what is going on.

My constituents say that retrospective legislation is destructive. Often, after a clean-break settlement has been agreed, an ex-wife spends her children's inheritance. The money is not used to support the child, as the lawyers intended five, six or seven years before. She has sold the house, the equity has gone, she has gone back on benefit, and her ex-husband is being asked to pay again. We must look into clean-break settlements, not only when they have endured and been fair and reasonable, but when one or other of the parties has taken advantage of them.

Finally, the Child Support Agency and its complicated formula are persuading men not to take promotion, move up the ladder or work harder because they know that any extra income will be creamed off. The formula is debilitating for people who are in business because, with

the CSA as a silent partner, they cannot treat business profits in the same way as they would if it were a family business.

Those are the matters that my constituents have raised with me and about which I have often written to my right hon. and hon Friends on the Front Bench. The majority of my constituents—about 80 per cent.—accept that the CSA is a reasonable and sensible way to ensure that those people who are responsible for children bear that responsibility properly. It would be a disaster if that near-consensus crumbled because of inflexibility and bad administration.

Since the CSA was set up, the amount of money that has gone to children has increased from about £16 a week to about £40. That increase is welcome to the children. I am sure that this debate and the excellent report of the Select Committee, which is to follow, will help to clear the Government's mind and make the CSA more effective.

5.31 pm

Mrs. Jane Kennedy (Liverpool, Broadgreen): First, I must congratulate the hon. Member for Eastleigh (Mr. Chidgey) on his excellent speech and the accomplished way in which he made his debut. When I made my maiden speech about two years ago, precisely four other Members of Parliament were present, apart from the Deputy Speaker, and only my mother and my two children were in the Public Gallery. I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his obvious ability and look forward to hearing him speak again many times.

I listened carefully to what the hon. Member for Calder Valley (Sir D. Thompson) said, but I was somewhat worried about the way in which he began his speech. He said that this is not a controversial debate and that, unusually, there is general agreement today. I warn the Secretary of State, his colleagues and Conservative Members that if they make the subject of this debate party political, it will be to the detriment of the CSA and the children whom we want to help to get through all the mess created by the working of the agency during the past year. I detected a party political tendency in the Secretary of State's speech and in some of the comments his hon. Friends made from the Back Benches—albeit from a sedentary position.

I spoke on the issue when the House debated the report by the Select Committee on Social Security, so I do not want to be too long as I know that other hon. Members want to contribute. The Child Support Agency was set some targets when it began its work about two years ago. Very few of them appear to have been met, as the agency's report makes clear. It appears almost to have met the target for satisfaction. It claims that 61 per cent. of its customers are satisfied with its work and the target that it set out to achieve was 65 per cent., so it has done well in that respect, if not in any other.

If hon. Members, irrespective of the side of the Chamber on which they sit, are voicing the concerns of fathers, or absent parents—however one wants to describe them—it is not because they do not recognise the work that the agency is doing to assist those parents who care. For the most part, they are lone mothers, who are feeling the benefits of the agency's work. We want to articulate the real fears of the many constituents who, for the past year, have been plaguing us with their concerns about the way in which the agency works.

I am one of the luckier Members in this House in that only a small number of constituents have mentioned their worries about the agency to me—four or five at the last count. Other hon. Members have received many more complaints. Judging from those few cases, I am worried about the way in which the agency has been working and must bring one case to the attention of the House—that of Mr. Anthony Howard. I wrote to the Under-Secretary of State about the matter.

I have been working with Mr. Howard, as his Member of Parliament, and trying to help him understand the way in which the agency has calculated the formula and applied it in his case. He is a systems analyst and works for British Telecom. He is used to dealing with complicated formulae —it is his bread and butter and he knows how such things work. He cannot understand why he is unable to work out how the agency has arrived at its final figures in his case.

When the original assessment was made, he came to me in real distress because he felt that it was a serious threat to the well-being of his family. In his case, it was not a second family, as he had married only once. He is required to pay maintenance for a 14-year-old son, whom he had in a previous relationship. As soon as he was made aware of his responsibilities, he undertook to pay maintenance, through a court order, and continued to do so until the CSA became involved.

He was not trying to evade his responsibilities. He took them seriously and still wishes to do so. He is anxious to make the maximum payment that he can afford, without damaging the family that he has created with his wife, which is a long-term commitment. He is worried that the agency's assessment is seriously jeopardising the stability of that marriage and his ability to care for the children he has in that relationship.

After the agency made its assessment, Mr. Howard followed the work of the Select Committee closely—I was a member of the Committee at that time. He read *Hansard* and the Committee's report. In December, that report was presented to Parliament and the Secretary of State and his colleague, the Under-Secretary of State, accepted many of its recommendations. I agree that they went further and we welcomed many of the changes that were made—especially the changes to the formula.

I agree entirely with the Chairman of the Select Committee, my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), who spoke earlier. If we cannot get the formula right and make it work, we cannot save the Child Support Agency in its present form. Things have got so bad that, unless we make the formula workable, easy to understand and simple, it will not stand the test of public support.

What subsequently happened to Mr. Howard was inexplicable. After he had read the Select Committee report and heard what the Government had decided to do in response, he wrote to tell me how pleased he was with the work that had been done. He genuinely felt that, as far as he was able to understand them, the changes would assist him, especially as the child he was paying maintenance for was 14 years old. He wrote thanking me for my work—not that I did a great deal—and was especially grateful to the Select Committee for its work and for the way in which the Government had responded.

The CSA wrote to him in terms that I do not understand. I sent a copy of the letter to the Minister. The agency acknowledged that his payments would be reduced. He expected a reduction of about 25 per cent.

[Mrs. Jane Kennedy]

In fact, the agency then started to use vague phrases. In a letter of 13 June, it tried to explain why Mr. Howard would not receive the 25 per cent. reduction in the maintenance assessment that he had expected. It merely offered the following explanation:

"because a fresh maintenance assessment following Anthony's birthday would not make the maintenance payable significantly different. This is known as the tolerance rule."

The agency offered no explanation of that rule or how it applied to the formula. Mr. Howard, who could be expected to be able to understand such explanations, began to tear his hair out.

The agency cited in another letter that, because Mr. Howard's income was regarded as high and

"in accordance with the principle that children should share in the wealth of the absent parent as if they had continued to live with them",

that also meant that his maintenance requirement would not be reduced. I do not disagree with that principle, but the CSA offered no figures or any explanation for how it had arrived at its assessment. Mr. Howard felt that the arguments that he had presented to me and to the agency over many months had been entirely disregarded.

I recognise that agency staff are working under extreme pressure and I agree with those who have said it is unacceptable that those staff should be attacked at work or at home. Such behaviour is entirely unacceptable in a democracy. The House should be aware, however, that Mr. Howard has been on the receiving end of harassment from agency staff. The Government should recognise that it is not acceptable for people who are already suffering from heightened anxiety because of maintenance problems to receive telephone calls at work while going about their daily business. Those calls were not made to ask for information that had not been provided or for clarification of a particular point—they can only be described as abusive telephone calls. Mr. Howard received calls in which he was asked, "Why have you not completed your standing order? What is the matter with you? It is only £400 a month. Get on with it." That is how agency staff responded to Mr. Howard's correspondence and his efforts and mine to get to the bottom of his case.

I accept that agency staff do not behave like that all the time, but they have done so sufficiently often to cause concern. That is why people get so angry. People are not justified in taking out their frustration on agency staff and I would not seek to condone that, but one must also recognise that such harassment from the staff is also unacceptable.

I know from talking to staff of the agency that their training is very good, so I do not understand why, once they are back in the workplace, they sometimes adopt unacceptable methods, which cannot be condoned. I can only assume that they have been set unattainable targets and that they are working under such pressure to achieve them that they sometimes stoop to methods of which we would not approve.

According to some publicity earlier today, the Secretary of State intended to use today's debate to announce changes in the targets. I did not hear him make such an announcement, but perhaps the Under-Secretary will. I believe that those targets should have been changed when the formula was changed as a result of the Select Committee's report. If the formula is not right and CSA staff are working towards unachievable targets, the agency will not function in the manner that we all intend it to do. That benefits no one—the people we are trying to help or hon. Members, as we seek to implement legislation that works.

5.44 pm

Mr. John Horam (Orpington): Before the CSA was established, all the relevant matters were handled by the courts. Whatever their particular disadvantages, those courts are concerned with justice and are empowered to take account of individual circumstances. When the Government created the CSA, they transferred that sensitive and personal material to a state bureaucracy, which was required to impose a standardised approach. That was a curious thing for a Conservative Government to do.

My hon. Friend the Minister will say that the transfer was necessary because the courts were producing unsatisfactory results. That is undoubtedly correct. They were slow, were inconsistent in their approach and, in particular, left the taxpayer to pick up a huge burden. All those problems obviously had to be tackled. Was it not possible, however, to deal with them directly by passing legislation that required the courts to minimise the call on Government funds? In addition, the Government could have seconded people from the Department of Social Security to chase up absent parents to ensure that they paid what the court had said they should pay. If that had been done, we would have adopted a more modest and less expensive approach to the problem.

I am surprised that that approach was not adopted by the United Kingdom, because it is the basis of the Australian approach, which has been more successful than our own. Stage I of the Australian Child Support Acts of 1988 and 1989 made it clear that the Family Law Act 1975 had been amended to take no account of custodial parents' eligibility for benefit. When the legislation was reviewed—my right hon. and hon. Friends would confirm that that is a continuous process—it was confirmed that the law should not be retrospective in that regard.

That raises another question about this phalanx of British law—it has been made retrospective. That is another thing about which people rightly complain. It is one thing for a group of people to be told, "From here on, if you do this, the consequences will be such and such." The fact that several years of law have been set aside, in circumstances that people could not have foreseen, is fundamentally opposed to traditional notions of British justice.

The fact that the legislation to set up the CSA was rushed through the previous Parliament with remarkable speed is one reason that the various alternatives were not explored thoroughly. The then Prime Minister, Mrs. Thatcher, made her speech to the Pankhurst group on 18 July 1990, and exactly one year later the relevant legislation received its Royal Assent. No Green Paper was published, so it was not possible to have wider consultation with relevant groups and individuals.

Many of us on both sides of the House are deeply critical of our legislative procedures, in particular those of the past few years, which have produced over-hasty legislation with many things at fault. The Child Support Act 1991 was passed unanimously, but, given the fact that

it has had such adverse consequences for many individuals, we must all reconsider it. Individual citizens should not be penalised because of the faults of our legislative procedure.

I support the principle behind the CSA. I do not deny that parents, even though they live apart, should be responsible for their children. It is the methods about which I am concerned. I should like to relate the story of someone who came to my surgery only the Saturday before last. That young man's wife left him. He looked after their two children for at least a year, before, finally, the mother took the children to live with her and another man, 200 miles away.

The father earns £127 a week net and out of that he has to pay £40 in rent; £15 for gas and electricity; £30 for food; £5 for car insurance and road tax; £7 for council tax; £3 for various other items and £20 for petrol to get to work. That totals £120 a week. The CSA wanted £28 a week from that man. As a result of my right hon. Friend's changes in the regulations in February, that £28 was reduced to £18.

In addition, the man is now in arrears and owes the CSA £466. It is demanding a further £5 a week, so he must now pay £23 a week when his net surplus—the money that he has left to pay for everything once he has paid his essential costs—is only £7 a week. No wonder he cannot concentrate at work and breaks down in tears all the time. No wonder he talked about suicide when he came to my surgery only a fortnight ago. I am concerned about such individual cases. Life is now a nightmare for that young man.

Although I fully recognise that none of that is the fault of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State or my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary, who have taken a consistently concerned approach and been considerate in handling matters—I am particularly grateful to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for agreeing to meet a group of people from the Croydon, Orpington and Bromley group against the Child Support Agency, COBACSA for short, organised by Mr. Brian Reavill—none the less, it is the essence of the problem which the House must deal with.

Two or three changes are essential. First, the standard assessment must be widened to take into account other costs such as travel, access and house insurance. Secondly, the formula should, if possible—I agree that a conflict exists—be simplified. It should not take two hours to explain it to the Select Committee on Social Security. Anyone should be able to grasp it quickly.

Thirdly, payments should begin when the assessment is finally settled. The young man that I mentioned faces a total bill of £466. He is being asked to pay just £5 a week, but other people have much greater bills. Not only should the existing power for people to spread payment over a long period be improved, but some of those debts should be cancelled.

Although my hon. Friend would say that that is giving in to people who refuse to pay, it would also take account of people who cannot pay. Because of the problems faced by the CSA, the gap between the time when the initial assessment is made or when people are first written to and a final settlement is much longer than was originally envisaged. Ordinary citizens should not be penalised for the mistakes that we make in the House or civil servants make at our behest.

All those changes should, as far as possible, be made through regulation or administrative order because they need to be made quickly. Obviously, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will want to wait until the Social Security Select Committee has reported, but once it has had its say, action must follow extremely swiftly.

5.52 pm

Mr. Kevin Hughes (Doncaster, North): I am grateful for an opportunity to speak in this debate. From speeches by hon. Members on both sides of the House, it is obvious that we needed to have this debate. People outside can be assured that hon. Members on both sides of the House are fighting for a fair and effective system and to make the Government aware that the system of child support maintenance which they set up is close to collapse.

The country desperately needs a system of securing maintenance for children which works, is fair and takes unusual circumstances into account, which commands the support of parents but which, most of all, benefits children. That children should benefit is essential. The fact that so few have done so is central to the Government's failure.

In my experience, parents on both sides want a system that works. There will always be people who want to avoid their responsibilities and they should be pursued vigorously. Equally, however, many parents want to pay. They want a fair and efficient system that allows them to make and receive regular payments for the benefit of their children. Most hon. Members have had a crop of cases from constituents who feel aggrieved at how the CSA has treated them or are concerned about their ability to cope on the income which they have left. Concerned parents come from both sides—those with care and those who have left the family home.

A parent with care who contacted my office was horrified to learn that she would probably be worse off receiving child support maintenance. As a parent on income support, she was told that her income would be the same but that she would lose other benefits to which income support can be a passport. Parents can lose free school meals, which are worth several pounds a week, school clothing grants, and housing and council tax benefits. My constituent's hopes were built up only to be dashed, and she was potentially far worse off than before.

Many women who have not previously received maintenance but are on income support and receive help from practically no one now find themselves even worse off than before the system was introduced. The Government claim that those were the people they wanted to help. That shows the depth of their failure. Many parents with care on income support, many of whom are women, who may have no savings and manage from week to week, will soon receive no support whatever from the state.

By taking away their income support, the state is effectively denying them the help to which most people are entitled and throwing them to the mercy of their former partners. That does not represent progress for women in our society. If their former partners default and either do not pay or make payments erratically, they will have no money and will be forced into a crisis.

The lengthy procedures for reclaiming arrears and forcing people to pay are fine in theory, but how will those parents and children manage to eat in the meantime without the guarantee of regular payments? How can driving struggling families further into insecurity be considered putting children first? The Government are putting families on even lower and far less secure incomes while claiming that they have done so for their benefit.

[Mr. Kevin Hughes]

That is an appalling attitude. It is little wonder that people have so little respect for the Government when they show so little compassion for individual human circumstances.

Absent parents and sometimes their second families are finding themselves under pressure from the system, especially when they are in unusual circumstances. A constituent of mine has been left with thousands of pounds' worth of jointly incurred debts, but none of the repayments will be taken into account for maintenance purposes. An official of the Government's quango is now telling one of my constituents, "You must pay that amount of money, even though we know that, in reality, you can't afford to do so." The state is literally asking the impossible, yet that man's children will see not a penny piece of that money, as it will be spent on taking his ex-wife off benefit.

We are all aware of cases in which the formula has been inflexible and unresponsive to individual circumstances. The Government must respond to that problem and treat those delicate matters with the sensitivity and common sense that they deserve. They have failed to set up a sensitive and effective system of delivering maintenance because they do not have the welfare of the people involved at heart. Their overriding priority has been to save money first, second and last. By setting the £530 million target in the first year of operation, they gave the CSA a licence to pursue soft targets where maintenance was already being paid rather than first trying to help those who receive nothing.

The £335 million—the figure has now been questioned—that has been saved so far should be benefiting the children, but it is being used as part payment for the Government's economic incompetence. The end result is a system from which many thousands of children will see no benefit at all, and it will take thousands of parents with care—mainly women—out of the income support safety net.

The Government must review the system so that it guarantees that maintenance will be paid regularly and all children will be better off at the end of the day. They must also ensure that there is a right of appeal on both sides when there are circumstances that need to be examined in more detail. It is not good enough to say to people, "Those are the rules. I know that they do not work and have no relevance to your circumstances, but they are the rules". Yet that is what the Government have sought to do and are doing.

The Government cannot be short of evidence. With many letters from hon. Members, charities, pressure groups and individuals who are affected, even they should have worked out by now that a fundamental change to the system is needed. As well as the failure of the system, we have also been faced with the chaos of administration which seems to be rife throughout the CSA and which adds insult to injury for many people who are dealing with personal matters that are often urgent.

In the past few days, one of my constituents found that her case as it stands today has not advanced one iota since November. Last year, when she notified the local office of the change in benefit that she was receiving, the CSA said that the next step was an interim assessment—and the agency said the same thing to my office on the telephone only last week.

In another case, employers were contacted for information when no approach should have been made at all, causing potential problems for the constituent at work. In another case, the new name and address of a constituent and his wife were given to the former partner who had caused a nuisance in the past, despite repeated verbal and written requests that the address should be kept secret.

A catalogue of similar examples of misinformation, incompetence and delay have characterised the experience of many of my constituents with the CSA. Many hon. Members will have cases on their files which have lingered on for months, and many will have shared my experience of writing to the CSA and not having had a reply for more than three months.

The system is close to breakdown in terms of both organisation and support, and that is why I want to see a fundamental review of it. A number of positive suggestions about how the system could be changed could be made to the benefit of all those involved. Many hon. Members who attended the lobby on the Child Support Agency last week will have been impressed by some of the proposals raised there. Certainly the south Yorkshire contingent representing absent parents, second families and parents with care produced a persuasive case for change.

Mr. Frank Field: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way because it allows me to put it on the record that, although the Select Committee received about 5,000 submissions in response to its inquiry, the submission from the South Yorkshire group was by far the best.

Mr. Hughes: I am grateful for that intervention.

It is high time the Government took some notice of the hundreds of letters that they have received on the subject rather than simply passing the buck and evading the issue. They have got the matter dreadfully wrong. They have an absolute duty to act to introduce changes which will address the chaos that they have caused to so many people's lives. The message from my constituents is that we need a fair system but, most importantly, one which delivers benefits to the children and one which can be relied on. I hope that the Government will now hear that message and act on it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): I must remind hon. Members that Madam Speaker has declared that speeches between now and 8 pm shall be no longer than 10 minutes.

6.4 pm

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): Like most speakers in the debate so far, I strongly support the principle that we should have the Child Support Agency. It has almost become commonplace to say that we have a society with too many rights and not enough obligations. Of course, it would be completely empty words if we were to say that obligations will simply be achieved through exhortation and never through the bite of the law. There is no more important obligation in the ordinary way in society than caring for one's own children.

Before I come to some criticisms of the existing system, I shall stress three aspects of which we essentially must keep hold. The first is the principle that, even in the era of artificial insemination and all the other facilities available, every child has two biological parents, and if they are both alive and fit and well, they should both be involved in caring for the child, and not only financially.

Secondly, we are absolutely right to take the maintenance of children away from the courts. It is

outrageous that for years the courts were allowed to get away with dumping two thirds of all cases wholly or largely on the taxpayer. Indeed, if the appeal system is expanded—at present there are limited grounds for appeal—it is essential that it should not go back to the courts.

Thirdly—to reiterate the point made earlier by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State—it is absolutely essential that, if the appeal system is extended, it must be only on a limited number of clearly articulated headings, not some sort of general appeal with weasel words such as "personal circumstances" or whatever, which would simply lead to everyone appealing and the formula being undermined.

I have four criticisms of the existing system—some of them have been aired already. First, the Child Support Agency must be allowed to take account of genuine working costs. Indeed, that is one area where there is room for appeal, because there is an unavoidable element requiring discretion. As other hon. Members have already mentioned this, I shall not dwell on it, but it would be a bizarre anomaly if, just as the Department of Social Security has made the strongest possible commitment—it was reiterated on the wireless this morning by the Secretary of State—to find ways of easing the unemployment trap, we turned a blind eye to the fact that the formula does not take full account of working costs, especially travel-to-work costs, and many absent parents, of which 10 per cent. are women, find themselves paying such sums of money that they are pushed into an unemployment trap.

My second concern rests on the agency's lack of legal bite. At present, I am dealing with a constituent whose former husband applied 10 months ago to have his case assessed by the CSA and, as a result, the court maintenance order which he had paid for many years ceased. For 10 months, the woman has been living on income support while her former husband skilfully evades the system by prevaricating over details. If the CSA eventually manages to sort out a payment for him and he then chooses not to pay it, it will still take several months to get an attachment order on his earnings. We must give the CSA some of the powers which the courts used to enjoy, so that it will be a clear offence if someone fails to fill in forms in a timely manner, gives a false statement of earnings and so on.

My third concern, on which I shall spend a minute or two longer, relates to the failure of the present system, in a different way from that which has been raised by Labour Members, to deliver money to the children. I do not mean the suggestion of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) that there should be some sort of fixed disregard. It seems to be totally wrong that we should end up with a position in which some people are potentially better off with a family split than with it joined together. It would be wrong that in two neighbouring houses there should be a widow on income support and someone on income support whose marriage has broken down with identical family commitments, but the latter enjoys more money than the former.

A curious flaw in the present system is that there is nothing in it to say that the money has to go to the children. There is no way even in principle that an absent partner can chase up a case by appealing if he strongly believes that little or none of the money is being spent on the child.

I know of two almost identical constituency cases of wives running off with other men. Both former husbands were in reasonably well paid jobs, while the women's lovers were and remain jobless. Maintenance was being paid in both cases before the CSA was set up; it has substantially increased the maintenance now, with the result that the women's lovers have been able to enhance their life styles—spending more in the boozer and on various other activities.

In both cases the effect of the increased payments has been that the deserted fathers—at least one of them did not want the marriage to break up—can no longer buy their children the presents and gifts that they used to give them. Both fathers used to give their children clothes, holidays and so on, but they can no longer afford to do that. So the children are suffering, while the new boy friends only stand to gain.

I would not naively suggest that the state should interfere in the budgets of every household—that would be monstrous and unworkable—but absent parents in these more extreme cases should have access to some appeal procedure when it is clear that little or none of their money is going to their children. An appeal procedure should be able to provide them with an order stipulating that, if they give their children gifts in kind, those can be counted against their cash payments. In that way they can be sure that at least some of the money is spent on the children.

My fourth and last point relates to custody, but it fits in closely with the subject of this debate. Before the CSA was set up, I dealt with a bad constituency case involving an agricultural worker whose wife had run away with another man, abandoning him with the three children. Some months later, when their money had run out, the wife and lover realised that the way to acquire accommodation was for the wife to claim custody of the children whom she had abandoned—such is the imbalance in this country's laws of custody that she could easily and quickly do that, even though the children begged to stay with their father and have several times run away to see him.

With other areas of law, most strikingly in the White Paper on housing, it has now been acknowledged that state benefits can create perverse incentives. Teenage pregnancy to gain a council house is offered as an example of this. To some extent, child custody arrangements have always involved a perverse incentive, because they provide an incentive for someone who cynically wants to gain housing. I am sorry to say that I have had to deal with several such cases.

The downside of the good provisions of the CSA, which do ensure that real payments are made, is that they can sometimes add a second edge to this perverse incentive. I am afraid that I am talking about the woman, not the man, because child custody arrangements are biased towards the woman. On top of this possibility of acquiring the family home—regardless of whose name the home was in—the CSA can provide the added incentive of a large income which the woman and the new man can then spend.

Here, then, is a second reason for looking again at our child custody laws. I am aware that I am speaking against the White Paper on divorce law. I believe that we must go back to some of the pre-1969 ideas and ask where some of the fault may lie. If one partner has clearly abandoned the marriage and left the children with the other, that should be a prime consideration when subsequently awarding custody of the children.

I end where I started by expressing strong support for the principle of the CSA. In all the areas that I have described, however, we need reform, and it is important that it comes as early as possible.

6.14 pm

Ms Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar): One would think, after the fiasco of the poll tax which cost the country dear, that the Government would have learnt the lesson that they cannot operate an Act without the support, or at least the acquiescence, of the majority of people in this country if we are to keep our democracy intact.

The Secretary of State has tried to demonise the campaigning groups, implying that they consist of nothing but violent, selfish fathers who do not want to pay maintenance for their children. That is totally untrue. There may be some fathers of that sort, but most members of the campaign network are decent men who care about their children and want to maintain them. The networks also contain single mothers with care and second wives—they are a mixture, not just groups of fathers.

The Government are already trying to reduce the democratic rights of these groups. The latter wanted to hold a rally in Trafalgar square on father's day, but the Heritage Commission banned it on the spurious grounds that large numbers would attend—as, indeed, they would —and that it would be dangerous for the large numbers of children who might be brought across the road. Will that be the pattern for the future when groups who might bring children with them apply to hold rallies in Trafalgar square? I hope not. Will the Government go further, as they did with the poll tax, and bring in bailiffs and imprisonment to deal with the men who cannot find the money to pay the huge debts that have accrued owing to retrospective awards?

Not only are the campaigning networks mushrooming all over the country and holding rallies of thousands of people who are against the Child Support Act 1991, but the legal profession has declared itself against the Child Support Agency and in favour of a court-based system. Even groups of lawyers who deal with family matters and divorce are of that opinion. I believe that we should take their expertise and advice into account.

The voluntary organisations which have thus far supported the idea of a formula are getting more and more worried too. Looking through the voluntary organisations' reports from the end of the first year of the CSA's operation, I find that the Child Poverty Action Group's report lists about 34 changes which should be made to make the formula function more fairly, the National Council for One Parent Families lists about 20 changes, and the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux wants no fewer than 44 changes. Other organisations could add to that number.

It is time the Government realised that the agency is not going to work and that what is needed is a court-based system with an organisation to enforce the maintenance on which the court-based system decides. That would be much more efficient than the discredited CSA, but the Government should attempt it only after widespread consultation with the public. By now, millions of people are aware of the problem of child poverty and are discussing it, and thousands of people have been to meetings to suggest what system they would like—how the Government's system can be improved or done away with and replaced. The Government should therefore consult the public and the campaigning organisations about what can be done, because it is clear that what the Government have done so far is not working at all.

The central question remains the poverty of children. In 1990, Breadline Britain showed the true extent and nature of the poverty of many children in this country; 2.5 million children were living without certain basic necessities, such as three meals a day or being able to take a full part in school activities—despite the fact that many parents went hungry to prevent their children from suffering the stigma of poverty in school.

On Government statistics, 3.9 million, or 30 per cent., of our children were living in households with less than half the average income in 1991. That means that they were living in poverty or on the margins. We need up-to-date figures so that we can compare what happened before the CSA with what has happened afterwards, but the 1992-93 figures have not been published. They have been ready for a long time and the Government have said that they will be released soon. Is it too cynical of me to think that they are being held back until the House rises for the recess? I challenge the Government to publish the figures before the House rises so that we can see what is happening.

The Government must take account of the fact that a man on average wages cannot keep two families. When the Act tries to make him do so, it simply spreads the poverty so that not only the families of single mothers but aiso the second families will live in poverty. The Government must face the reality that a low average wage will not keep two families decently.

The Act was introduced on the pretext that it would alleviate child poverty, but it is doing nothing of the sort. It seems to have become a grubby device to fill the Treasury's coffers. On 2 July the *Evening Standard* published figures showing that less that 2p in every £1 went to parents with care for the benefit of the children. Most of the money went to the Treasury. That may be good for the public sector borrowing requirement, but it is not alleviating the poverty of this country's youth.

Many people have come to see me or written to me in distress because of the activities and demands of the CSA. With the 10-minute restriction on speeches, I do not have time to go into these cases, and in any event it might bore the House as I am sure that many hon. Members have had mailbags full of letters too. In many cases, the CSA is acting illegally by not giving women, and especially single mothers, proper information about their rights. It may also give false information about the right to withdraw authorisation if a woman changes her mind.

My hon. Friend the Member for Doncaster, North (Mr. Hughes) spoke of women being forced back into dependence on former partners with whom they wished never to have contact again. Some of them are even forced into financial dependence on their former partners' second wives, whose income is also taken into account. The Act has caused widespread misery and despair. It has disrupted many relationships which had been painfully rebuilt after the bitterness of separation and divorce, where parents had got together and established some kind of modus vivendi for the sake of the children. That has been shattered by the activities of the CSA.

Single mothers have been threatened with benefit penalties and fathers have often been saddled with huge debts because of the retrospection of maintenance demands. As hon. Members have said, some people have been brought to the point of suicide. The agency has acted with great insensitivity. I have had reports that wives who have been battered by their husbands or threatened by men have been interviewed by a male officer sent by the CSA. That also causes great distress.

The Child Support Agency has been dilatory and inefficient and it must go. The Child Support Act 1991 must also go. We are all concerned about proper maintenance of children and want to do away with child poverty, but this is not the way. The Government must go back to the drawing board. There must be public consultation and a Government rethink.

6.23 pm

Mr. Nigel Waterson (Eastbourne): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak in this debate, not least because—in common, I am sure, with many hon. Members—I have had a substantial number of letters and surgery visits as a result of the introduction of the Child Support Agency. I have discussed the recent visit of representatives from Australia and New Zealand with my hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw), who takes a close interest in these matters. Unfortunately, that discussion gave me little room for hope that, within the next five years or so, matters will improve, as, after six years of the operation of similar legislation in Australia, there are still many complaints about its working.

That is hardly surprising, however, as we are fighting a whole culture which has built up in this country, not least with the encouragement and support of some Opposition Members. As a result, many people assume that at the heart of the way we run our society is the fact that, if people are not minded to pay for the upkeep of their children, the state will pick up the tab.

In dealing with correspondence and surgery cases, it is easy to get a slightly slanted view of the reality. I do not think that I am alone in saying that I have not had many representations from single deserted mothers, many of whom already benefit from the legislation. There has been a well organised and well orchestrated campaign against the Child Support Agency. As we have heard, that campaign has sometimes slipped into violence and intimidation and a kind of strike against filling out forms which are needed for assessments.

Almost all those who visit my surgery or write to me begin with the mantra that of course they support the principle of the CSA, and I am sure that some of them genuinely do, but as one strips away the layers of truth or untruth, one discovers that many do nothing of the sort as they plainly rely on the assumption which has existed until recently that, come what may, there will be state support. The job of hon. Members is to separate the wheat from the chaff before we come here to debate the issue.

We must remember that the balance must be tilted towards deserted parents, of whom we tend to read little in the newspapers and hear little in these debates. Just as important is the taxpayer. At the moment the average person in work pays £15 each working day towards the cost of maintaining the social security system. Those people have children and mortgages and have chosen a traditional family unit. They may have had their ups and downs, like all families, but they have stayed together and met their obligations; yet they are being called upon to pay such amounts.

It does no good to talk about the Treasury taking the benefit, as the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Ms Gordon) did, because the Treasury is another word for the taxpayer. Money clawed back for the benefit of the Treasury benefits the ordinary taxpayer. I was delighted to hear my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security outlining the extent to which benefit fraud is being exposed as a result of the agency's actions. That has certainly been my experience in several constituency cases, and my right hon. Friend's figure of £138 million already recouped was impressive.

No modern industrial state can afford to ignore this problem. In a speech made a couple of weeks ago on the welfare system in the USA, President Clinton spoke about "the toughest child support enforcement measures in the history of this country".

President Clinton, a Democrat president, went on to say:

> "How are we going to do that? First, by requiring both parents to be identified at a hospital when a baby's born. Second, by saying, if you don't provide for your children, you should have your wages garnished, your license suspended, you should be tracked across state lines."

In August last year, the *New York Herald Tribune* said:

> "Seventeen US States now deny driving, professional, fishing and hunting licenses to divorced men who are behind in their child-support payments. In Maine 18,000 'deadbeat dads' owing a total of $150 million were mailed warnings this week from the . . . State Department of Human Services. Licenses to drive, fish, practice law, work as a beautician or in any other state-licensed field are at risk."

[Interruption.] As Opposition Members should know, the problem is not limited to this country, and other countries have different ways of dealing with it.

The changes in the working of the CSA are welcome and Ministers have not ruled out the prospect of future changes. I shall touch on a couple of problem areas that I have identified in my constituency cases. Perhaps my right hon. Friend the Minister will deal with them in his winding-up speech.

The problem of travel costs is particularly prevalent in the south-east, where people often pay substantial sums to travel to and from their place of work, mainly in London. Some even take out a loan for that purpose, which means that they are doubly penalised. I have some sympathy with those people, and I ask my right hon. Friend to look at the problem again. I appreciate that the general question of loans is a difficult one. Very often a divorced father has to set up a new household and borrow money to buy furniture and other things; yet I understand that those loans are not taken into account.

At the other end of the scale, a gentleman came to see me recently—he shall remain nameless—who before his marriage broke up was earning £40,000 a year. He had been paying some £1,000 towards child maintenance. After receiving the attentions of the CSA, he has set up a new business, is no longer making voluntary payments and is claiming that he cannot afford anything, because in the nature of starting a new business, his drawings figure is very low indeed. He seemed quite outraged by my suggestion that he was expecting the taxpayer to subsidise the start of a new business enterprise. As for my somewhat tongue-in-cheek suggestion that, when the business eventually took off and succeeded, he should send a retrospective cheque to the Department of Social Security, the thought had clearly not crossed his mind.

Although that is an extreme example, I appreciate that there are difficult cases. It is difficult to find a rule that would do justice to an extreme case such as that—someone who has given up a well-paid job and is starting a new business—and also to more deserving cases. But the fact remains that the system is necessary and useful. It is a system that is already being applied in a number of other countries. We have heard how Australia and New Zealand

[Mr. Nigel Waterson]

are still fighting to achieve an acceptable system and to make it as practicable as possible. Our job in the House is to ensure that the system works.

Some of the contributions that we have heard from Opposition Members suggest that they would like to see the whole system done away with and a return to the bad old days. The bad old days were totally unacceptable, because they involved a consensual burden being placed on the state and on the taxpayer, with the connivance of the courts. That resulted in an enormous bill for the maintenance of children when in many cases the parents were perfectly able to maintain them in the style to which they had become accustomed. If other changes are to be made to the workings of the Child Support Agency, I am confident that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will consider their merits in due course.

6.32 pm

Mr. Malcolm Wicks (Croydon, North-West): Like many hon. Members who have spoken today, I recognise the importance of this subject. We are talking about one of the most important issues to have arisen in social policy over the past 10 or 15 years. It is important largely because of the force of family changes that are occurring, as has been acknowledged, in many societies such as our own, which mean that more and more children are being brought up by only one parent rather than two.

The evidence from the general household survey shows how rapidly some of those changes have occurred. In 1979, 83 per cent. of children under 16 lived with both their natural parents. By 1991, that figure had declined to 71 per cent. So only seven out of 10 of our children under 16 are living with both their natural parents.

That rapid change, which makes the debate all the more important, is being fuelled by two forces in particular. One is marital breakdown, which probably means that some one in four children under 16 will have mothers and fathers who divorce. The other—a peculiarly British issue in the European context—is the rise of those families headed by the single unmarried mother. It is a particularly vulnerable—certainly very poor—family. The issue of parental responsibility is crucial for the welfare of future generations of children. The futures of literally millions of our children depend on our getting the debate right and fashioning an effective child maintenance policy for children.

Although my own analysis of family change would not be all doom and gloom—a proper analysis would talk about the strengths associated with some changes as well as the insecurities, and proper social policy should play to strengths and not just recognise insecurities—nevertheless, in the context of the debate, we must acknowledge that the revolution of family change, which we have seen over the past 20 years, has not been a bloodless revolution. Although many are affected, including many men, the major victims of that revolution have been women and children.

In handling family change, our approach, implicitly, has been women and children last. I say that because, although I am sympathetic, as are many hon. Members, about the position of the many men who find that they have second family responsibilities, there is a sense in which the debate is affected by a major hypocrisy—we should be spending most of our time worrying about the position of women and children in one-parent families, the families with care, but the debate is becoming increasingly dominated by the interests of men.

There is something strange about that, because we know that, in the past, after a marital breakdown, the men were often not only unaffected financially but were better off, because they no longer had to pay the maintenance for their children. Invariably, the women and children have been worse off. If there were any justice in the debate, about the concern that we feel about the position of men—I share that concern, and we need the Select Committee report to show us how we get the right formula for second families—we would hear rather more about the poverty of women and children.

Although many of those women and children are beginning to come to our surgeries, we are letting the men's agenda dominate the debate. Unless we have the courage—sometimes it requires courage when discussing this with some of those affected by the CSA—as a Parliament to listen hard for the silent voices of poor one-parent families, we will make major mistakes.

The costs of social change are considerable. We must recognise that the debate is so controversial because it highlights questions about the costs of children. Any parent knows that children are very costly, and are increasingly so when one considers the demands of training, education and higher education. One way or another, our society, through partnerships between the family and the state, and perhaps other institutions, must invest more, rather than less, in our children in future. At the moment, the costs of social change and family disruption are being shouldered in the main by women and children through poverty. They are being shouldered negatively.

There is no getting away from the fact that children are costly. The York study, which sought to draw up a modern budget, showed that, for children under 11, a modest but adequate budget per week would be about £59. When one thinks of that, perhaps multiplied by two children and a monthly rate, it is not so surprising that so many absent fathers are shocked by the size of their child support bill. I think that, if parents in this country totalled up the costs of clothing, food, shoes and the rest, or had some Government agency doing that and sending the bill every week, they might well feel that they too would want nothing to do with those costs.

I am making a serious point. The issue highlights the costs of children, and there is no dodging that. The parents should share those costs in an equitable way through a revised formula; the mothers and children pay for it negatively—as I have argued, through poverty—or the state pays it. That is the issue. I am not one of those who talk about the state and the Exchequer—although I was one of the first on the day that the White Paper was published to call it the "Exchequer Support Act"—in some faraway fashion. I know that many poor parents in work in my constituency, struggling on low incomes to bring up their children, have been asked implicitly—perhaps explicitly—to help to pay for other people's children through social security.

Perhaps I may say something with which Conservative Members would not agree. I am one of those people who want a new formula and believe that major reforms must be made, but I regard the key criterion to be the attack on child poverty. I first studied child support legislation in

Australia, where I spent several weeks some years ago. I was struck by the fact that, when Brian Howe, Canberra's Social Security Minister, introduced his child support measure, it was part and parcel of a strategy to attack child poverty. That was important. For that reason, there was a disregard.

In Australia, most of the money collected goes to the mothers and children. When I spoke to Ministers, officials and members of the Australian tax office that does the work of the CSA, I was told that, without the disregard, it would not have been possible to introduce the legislation with the degree of success that it has enjoyed. I know from talking to groups in Australia that it makes a difference to Australian mothers when the dollars come in every week.

I argue for a disregard, but many Conservative Members—some briefed, no doubt, by strange offices in squares nearby—like to challenge Labour Members, and in particular members of our Front Bench, saying, "Where would you find the money?" We are debating a policy that is in deep trouble. It may not exist in a year or two unless it is sorted out and it wins public confidence.

The Government are quibbling about the cost of a disregard—which I acknowledge would be substantial—when that may save the scheme and one day result in a measure that will make sense for children in poverty but also for the taxpayer and other parents. That displays the peculiar short-termism that makes the Treasury so badly fitted to be the lead Department in social policy.

I urge the Government to think again. It should not always be the story of Mrs. Thatcher and the Treasury. We must find ways of making this a decent piece of social policy. We are about cultural revolution. We are about saying to parents, "Whatever the circumstances, you as parents have a long-term responsibility for your child. Yes, there will be a framework of rights"—such as child benefit and one day, I hope, child care and nursery education—"but you have a responsibility." If we are to succeed with that cultural revolution, there must be urgent reform of child support to make it not Treasury or fiscal policy but decent, child-based social policy.

6.42 pm

Mr. Michael Stephen (Shoreham): There are two dimensions to this debate—policy, and the administration of the child support system. I will confine my remarks to policy.

The starting point must be the amount of money each week that the Child Support Agency requires an absent father to contribute. I do not believe that anyone can say that that amount is generous. It is determined by the formula and is much less than the amounts recommended by the National Foster Care Association.

However, the principle behind the legislation is that the child who is not living with, usually, his father should not be confined to income support level but be entitled to benefit from any increased prosperity enjoyed by his absent father, just as if his father were living with him.

Having examined the formula and a large number of constituency cases, as have other hon. Members, I do not believe that it can be argued that the agency is asking absent fathers to pay more than is reasonably required for their children's maintenance.

It is often said that, if a court had been involved in the past and a clean break settlement reached, that should not be disturbed by the CSA. Having practised 15 years at the Bar and been involved in a good many such cases, I can let the House into a secret. Most of those cases were not considered by the judicial mind at all. The lawyers for the husband and for the wife got together and worked out an agreement that was acceptable to both parties, and that was rubber-stamped by the court. Neither the advocate for the wife, nor the advocate for the husband, nor the judge had to consider the interests of the taxpayer. Many orders cannot be left undisturbed, because they failed lamentably to take account of the interests of our constituents—the taxpayers—who fund all the social security benefits.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): Does my hon. Friend agree that a concern shared by many of our constituents is the quality of the scheme's administration? That seems a recurring theme in debates on the agency's operation.

Mr. Stephen: The system's efficient administration is immensely important, but, if my hon. Friend will forgive me, I have only 10 minutes and want to confine my remarks to policy.

A major part of a settlement between a husband and wife would usually be the transfer of the marital home to the wife. In effect, the husband usually transferred not the property but a large mortgage. The wife would then expect the state to pay the interest on the mortgage, which accounts for the lion's share of the monthly payment.

I do not believe that anyone is arguing that we should return to the old system. I remind the House that, under that system, three out of four lone parents received no regular maintenance and where maintenance was paid, it was wholly inadequate. The average payment was £25 a week. Some ex-husbands have come to my constituency surgery and said indignantly, "I have always paid. Why does the CSA expect me to pay more?" When I asked how much they had been paying, one constituent told me that he was paying £25 a week. I replied that I did not think that was very much to support a child these days and he replied, "Three children." Some people have no idea how much it costs to maintain a child these days. If the agency has done one thing, it has brought home to everyone that parenting a child is an expensive business.

Earlier, the question was asked why absent fathers should be expected to maintain their ex-wives as well as their children. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State was right when he said that there was no obligation as such to maintain an ex-wife, but there is an obligation to maintain an ex-wife in her capacity as the carer of the child. If she is unable to go to work to earn her own living because of the need to care for her child, who is to support her—the father or the taxpayer? Clearly, the father must pay in so far as he has the means to support her.

It is said also that the agency is a law unto itself. That accusation should be refuted here and now. Clearly, the CSA is not a law unto itself. It can only do what Parliament has authorised by the Child Support Act 1991, and any officer of the agency who sought to step outside his statutory powers would be brought to account by the courts.

Many absent fathers are, of course, taxpayers, but if everyone who was paying taxes had the right to have his or her children maintained wholly or partly at public expense, the whole system would collapse and no one would get anything.

Reference was made in a derisory way to cases in which fathers are spending money on pet food and say that they

[Mr. Stephen]

do not have the means to pay for their children's maintenance. That is actually a serious point. Does one put the interests of one's dog before those of one's child? Anyone who thinks about that for a moment will know the answer.

It has been suggested that the formula should be adjusted to include the cost of travelling to see the children. From my experience at the Bar, I know that that formula would be open to abuse. There would be arguments about whether the husband had actually been on that particular day. There would be endless disputes between the husband and the wife as to whether the husband was entitled to deduct an amount from his maintenance payments. Rather than going into specific details such as the travel-to-work costs or the costs of travelling to see the children, it is better to have a simple, basic formula that leaves sufficient income in the hands of the parent who is paying, for him or her to discharge those reasonable expenses.

I am conscious that any new scheme, particularly one as ambitious as the Child Support Agency, which has social as well as administrative and political consequences, is bound to produce teething troubles. Those problems have perhaps been worse than any of us expected, but we must not be defeated by that. It is, in essence, a sound system. No hon. Member has suggested that the system is not essentially sound and fair. We must get it right.

I congratulate the Government on responding positively to the Select Committee's report. The Government have made important changes which have benefited absent parents. From the outset, parents with second families whose maintenance liability was less than £60 a week had that liability phased in over 18 months. That phasing has now been applied to people with higher incomes. The protected income level, which ensures that absent parents and their new families stay above income support level, has been increased. Collection fees have been abolished in many cases.

Absent fathers sometimes ask why the CSA becomes involved when they have a reasonable maintenance agreement with their ex-wife which has been operating well. As I understand it, the CSA does not become involved in those cases. It becomes involved only if a party is on benefit, or asks it to become involved. If I am wrong, I should be grateful if my hon. Friend the Minister would correct me. Another amendment that has been made is that, as the children become older, the amount payable to maintain the parent with care is progressively reduced. Clearly, the parent who has care of an older child is more able to earn his or her own living than a parent caring for a young child.

The Select Committee is continuing its valuable work, and we all look forward to reading its report. I have no doubt that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will give that report serious consideration and bring before the House those changes to the system that he considers necessary.

6.52 pm

Mr. Mike Hall (Warrington, South): My reading of the debates that took place before the Child Support Act 1991 shows that they were based on two discussions: first, that absent non-paying fathers should contribute to the maintenance of their children, with which everyone in the House will agree; the second underlying theme of the debate was that we should try to tackle child poverty. I used to think that there was a hidden agenda and that the Child Support Agency might bring money to the Treasury that could be used to reduce either the public purse or taxes. That argument was introduced at a late stage.

The Government's amendment states that the Government

"reaffirms its support for the principle, to which the Child Support Act 1991 and the Child Support Agency give effect, that parents should support their children where they are able to do so".

There is no distinction between non-paying fathers and paying fathers with care of children, but that distinction is important.

If there were any truth in the suggestion that Conservative Members were concerned about the tax bill on those least able to pay, the Government would not have introduced the 8.5 per cent. value added tax on fuel at the last Budget, and they would not be contemplating increasing it to 15 per cent. in the next one. If the Child Support Agency were targeting non-paying absent fathers, half of today's debate need not have taken place, because that aim has the support of all hon. Members.

But the fact that the CSA targets parents who have consistently paid generous support for their children has clouded today's debate. That aspect of the CSA is getting in the way of the marginal benefits that could accrue to parents who currently have care of their children. The CSA is clogged up with bureaucracy, because people are using all the means they can to delay its effects. If the Government had tackled absent, non-paying fathers, that would not have happened.

Mr. Stephen: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hall: No, I shall not give way, as I only have 10 minutes and I must make progress.

The marginal benefits have been stopped.

When I listened to the Secretary of State today, I waited for him to say that there were still major problems for the CSA and that he was announcing measures to alleviate some of them. However, I heard nothing of that sort from the Secretary of State for Social Security, whose message was the usual one of wait and see—a recipe for doing nothing about the problems of the CSA. The message that the Secretary of State gave to all families and second families facing poverty was that he was not prepared to listen to their arguments and announce changes to CSA today. The message was that the Government are clearly trying to tough it out.

The Government's amendment states that the House

"acknowledges the continuing concerns over child support issues and therefore welcomes the Government's commitment to continue to keep the scheme under scrutiny and to bring forward further changes should these prove necessary."

The hon. Members for Orpington (Mr. Horam), who is not present now, and for Calder Valley (Sir. D. Thompson, who is also not present at the moment, gave many reasons why action was needed on the CSA.

The idea of retrospective action is wrong. Before I became a Member of Parliament, I believed that Parliament could not legislate retrospectively on tax issues. But all those involved in the system of paying maintenance to children are having their circumstances looked at again, which is wrong. Fathers who have consistently paid for their children's welfare are finding that the agreements that were reached in court are being ripped up. The CSA is

replacing agreements made in court with other agreements that ignore the generous financial settlements that were originally made.

There is one case about which I have written to the Under-Secretary of State—I am glad that he is present. One of my constituents agreed in a clean-break settlement to give all his equity to his wife, together with the contents of the house and the car. He paid the endowment insurance on the mortgage. He pays all the household bills and a second loan for double glazing. On top of that he pays £142 a month in maintenance to his children. The CSA took over the agreement and imposed an increase, bringing the child maintenance up to £250 a month. That father was not avoiding his responsibilities, but was totally committed to the children of his first marriage—a fact that was ignored by the CSA.

The financial calculation that has been mentioned by other hon. Members is too mechanistic and is not based on ability to pay. Another fundamental problem with the CSA is the false concept that men who are divorced and who have second families or partnerships have disposable income that they can pay to the CSA. There should be a more sophisticated mechanism to deal with the financial calculation. The Government could then say that they had listened to the arguments and were trying to do something to deal with the problem.

I am extremely worried about current families—to use the jargon, new families. I do not know whether they are new or current, but I know that some of my constituents tell me that, because of the actions of the CSA, they and their partners are unable to provide the basic means of support for their current families. That is clearly causing distress throughout the country, not merely in my constituency of Warrington, South, which is quite affluent and prosperous.

I know of no other Government policy related to benefit in tax that charges people for the so-called privilege of having their means assessed. One of my constituents, who was already paying maintenance to his former partner, was contacted by the CSA. The agency worked out the calculations and found that my constituent was paying the right maintenance. It charged him £44 for the privilege of knowing that what he was doing was in line with what the CSA had outlined.

The most fundamental problem, however, is that the agency does not attempt to deal with child poverty, which we should be trying to eradicate; indeed, that concept is completely ignored. The Government's original estimate that the agency would collect some £530 million, of which £480 million would be recycled back into the Treasury, shows how little extra money would have gone back to the children. According to the latest assessments in the agency's annual report, about £418 million has been saved for the Treasury—but how much extra money has gone to children whose parents are divorced and subject to the attentions of the CSA? I can find no mention of that in the report; perhaps the Minister will tell us precisely how much they have been given in this fiasco.

Let me say directly to the Minister that the system would be much fairer if it were seen to be fair. If an independent appeal tribunal were there at the end of the process, half the Government's current problems would disappear. If that tribunal had the ability and the discretion to re-examine the issue and make a fairer assessment, more people would be willing to go through the process: they would have confidence in the independent tribunal, and would pay what they were eventually asked to pay. That would remove the Government's three main problems with the Child Support Act, and by refusing to adopt such a course they do themselves a disservice.

Families are now considering the possibility of separation because of the bills being forced upon them. My constituents are afraid that they will have to pack in their jobs, or that their businesses will fail, because they cannot afford the settlements. Some tell me that the problems are causing friction between the children of their first and second partnerships. Families are being forced against each other, which surely was not the purpose of the CSA. Men are even contemplating suicide.

Another issue has not been mentioned. I am convinced that custody hearings following divorces will now be contested because of the CSA's actions. On television this morning, the Secretary of State said that the Government would build on the CSA's successes. I have seen no successes, and I should like to think that the Government would listen, recognise the agency's failures and remedy its problems.

Conservative Members must make a choice when it is time to vote this evening. They can accept Labour's motion, which asks the Secretary of State to act on the CSA's failures—in other words, they can do something positive—or they can join the Government in the Lobby, and vote to do nothing. Clearly, they should put their constituents' interests first on this occasion and vote with Labour.

7.2 pm

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): I am grateful for the opportunity to follow the hon. Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Hall), not least because—as frequently happens when we sit on the Public Accounts Committee—I agree with a great deal of what he says. Like many hon. Members on both sides of the House, I have encountered cases in my constituency which lead me to believe that there is a clear choice between the motion and the amendment.

Many hon. Members have identified failings in the workings of the Act and the formulae adopted by the CSA. The choice is this: do we need to wait for a further indeterminate time for those failings to be corrected, or do we need to send the Government a signal that at least some of them can be corrected now? I feel that some of my constituency cases—which I have been examining for many months, while still awaiting any sign of positive movement to correct the obvious failings of the formula —have already lasted too long.

I shall refer to cases by initial letters and summary addresses, but I have conveyed the full details in a letter to my hon. Friend the Minister so that they are available to him and his officials. The first—which illustrates a couple of points that are becoming increasingly important—is that of Mr. H of Stoke Gifford. He and his wife separated about three years ago, when they made the great mistake of not being clairvoyant. The arrangements that they made for the care of their children, for who should take over existing debt and for who should pay the costs of the divorce were made under the existing law; the changes introduced by the Child Support Act and the agency have made their lives virtually impossible. Moreover, arrears of payments under the CSA's order now exceed £3,000, which is a great deal for someone on a moderate income.

[Mr. Michael Stern]

That couple made two mistakes. First, they accepted that the legal fees resulting from a fairly acrimonious divorce should be paid by the absent parent—in this case, the father. Unfortunately, such decisions are not acceptable to the CSA. The legal fees for both parties, payable by the absent father, amounted to some £7,000. Although it is possible and, indeed, legal for the CSA to say, "You must reschedule the debt: we come first," the lawyers to whom the money is owed do not necessarily agree.

I never expected to see such a case, at least under a Conservative Government. I never expected, following the making of a legal contract when the law operated in a particular way, to see the wherewithal to fulfil that contract being retrospectively removed from one party. I do not consider that acceptable in any branch of English law. Indeed, I found myself in a certain amount of trouble when we were debating the Finance Bill last year and—using an only partially transparent device—I exposed the Labour party's desire to introduce retrospection into tax law. I find that no more acceptable than the introduction of retrospection into the contract by means of the Act.

Mr. Stephen: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Stern: I am afraid that I have no time.

The second mistake made by that couple setting up their settlement before the Act came into force was to assume that the absent parent would look after the children for as many days a year as he could. Unfortunately, because of their circumstances, that amounted to only 87 days. Of course, the husband should have been clairvoyant and realised that anything under 102 days did not count; nevertheless, according to the arrangements that he made with his ex-wife and wishes to observe, he continues to look after the children for 87 days and to bear the costs.

Indeed, he often bears more than he should. One of the agreements that he made with his ex-wife was that he should purchase more of the children's clothing. Of course, none of that is of the slightest account under the current formula: inevitably, the absent parent builds up arrears on arrears while seeing no hope of doing anything about it under the present law. As I have said, I find it difficult to envisage a Conservative Government introducing what is effectively retrospective legislation.

The second case to which I want to refer concerns Mr. G of Bradley Stoke, who is a police officer. Regrettably, police officers—like Members of Parliament—are probably more prone to marital difficulties than those in many other professions. I am told that, in the case of police officers, that is due to the stress involved in their work.

In this case, the officer concerned was presented with a huge bill for arrears and was told that, unless he did something about it fairly quickly, there would be an attachment of earnings order. Inevitably, because of the standards of conduct demanded of police officers, he would have to leave the force: police officers, rightly, are not permitted to get into debt of that nature unless they have serious proposals for dealing with it. The debt was so large that he could not have dealt with it.

A fortnight before the agency's action was due to take effect, the agency discovered that it had made a mistake and that there was no debt. Fortunately, the police officer did not face that extreme difficulty, but it caused me to wonder why a Conservative Government are putting the careers of serving members of the police force—public servants, whom I greatly respect—at the whim of an impersonal and inaccurate agency. That is unacceptable.

The final case to which I wish to refer involves a Mr. P. of Filton, who received an assessment from the CSA and was foolish enough to calculate, on the basis of that assessment, that he could just about afford to take out a second mortgage to provide an adequate house for his second family and pay his obligations to the first. He duly went ahead and purchased the property, only to discover a few weeks later that the agency had made a mistake. My attempts to get the CSA to acknowledge the horrendous financial tangle that it has created for that gentleman have so far been met with the response, "There is nothing we can do about it."

We have created a monster and it is not sufficient to say, as the majority of hon. Members have said, that we shall get round to tackling it in time. The agency is causing real hardship and we are entitled to expect the Government to take more radical action to deal with it.

7.11 pm

Mr. Elfyn Llwyd (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): I have some sympathy for the Under-Secretary, who carries the most poisoned chalice in the history of the House. In previous debates, the hon. Gentleman said that he did not think that the investigative powers of, for example, the civil courts are such as to ensure that all available financial and other information could be disclosed to enable the setting of an accurate and fair figure for child maintenance. As I said before, that is a slur on the courts—and I speak as a practising lawyer with more than 15 years' experience in matrimonial law and practice.

The Government's attitude has rightly outraged lawyers and judges. The Government had previously displayed their mistrust of the legal system, and said that the Child Support Agency brought with it far greater uniformity in terms of approach and results. I venture to suggest that that is a double-edged claim. The sheer inflexibility of the process is bringing it into disrepute. Under the courts system, there were often substantial variations, but—this is the crux of the matter—they reflected the way in which courts considered the minute detail of each couple's circumstances. Naturally, those circumstances varied widely, which produced different results.

Some absent parents have to spend a good part of their free income on travelling to work and purchasing a vehicle to do so; others do not. Some absent parents will have contact orders that enable them to have weekly contact, with the financial commitments that they bring; others do not. Such variations mean that a substantial charge may be placed on a person's income. A just system, employing the necessary flexibility to meet the requirements of each case, must take those and other factors into account.

This afternoon, I was interrupted by Madam Speaker when quoting from the report of the Select Committee on Social Security. Let me again quote what the chief executive said:

> "We do not have discretion in relation to the size of the maintenance bill. We operate according to an administrative formula."

She went on to detail the glorious appeal system, which, to say the least, operates slowly.

Investigative powers are at a premium under the new system. The husband of a constituent of mine, Mrs. Susan Macnally from Tywyn, left her in August last year, taking

with him pass books and documents providing access to the family capital. Their investments totalled £12,000 and he had recently benefited to the tune of more than £20,000 as a beneficiary under an insurance policy. He left on 16 August, and on 18 August Mrs. Macnally reported his departure to the Department of Social Security and the Child Support Agency, making it clear that he had access to all their capital. Shortly afterwards, I sent the agency photocopies of the investment books and full details of the case, which would have satisfied any court of law. Incidentally, Mrs. Macnally gave her husband's current whereabouts as well.

Weeks later, the agency informed me that, when he completed the agency's form, the husband had no capital or investments. I wonder where the investments went. He said that he had no money, and the agency was blissfully satisfied. What a way to run a system! To add insult to injury, in May, the husband was refused a legal aid certificate in relation to the divorce on one of two grounds —either he had too much capital or he had too much income.

I do not know what the agency is up to or whether it is trying to do the job. I do know, however, that one lady in my constituency is desperately unhappy. She looks after her two teenage children but does not receive a penny piece from her estranged husband. That cannot be right. That is one of many examples that hon. Members can cite.

Should the current system therefore be preferred to the courts, which have come in for some grotesquely unfair criticism in this debate? I do not speak from any standpoint of vested interest when I say that I have heard time and again that the courts somehow connived at transferring financial responsibility for the family on to the state. To my great surprise, some of the hon. Members who made those allegations professed to be lawyers. If that is so, they should know that registrars in the county courts—latterly, district judges—have long since been subject to practice directions, going back five or six years, which specifically constrained such action. Clean-break orders were introduced to ensure that that did not happen.

I have previously spoken at length about clean-break orders. I understand that perhaps the Government now propose to take action on that—I certainly hope so. If a person divests herself or himself of all capital to ensure that a child has a roof over its head, the system should take account of it. If recent press reports are to be believed, the Government are at long last dealing with that important anomaly, and it is high time that they did. Will the Under-Secretary give an assurance that there will be movement on that issue?

In opening the debate, the Secretary of State for Social Security said that he was open to suggestions on how the value of property should be assessed—at the time of transfer or concurrent value. He went on to say that in many cases no valuations had been prepared for clean-break orders. I can enlighten him on the matter. In each and every case involving a clean-break order, a valuation is made and a redemption figure is set for the mortgage—ergo, the figure for the equity. If the Secretary of State's facts are untrue, it makes one wonder about the quality of the latest review.

As I said, more flexibility should be introduced into the present system. Standard formulae may be fine for many things, but they cannot produce fair results when there are so many individual variants, which may be extremely telling. I question whether the agency is capable of fixing maintenance. It has no experience in that matter, and the way in which it has operated leaves a lot to be desired. Clearly, the system is too rigid, and grossly unfair on many thousands of people throughout the United Kingdom.

Like Members of all parties, I of course do not argue with the principle that, if an absent parent can afford it, he or she should be the first to maintain the children. However, I am also acutely aware of the fact that the present rules discriminate against the children of second marriages or second unions, where fathers or stepfathers have to pay hundreds of pounds a month more than they can afford. Why should the children of those unions suffer when they are as innocent and as deserving as the children left behind? Is it right for second partners' incomes to be taken into account in any event?

I endorse what the hon. Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) said about police officers, but would extend it to members of the armed forces who are in a not dissimilar position. They are also having a very difficult time, which, as the hon. Member said, is not of their own creation. I hope that the Government will take on board what has been said and reconsider the position of those serving in the armed forces.

Why should the Government recover more than they pay out in income support? What is the basis for that?

I conclude with one or two general points that I hope the Minister will take on board. Full housing costs need to be allowed for, including any endowment assurance element of mortgage payments. The Government have made clear their view on pensions, and I believe that pension payments should be taken into account. It has been said that the cost of transport to work should be considered, especially in the south-east. I can assure the House that it is even more of a problem in rural Wales—and, I am sure, rural Scotland.

The cost of exercising the right to contact one's children should also be borne in mind, or the children will again be the innocent victims. The carer element should be substantially reduced if an ex-wife remarries, is cohabiting or is caring for an additional child or additional children.

To their credit, the Government have already made some changes to the Act, largely in response to the report published by the Select Committee on Social Security, but I ask them to consider the Act anew, because many thousands, if not millions, of people throughout the United Kingdom are being hurt by it. Many millions of children are suffering badly at the hands of the Government. The time has surely come—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order.

7.21 pm

Mrs. Marion Roe (Broxbourne): I have listened carefully to all the contributions to this debate, from which two major points have emerged. First, this is a highly emotionally charged issue, because we are dealing with the breakdown of relationships between individuals, and one can claim that each will have an axe to grind. Secondly, as my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Waterson) said, the constant theme that emerges from our deliberations is that most hon. Members appear to support the principle of the Child Support Agency although there is frequently a "but" which then undermines and destroys the whole structure of the scheme.

[Mrs. Marion Roe]

During a previous debate on the CSA, I spoke in support of lone carers and their children, because it seemed to me that there was no balance in the arguments being advanced —the voices heard were nearly always those putting the case for the absent parent. I think that the same is true today.

On 29 March, I sponsored a meeting in the House for the National Council for One Parent Families, to provide an opportunity for the case of the lone carer to be heard and the other side of the story to be considered. I regret that very few colleagues from any party attended, yet when the absent parent lobby took place here some weeks earlier, every Labour Member seemed to pass through. One might conclude that only those who shout the loudest will be heard and believed.

One of the main concerns of lone parents is that they do not have the resources to organise themselves to mount a campaign in favour of the CSA. They do not have the money or the contacts or the access to telephones, faxes and cars enjoyed by many absent parents. They do not have the time or the means to go on marches and demonstrations; they are on their own, often isolated and vulnerable.

The threat of suicide by absent parents has been mentioned by a number of hon. Members. Lone carers are incensed by the media hype of "CSA suicides". They tell me that it is a luxury that is not open to them even though many feel despairing—their children rely on them too much for them to threaten or commit suicide. I draw the House's attention to an article in *The Sunday Times* on 27 March, which showed that the CSA was cleared of responsibility for suicides which had been blamed on it. Many of the cases outlined in the press were not accurate but wholly misleading.

There is no doubt that lone parents welcome the CSA and the fact that they might finally receive appropriate maintenance for their offspring. Why? Because all the evidence shows that, whereas lone parents and their children sink deeper into poverty after separation, absent parents quickly recover their former standard of living. Lone carers and families on income support want the CSA to deliver; they do not want the Government to give way any further.

There has been endless debate about the hardship caused to second and third families, but there has been little or no discussion about the hardship experienced by one-parent families. Many of the huge maintenance payments about which absent parents are worrying are in fact interim assessments that have been imposed because they have failed to co-operate with the agency.

Lone parents are convinced that the negative effects of the changes last February have not been fully appreciated, and that any further changes to benefit the absent parent will push lone parents and their children further into poverty. For example, in cases where the CSA has effectively delivered higher maintenance to lone parents, it has clearly given them the first opportunity in a long time to return to work and make plans for themselves and their children. Unfortunately, for many, the decision to return to work has now been seriously undermined by the February reforms, all of which resulted in a reduction of the maintenance due to one-parent families.

Shortly after my contribution to the previous debate in the Chamber on the CSA, I was subjected to a barrage of letters from absent parents and their current spouses or partners. Some politely admonished me for standing up for lone carers, but others were abusive and vicious. It appeared that a carefully contrived campaign was being orchestrated against me, almost to the point of harassment.

I was therefore interested to read in *The Independent* of 20 June 1994 an article by Yasmin Alibhai-Brown, in which she described the unbelievable persecution that she encountered from absent parents and their friends. She explained that, within 24 hours of starting to research her article, her telephone was virtually jammed with unsolicited calls, mainly from second partners telling her their side of the story. When she asked one caller why she was doing this, the woman said that she had been told to ring her. When asked by whom, the woman said:

"Well we have this network and this is what we do when we hear when somebody is writing about the CSA and we don't want you to say things like 'These whingeing men' and that."

The article goes on to describe further persecution tactics inflicted not only on the reporter but on CSA staff. As a result of my own experience, I believe everything that she says. It seems that intimidation and thuggery are par for the course in this business. I think that colleagues should be aware that there are people in the anti-CSA campaign who are determined to get what they want at any price.

I should like to cite an example of the wholly unacceptable pressure being placed on lone carers by absent parents to destroy the CSA's work. I have here two draft letters recommended by an anti-CSA organisation. The intention is for absent parents to persuade the carers of their children to sign them, thus withdrawing authority for the CSA to continue their application. The first instructs the sender to "Put in own address", "Put in date", and "Put in CSA Address". It reads as follows:

"Dear Sir

I hereby withdraw my authority to pursue my ex-husband/wife . . . Mr./Mrs. . . . for any monies. The reason is the distress that is being caused to my child/children, as he/she/they . . . are obviously aware of what is happening to their father/mother . . . This also affects myself and my ex-husband, as we are both upset whenever our child/children . . . are. This and the fact that the MAF that I filled in was misleading in its content, and asking me to sign under duress.

I even get comments such as, 'I'm not having children when I grow up, they're too much trouble.' Your actions are actually causing some problems that will only resolve themselves in the future, and who knows what damage this will do to young minds. If you are causing children to blame themselves for what is happening to their parents, then can you really feel you are doing a good job, I no longer can, so I must ask you to stop hounding my ex husband/wife immediately. Yours faithfully."

The instructions continue:

"Sign and send . . . only enter the words applicable . . . put in ex-partner's name. Send the above as a hand-written letter, but keep a copy. Send it Recorded Delivery, so you have proof of sending. Amend anything that will help explain your own circumstances more clearly."

The second letter reads:

"Re: Child Support Act.

I am writing with reference to the forms which I recently completed, giving authority for the Child Support Agency to review, on my behalf, the maintenance payments made to me by my former partner.

I now wish to inform you that I am withdrawing this authority with immediate effect, and do not wish the CSA to take any action in my case. This is because I am opposed to the way in which the Act is operating, and believe that the involvement of the CSA will have a detrimental effect on the welfare of my children.

I understand that this withdrawal of authority may lead to a reduction in my personal benefit of up to 20 per cent. for six months and 10 per cent. for a further 12 months. I am willing to accept this reduction in order to allow my children to continue to have a relationship with their father/mother.

Please therefore discontinue all action in this case immediately.

Yours faithfully".

Those are the draft letters being sent out for absent fathers to get the lone carer to sign.

With the sample letters goes a briefing which states clearly the way in which an absent parent can manipulate the system. It says that the lone parent, by refusing to give authority, will be at most £8.80 per week worse off and that that can be alleviated by the absent parent helping out by buying more clothes and so on. How very misleading that is! Not every absent parent provides anything like as much as all those extras. In addition, there is no obligation on an absent parent to make up the £8.80 to £9.14 difference, and the parent with care has no comeback on the absent parent if he or she does not do so. It is claimed that this contrived declaration has been used successfully in the Fylde area. Such a tactic should be made known in the Chamber. I hope that those who are perpetrating it will stop doing so.

7.31 pm

Ms Rachel Squire (Dunfermline, West): I sympathise with some of the points made by the hon. Member for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe), but I do not share her belief that the Child Support Agency is addressing the whole area of child poverty in the way that seems to have been her experience. From my experience and contacts with many lone parents, I know that they have certainly not found themselves better off as a result of the CSA, because many of them are on income support and remain at that income level whatever the actions of the CSA. They are not able to come off income support and go out to work because the low wage that they would get from the part-time work available is not sufficient to cover the costs of child care, let alone all the other essentials.

I too take this opportunity to raise some constituency cases, and to raise them directly in the Minister's hearing, rather than being fobbed off with yet another letter referring me to Ros Hepplewhite. I raise these cases because I too want to emphasise the widespread and justified criticisms of the financial rules and administration of the Child Support Agency.

Like all hon. Members who have spoken so far, I believe that every parent has a responsibility for his or her child, and that that includes a financial responsibility. I echo the remarks made by the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Llwyd), especially those about the armed services. I have a considerable number of armed services personnel and retired service personnel in my constituency.

I certainly support the points made about the need to reform the CSA, the need to reform the financial formula, the need to introduce an independent appeal procedure, and the need to recognise the contribution made by the parent who no longer has care to the provision of what was once the family home. I also support the points that have been made about the disregard of income support.

I now raise directly some of the cases with which I have dealt. The first is the case of a gentleman from Rosyth who writes to me:

"Since my separation I have willingly paid £130 per month, which is the maximum I can afford and still afford to travel to work and keep a roof over my head".

He is now being asked to pay an extra £114 a month. He continues by saying that if he has to find that money, he will not be able to afford to carry on travelling to work. He feels that he would be better off giving up work in that case.

The second case is of a constituent from Crombie who contacted me several months ago to tell me that, after he had paid the maintenance being asked for, all essential bills, travel-to-work expenses, housing insurance and heating, he would be left with the princely sum of £6.49 a week on which to live. He was upset that his travel expenses were not taken into account because he had made the deliberate decision, when he and his wife separated and she moved to west Fife, that he, too, would move to west Fife to be close enough to his children to be able to see them during the week after school as well as to have them regularly at weekends. That involved making an 80-mile round trip to work and back every day of the week, but that was not taken into account, and nor was his regular contact with his children, as it did not quite go over the 104 nights level.

The third case is that of a fireman from one of the west Fife villages. He is being asked to pay £82 a week from a net income of £141 a week. Again, he now has a second family and he is the sole breadwinner in that family. As other hon. Members have said, such cases highlight the immediate need for change to the financial formula. It is not only Opposition Members who are asking for that. The National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux has pressed for several changes to be made to the rules, on which other hon. Members have touched.

There is also a widespread view about the need to ensure that there is an independent right of appeal. So far, I have had only one constituent who has found the appeal process to be effective, and in his case the assessment was reduced by the grand total of £5 a week. Opposition Members feel that there needs to be an independent appeal procedure.

Many hon. Members have raised the point about capital settlements. My constituent from Crombie who moved to west Fife to be near his children is one of many who, when the home was sold for £40,000, left his wife £30,000 and the furnishings to try to enable a suitable home to be set up for his children. That has not been taken into account. Other hon. Members have also raised the whole question of the interests of the children and whether the agency is in their interests or whether the operation of deduction from the level of income support is leaving families no better off, if not worse off.

I have recently come across a case in which the Secretary of State is apparently refusing to use his discretion to involve the Child Support Agency under section 6 of the Child Support Act 1991. A constituent who had separated from his wife and was told that he had a maintenance assessment form to complete found that his ex-wife was both working and claiming income support. He has reported that, but he still finds himself and his actions being apparently disregarded by the Minister and no discretion being exercised.

I join other hon. Members in expressing my complete dissatisfaction with the administrative delays that have occurred. To mention just one of many, a constituent had a maintenance assessment last February. His wages fluctuate—with performance-related pay, and so on, and overtime. He wrote asking for a review on 28 February. He was told last Thursday—30 June—that the agency had not

[Ms Rachel Squire]

got to the top of that pile yet: it was still dealing with letters from January. In the meantime, deductions are being made from his wages at source on the original assessment.

I conclude that, while none of us disputes the aims of the Child Support Agency, least of all our constituents—both men and women have largely raised anxieties about the way in which it operates—it is important to ensure that it is seen to operate in a more fair, reasonable and just way than it currently does.

7.40 pm

Mr. Oliver Heald (Hertfordshire, North): I can certainly go some way with what the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Ms Squire) said about some of the administrative difficulties with the Child Support Agency. There have been problems partly because the agency has been overburdened, partly as a result of the actions of some of those who oppose it and partly because it perhaps needed more staff than it initially had. It is only right to mention to my hon. Friend the Minister two examples of the difficulties which can damage public confidence in what is otherwise a very important and useful system.

One lady in my constituency had been receiving maintenance regularly. Her former husband arrived on the doorstep with a letter from the CSA saying that he was entitled to £30 repayment. There was a scuffle on the doorstep, the police were called and an unpleasant incident took place. The following morning a letter arrived from the CSA saying that the former husband should have the money repaid to him at the rate of £1 a week. He had thought that he was entitled to his £30 immediately. If the letter had been clearer and a little more thought had been given, that difficulty and the incident on the doorstep would not have occurred.

Another recent example involved a police constable who had agreed to pay some arrears off at the rate of £19 per month. Two months later he received a letter saying that £300 per month had not been paid for two months. His ordinary monthly payments had been set against the arrears, in breach of the agreement that had been reached. When he took the matter up with the agency he was told that the file had been lost. Such problems do nothing to help the agency to establish itself.

It is right that the Social Security Select Committee, which is reviewing the issue, should have its report seriously considered by the Government. Its first report showed the way to make some important changes for the better. My constituents who are members of the North Herts Campaign for Fair Maintenance, particularly the two chairmen, Mr. Etienne and Mr. Howe, have submitted evidence to the Select Committee. I am sure that they are confident that their thoughtful contributions will be fully considered by the Committee and also, if those points form part of the recommendations, by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, who has throughout dealt with the issue with courtesy and great care.

Having criticised the work of the CSA to some extent, we should recognise that the duty to contribute is a duty to contribute fully: it is not a duty to contribute as much as one feels one can afford, given one's current standard of living. My experience as a lawyer for many years dealing with divorce cases was that there was a difference between the expectations of men and the expectations of women when it came to divorce. The women almost invariably expected to have a difficult time and to struggle by on a low income. They expected and always have expected that the man would often be unreliable in paying his maintenance. So the mother always wanted to have the home. In any agreement they always said, "Get me the home because that is some security for me."

The men had a different attitude. They were always extremely anxious to maximise the income available to them for the future. That was partly because they knew that it was extremely unlikely that they would have the home available to them for the future, so they knew that it was in their direct best interests to maximise their income. We would thus arrive at the court, with both parties on legal aid, and we would cut a deal which satisfied both parties: the wife would get the house and the man would get his income.

The principle in law is that one can never have a clean break from children, but in practice all too often the husband would receive an order to pay an unrealistically low level of child maintenance and the wife would receive no order, so both parties would achieve their aims at the expense of the state. I see the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) semi-nodding: when he said that the old system was a mess and unworkable, he was right. All hon. Members should accept that it was important to go to this new system and to make it work.

When the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Ms Gordon) said so graphically that one income would not satisfy the needs of two families, she was right to an extent. That is particularly so if both parties retain the same high expectations for their living standards. One of the points that my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) made was that the husband should have a right of appeal on the basis that the money was not being spent on the child. But all husbands say that. In my experience of such cases, they always point to the wife and say, "She has got a video machine." He forgets that the children watch the videos and that he has a video machine in his current home. Both machines are probably on hire purchase. So such a system of appeals would not be a sensible route for us to take.

It is important that we recognise that the principles behind the CSA and the amounts of money being delivered are right, and that both are equally important. It would be wrong if the result of any review were to reduce the amount of money going to mothers. They require that income. It is wrong to say that we are simply replacing benefit with income. To a mother who wants to go out to work, as so many mothers with small children do, a raft of maintenance at a high level is vital. If we reduce the amounts of maintenance too low, we shall stop women doing what they want to do in many cases, which is to go out and work part time and help to support themselves.

Nor is it right to make the point which was made by the hon. Member for Doncaster, North (Mr. Hughes) that it is wrong to take mothers out of benefit because they lose their passport to other benefits. It has always been the case that, if the level of maintenance rises above the child support level, certain benefits are lost. However, as I said a moment ago, a raft of substantial maintenance enables women to have options which are not otherwise available to them. It is too easy to forget that.

I hope that there will be a full and continuing review of the present provision. The principle of the CSA is right, and much of the practice of it has been successful. One has

only to see the figures announced in the report today to realise that 28,000 fathers who were not paying a penny and were not easily traceable have been traced, which is an achievement.

Finally, on the way in which some of the groups opposing the CSA behave, I have no criticism of those in my constituency—they have been thoughtful and courteous. One of the organisations most against the CSA, however, has stated:

"Most separations and divorces are now caused by the women. Changes in family law . . . have ensured that these women may . . . continue their lives without responsibility towards anyone."

The organisation intends to

"set up a register of women who have abandoned their husbands, sought to cut off fathers from their children or otherwise damaged a father and his children."

When the organisation's representative was asked to state the purpose of the register, he was unable to do so.

Hon. Members may accept individual criticisms of the administration—

Miss Joan Lestor (Eccles): What was the name of the organisation to which the hon. Gentleman referred, as I would like to deal with it in my reply to the debate?

Mr. Heald: It is called Families Need Fathers. My quote came from an article by Yasmin Alibhai-Brown in *The Independent* on 20 June 1994.

Hon. Members will be cautious before they ally themselves with people like that. Dangerous individuals can be drawn into a campaign of that sort and we must be extremely cautious about how much credibility we give them.

7.50 pm

Ms Glenda Jackson (Hampstead and Highgate): The organisation to which the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Heald) referred in the closing part of his speech is not unknown to many hon. Members. A few years ago, part of its advice to fathers, if they were not allowed access to their children, was to kidnap them. If that failed and nothing else could succeed, it advocated the murder of the mother. There is little doubt that no reasonable person, either within or without this House, would give much credence to that type of fathering.

The hon. Member for Hertfordshire, North spoke of the differing expectations of husbands and wives after the breakdown of their relationship. Judging by the experiences of my constituents, some of whom I shall refer to, their expectations of hardship—as the present caring mother as opposed to the absent father—have been more than confirmed.

First, I shall quote directly from one constituent's letter to me. She looked to the formation of the Child Support Agency with no small excitement. She believed that it would bring her particular relief and said:

"As a single parent with a handicapped child, I had hoped to obtain some financial help through the agency. My son is totally blind, and since my separation from my husband, when my son was six months old, he has paid nothing towards his maintenance, despite written undertakings to do so. That was fourteen years ago."

My constituent, who has only limited financial resources, spent more than £70 to avail herself of the agency's services. There were many months of delay and many hold-ups, as it was unwilling to take any action to enforce its award. Eventually, my constituent received the first payment, with which she was delighted, even though the sum bore no resemblance to the CSA's schedule. I regret that that case is still not resolved, as my constituent is receiving neither the full maintenance awarded nor the back payments owed.

Another mother in my constituency is still awaiting the first payment from her ex-husband. The lack of financial assistance to help with the upbringing of her daughter is causing her great difficulties. Her case echoes what the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, North said about single mothers who are desperate to return to work, but who, if the maintenance payments are too low or if there is no disregard and they are claiming benefits, simply cannot provide the necessary quality of child care to enable them so to do. She writes:

"I am finding it absolutely impossible to hold on to my part-time job for much longer. I am on disciplinary action report for my absence because of taking time off to look after my daughter when she is ill and during school holidays as I can't afford a child-minder. I am also getting deeper and deeper in debt."

This morning, I received another letter from that constituent in which she expressed her concern about the reply that I had obtained from the CSA on her behalf. The reply said that the agency was going to approach her ex-husband yet again for information that had already been requested, but not provided, on several occasions. Not only did the reply offer no hope of any enforcement action being taken in the near future against her ex-husband: it also got his surname wrong, calling him by the surname that she now uses. I am sure that the Minister will agree that such lapses on the part of the Child Support Agency are not acceptable when the subject being dealt with is of such particular sensitivity.

In essence, as my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Wicks) asked most cogently, why was the Child Support Agency set up, and why was the Child Support Act 1991 brought into being? If one accepts the principle, to which hon. Members on both sides of the House referred, that both parents have a responsibility for caring for their children for as long as they are children, none the less there is surely the other element, which is to alleviate or remove child poverty.

We are viewing major changes in what constitutes a family in these islands. Ours is not the only society in which two parents and 2.5 children no longer constitute a family. There are increasing numbers of single-parent families, they all experience unacceptable levels of poverty and the problem is becoming more and more serious. That poverty is impacting particularly on the children.

In the evidence submitted by hon. Members on both sides of the House this afternoon, the male voice seemed to be the most predominant in the argument. Very often the voice of the single parent—the caring mother—is being ignored. However, the voice that is not heard at all—not even in a whisper—is that of the children. They are consistently placed in the middle of especially brutal and horrifying disputes between their parents, as we have heard from the evidence that has been presented today.

We are considering not merely the financial costs to our society, but the psychological costs that are being heaped on our children. The House should re-examine not only the formulae and practicalities of the Child Support Agency, but our responsibilities, as a House representing the people of this country, towards our children and their future. That should be the most pressing concern, both in this debate and in any review of the Child Support Agency and its system that the Government undertake.

[Ms Glenda Jackson]

When hon. Members present, as a validating argument, statements from male constituents who say that they are perfectly prepared to pay for the cost of their children but not for the cost of the mother, we are clearly in a parlous situation. Perhaps we should tell those fathers, "Very well, don't pay for the upkeep of your child's mother, but we'll ask you to pay for all those jobs that being a mother entails."

Hon. Members on both sides of the House have underlined the increasing cost of raising children and how expensive they are. I am perfectly prepared to accept that many absent fathers, who have paid a minimum amount of maintenance, would be extremely surprised, indeed shocked—and have been shocked—to discover the realities of raising children today.

The essential matter that we must concern ourselves with is that children are a blessing, not a punishment. We have heard from hon. Members on both sides of the House about the difficulties that have been created, either because the CSA was not set up with sufficient personnel or because the formula is wrong. The arguments between separated parents after the breakdown of their relationship make it seem as though children are a punishment. The definition of their cost, and of what they need to be able to grow and flourish into caring and committed members of their society, has reduced them to the most pitiful level, in that they have been so spitefully and selfishly defined—possibly by both sides.

My perspective is based, in the main, on a single caring mother who is finding it extremely difficult to raise her children at the moment. In future, because of the problems that she encounters in obtaining the maintenance that is legally hers and the Government's absolute refusal to consider the possibility of disregards for those earning a low income, her difficulties will increase, as her income may fall even lower. That will put an additional strain on her and her children in circumstances that are already too stressful.

I am pleased to see that the Minister is listening with no small attention to what I am saying. I have no doubt that he has heard similar concerns expressed by many other hon. Members. I strongly urge him to consider the well-being of the children involved; that must be the primary concern. When absent parents are incapable of paying what the CSA has deemed should be their contribution, for whatever reason, surely it should be entirely possible for the Government to find some means to strike a balance between that and the requirements of raising children. They should offer disregards or continuing support from the Benefits Agency. Children are the most important consideration in this issue.

8 pm

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and, unusually, the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) on their thoughtful contributions to the debate.

I should like to start by giving some statistics about the CSA, which are necessary to put the issue in context. The agency has now assessed 205,000 cases and, of those, some 60 per cent., almost two thirds, represent absent parents who previously paid not a single brass farthing towards the maintenance of their children. I congratulate Opposition Members on joining my hon. Friends in denouncing those people. About 96 per cent. of all cases represent children who were left behind by a parent, for whatever reason, on state handouts, while the vast majority of those absent parents enjoyed a much higher standard of living in their new lives than their children.

I said earlier today that 28,000 feckless fathers have been tracked down by the CSA. In fact, my right hon. Friend corrected that figure and provided an updated one of 32,000. That is a commendable achievement. The CSA has had an 85 per cent. success rate, on which I congratulate it.

Those feckless fathers, who leave their wives and children behind, do not leave a contact address; they disappear without trace. One of those feckless fathers even came to my surgery and had the temerity to complain about his loss of personal liberty and his loss of freedom to do as he wished. He saw that loss as a breach of personal liberty. Can you imagine, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what I told that feckless father? I think you can.

Mr. Dewar: Tell us—go on.

Dr. Spink: Suffice it to say that that gentleman will not be voting for me at the next general election. That does not cause me any concern, because he has never voted for me. I was not surprised, and nor will anyone else be, to learn that he is a lifelong socialist, although I was a little relieved to find that out.

That man told me that he would work less hard and might even give up work to avoid paying the assessment that he had been given by the CSA. I had to tell him that families who stay together have to decide to work longer and harder to support their increased family commitments. It is a pity that he did not choose to do the same.

The payment of maintenance helps all parents with care, even those on income support, because they will get that maintenance even if they go back to work. Those parents get a £15 disregard if they work longer than 16 hours and are drawing family credit. That is a good thing.

Let me consider the Opposition's views on the CSA —I cannot call them policies because, as in most other areas, they have little well-defined or costed policy to review. The Opposition propose a right of appeal to a special independent officer with powers to test special circumstances. The hon. Member for Garscadden should understand that every absent parent in my constituency would appeal, because each one has special circumstances. I would, of course, support their appeals because it is my job to support my constituents against the bureaucracy. [Hon. Members: "Oh!"] I hope that I would not win, but I would help them all I could.

The Opposition also say that they would limit the grounds of entry to the appeal procedure, but, much as we tried to tease it out of the hon. Member for Garscadden, he has not told us yet how he would limit those entry grounds. Absent parents in my constituency, therefore, need not rejoice quite yet, because it would be a very limited and narrow gate. The Opposition are therefore holding out the hope to all absent parents, in a way dishonestly, that their special circumstances would be considered, although the Opposition know that, in most cases, those circumstances would be given no consideration. That is dishonest and it is typical of Labour policy, but that Labour ploy will cut no ice with my constituents, who are far too clever to fall for that one.

The Opposition have also called for a benefit disregard to help lone parents on income support, but they refuse to confirm that that is a spending commitment or to say how much it would cost and which taxes they would raise to pay it. The Opposition have been hopelessly inconsistent on this issue because they have changed their mind on whether a father should contribute from his unemployment benefit and on whether well-off people should pay a higher rate of maintenance.

In fact, Labour's so-called policies would encourage the break-up of families by giving financial inducements to those families that split up. It would pay those families more money than those that decided to stay together. Where is the justice and common sense in that? The Opposition would increase the tax bill as a result of their policy and offer a disincentive to mothers who work, because, under that policy, their income might fall if they decided to work.

Those are the embarrassing facts behind the Labour party's views on the CSA. Do not hold that too hard against the Opposition, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because they are not evil or malicious people; they are simply deeply confused.

I cannot start to give the Liberal Democrats' policy on the CSA. I see that none of them is gracing us with his or her presence tonight. Their Bench is empty. They claim to support the CSA in principle—and so they should—but, opportunistically, they are seeking short-term political advantage by saying all things to all men—no change there. At their spring conference this year, the Liberal Democrats passed a motion which berated the relative impoverishment of single women parents, who are usually financially worse off than men. Then, illogically, they passed an about-turn amendment, presumably—not clearly—to reduce the amount that men should pay to those women for their offspring.I am frankly embarrassed by the vacuum that we continually meet from the Opposition parties about the CSA.

I should like to consider a topical and somewhat controversial issue. Last week, we heard about developments regarding lesbians and the CSA. The agency has stated that, if a man makes a woman pregnant, he will be responsible to support financially the subsequent child, even if that woman is a lesbian. That will apply even if the man draws up a legal agreement before conception stating that he wants no involvement in the child's upbringing.

Will the Minister confirm the CSA's clear policy that only men who give sperm to a properly licensed clinic will be accepted and can therefore avoid paying maintenance for their biological child? That is exactly as it should be. Nature never intended babies to be conceived by way of a legal contract between a man and woman, denying a man's ongoing responsibility for his issue in a wholly perverse way—*[Interruption.]* Opposition Front-Bench Members find that amusing. Many of my constituents will not find it amusing, because those children are conceived for the amusement and pleasure of a lesbian or lesbian couple. I fear for children brought up by lesbians, without a father.

Only yesterday, an instance was cited in *The Sunday Times* of a lesbian couple from Manchester who were receiving £180 benefit a week. Many of my constituents would like to receive that much money each week. Those two unemployed women already have two children—one six-year-old and one eight-year-old—and they now have a 22-month-old baby. Under CSA rules, the father must pay maintenance for that baby, which is absolutely right. If the lesbians refuse to give the father's name, as it is suggested they might, their state handouts should be reduced not just by 20 or 10 per cent. for a few months but by a significant amount indefinitely until they reveal the father's name.

The CSA's ruling is right, but the Government must toughen up their rules to deal with wilful obstructers of the system. By institutionalising long-term state funding arrangements, we must not establish another source of impoverished children simply to deliver the instant and selfish gratification of homosexual couples who want a particular life style but do not accept the physical or financial consequences of their choice to live in that way.

You will be outraged to hear, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that groups representing lesbians have been vociferous in their opposition to the Child Support Agency. They defend lesbians' right to have children by what they call "private arrangements with male friends", most of whom are homosexuals. Yesterday's issue of *The Sunday Times* reported that, at a recent London conference, women urged non-co-operation with the CSA and outlined strategies to frustrate its attempts to trace the fathers. Opposition Members appear to agree with the moral of that story, which is that, if taxpayers are daft enough to pay, let them pay. That may be a socialist philosophy, but it is certainly not a Conservative one.

I understand that two lesbian couples who both want babies are now receiving fertility treatment on the national health service at Leicester Royal infirmary. Who will pay maintenance for those children, and what will be the CSA's policy towards them? That is an abuse of the national health service. The high cost of those two episodes of treatment will rob many old people of much-needed hip replacements, and sick children and babies in special care units of the equipment and nursing they need.

I acknowledge that the CSA has experienced difficulties in its first year. I have given an insight into how those difficulties have been promoted and aggravated by absent fathers or lesbian groups who either do not want to pay or would like to pay a small amount while the Treasury pays the rest—*[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) wishes to intervene, I should be delighted to allow him to do so, because I wonder how he will answer that argument.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): The hon. Gentleman seems to think that the whole problem associated with the Child Support Agency has been created by the masses of lesbians in our society. That is not the case. There are many problems associated with how the agency functions. It does not even sign letters which it sends to constituents who have problems. Those constituents are not lesbians but hold responsible positions in society. Why does not the hon. Gentleman face up to the real problems and the fact that lesbianism is a minor issue in this debate?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Before the hon. Gentleman faces up to anything, I remind the House that there are 65 minutes left for this debate before the Front-Bench spokesmen reply. Six hon. Members are hoping to catch my eye. With a bit of co-operation from hon. Members, they may do so.

Dr. Spink: I am indebted to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East made a good intervention. He is right to say that lesbianism is a minor issue, but it is a matter of principle that needs to be

[Dr. Spink]

addressed. No one else has mentioned it, so I thought that I was right to raise the issue so that we can have it cleared up, because it concerns my constituents.

One of the key charges against the CSA is that the money goes to the Treasury. That misguided concept is promoted ad nauseam by the media and Opposition Members. The Treasury has no money of its own; it has only the people's money, which it simply distributes where it is most needed. If it gives it away unnecessarily to support absent parents' first set of children, the money will not be available for other needs.

It will therefore be taken from orphans and widows who depend on state benefit, from the sick who need hospital care and from truly vulnerable people—*[Laughter.]* The hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding) is laughing again. She should not laugh, because that money is taken from vulnerable people in my constituency—the old, the mentally ill and the disabled—who need money in the kitty so that they can be cared for.

My constituents realise, even if the Opposition and the media do not, that there is only so much money in the system. If it is siphoned off by one group, it is not available for another, or for investment in education and fighting crime. Those issues lose if we spend the Treasury's limited resources on benefits for first families so that absent parents—usually men—can choose to support a second family. The only time that the Treasury should pay for child maintenance is when both parents genuinely cannot pay. That is the honest Christian truth, with which all my constituents agree. It is a pity that some of the bishops do not.

Improvements could be made to the Child Support Agency, and I welcome the Government's continued review. The carers' allowance should be reviewed and the formula changed to recognise the atypical position of my constituents, who often pay more for a season ticket to travel to London to work than for their mortgages. The Government should look at the full cost of pension schemes and many other matters which have already been dealt with in detail and which are so important to my constituents.

However, the Government must not go too far and impoverish vulnerable people in my constituency by taking too much financial responsibility for children, of lone parents when the absent parent has the means to pay.

8.18 pm

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): We have just heard an appalling contribution, which completely misses the point.

The size of my file of correspondence on this matter is shocking. It is a disgrace for any hon. Member to have such a file. Ros Hepplewhite said that she has 5,000 letters waiting for a reply. I seem to have the 5,000 here, and I am not too pleased about it—and neither are my constituents.

I am delighted to note that the Child Support Agency is to create 500 more jobs. However, it is appalling that one of today's newspapers has reported that the CSA is sorry after a flood of complaints. Ros Hepplewhite has announced that there will be an extra 700 staff to improve the body's performance. The agency certainly does not have a head. If it has a head, it is a lunatic who has come up with this type of plan.

I am not knocking the policy. It is important that absent fathers should contribute to their children. As the Minister said, no hon. Members object to that principle and policy. However, the plan of action to recoup the money is the most crazy and disastrous plan that we have seen in the British way of life for a long time. It is time that the Minister listened. He should plan something which responds decently to the needs of our constituents.

Tonight, I have heard about lesbians, homosexuals, the whole lot. I do not want to go down that road. I want to talk about the genuine concerns of my constituents and the genuine problems they face because of the Government's planning—or lack of it.

We should get rid of the head of the Child Support Agency because she is not doing a good job. She is certainly not doing a good job when, suddenly, she decides that the CSA will become a job agency.

Undoubtedly, the formula is in a mess.

Mr. Jim Cunningham (Coventry, South-East): Does my hon. Friend agree that, if the agency is serious about the work in which it is engaged, it must look at the problem where single mothers cannot be recompensed—the agency has typically failed in this area—if their former husband happens to be in business on his own? The agency has done nothing about that. It continually makes excuses about it.

Does my hon. Friend also agree—this is my second point—that there are many one-parent families where the wife in particular cannot get a penny from her former husband, and the agency has utterly failed to chase the former husbands whom it was designed to chase in the first place? Does my hon. Friend agree with my two points?

Mr. Graham: My hon. Friend makes a very telling intervention.

As I said, I have many cases and many points that I should like to raise. If I raised them all, it would take the time of the House for the remainder of the week and I do not intend to do that. I know that other hon. Members wish to speak.

The Minister should look at the mess that we are in. We cannot give decent information to our constituents when they write to us with problems. One constituent wrote to me on 11 October; then, lo and behold, I received a letter from Ros Hepplewhite on 31 March 1994. How in God's name can we act as Members of Parliament and give proper information from the House to our constituents if we have to wait months and people have the sword of Damocles over their heads? It is an appalling state of affairs. In a democratic system, it is totally unfair that people must wait to get information from the House and the appropriate people that the Government put in place.

I could go on. I have heard comments about organisations which have probably abused the Minister and some Tory Members. I regret that action. I regret that undemocratic methods have been used to put across points of view. But what about the thousands of people who have used the avenue of the parliamentary democracy of these letters? What about the thousands of people who have visited their Members of Parliament? What about the thousands of people who have demonstrated within the context of the law? Are the Government listening? No, they are not listening, because they have not put into operation a plan which at the end of the day could look sensibly at people's problems. As I said, the formula is a mess.

On many occasions, I have come to the House and read constituents' letters. Every one of them seems to be getting worse. The situation seems to get worse and worse. The Government seem to care less as time goes on. They simply want to fix the balance of payments. They seem to want to take money from every part, but are not too concerned about where it comes from. That is the danger. The Government are fraught with danger when they are supported by hon. Members such as the hon. Member for Castle Point (Dr. Spink). He is totally uncaring. He is not looking for a solution for his constituents, although he must have a postbag similar to mine.

I have written to the Minister on a number of occasions and the replies are all the same: we will put the plan in place, the plan of action stays, and we will think of it here and there. That does not matter; in the end, my constituents will still live in abject poverty. These are the people whom the Government have always known were making contributions to their children because of court action and levy of the appropriate money.

I could give many more examples, but I want to get straight to the point. I shall quote from a letter that I received from a constituent of mine. When I read the letter, I asked how we in civilised Britain could treat our men and womenfolk and their children in this way. The agency is called the Child Support Agency. It is a crying shame agency. It is a crying shame to the people it is supposed to help. As far as I know, it is not helping any child in my constituency. With my hand on my heart, I wish I could say that the agency is helping children in my constituency.

I do not want to take up the time of the House, but I shall read this letter because it epitomises what is happening throughout the country. I am sure that it is similar to the letters that we have all received. I quote:

"I am writing to you in a last, desperate hope that you may be able to give me some help or advice regarding payments which have recently been assessed for me by the C.S.A.

I am an ordinary working man"—

he is not a high flyer—

"I earn a reasonable wage"—

he thinks that it is a reasonable wage; I shall explain later—

"but I cannot cope with the unreasonable increase the C.S.A. has made to my maintenance payments.

I was divorced in 1990, at which time a court order was raised for a payment of £80 per month to be made in respect of my two sons. I love my two sons dearly and have done all in my power since the divorce to provide as much for them as possible over and above my maintenance payments. Although my two sons live in"

another part of the country—

"a 200 mile journey from my home—I drive through and bring them to my home approximately every third weekend and all school holidays. At no time have I ever failed to make regular maintenance payments.

I have since remarried and now have a stepdaughter and daughter through this marriage. My wife does not work and I am the sole bread-winner for the family.

My take home pay is £230 per week, but the C.S.A. has assessed my earnings at £270 per week from which they expect me to make payments of £76.76. I have been in contact with a counsellor from the C.S.A. who has agreed that the assessment is too high. She has phoned Falkirk on numerous occasions on my behalf to ask for a reassessment, but the C.S.A. has refused to give one as they say that the difference is not sufficient to warrant a reassessment. If I were to pay the amount the C.S.A. are requesting it would leave me in the position of not being able to provide my present family with even the basic necessities."

I feel that I must do justice to my constituents who have written to me, but I have not seen any decent replies. The letter goes on:

"My car is a necessity. If my car were to be repossessed I would neither be able to visit my sons nor would I be able to get to work. I work as a security guard at"

a well-known company—

"a job which entails shift work for which I could not rely on public transport"—

public transport in Scotland has been decimated—

"I suffer from osteo-arthritis and rely on pain killers to keep going.

Although I have requested an allowance to be made on my assessment for prescription charges the CSA have denied me this. My wife and I are at the end of our tether. We can see no way around this situation. We have thought of uprooting our family and moving away from Britain, but my sons and I have a close relationship and I do not want to lose contact with them. My company has a policy of dismissal for arrestment of wages, but the only course of action I can see open to me is to continue to pay my £80 and wait for the CSA to arrest my wages. I am 39 years old and am proud to say that I have never claimed any state benefits. Sadly however if I am dismissed from my job, myself, my wife and my two daughters will be forced to be reliant on state benefits. At which point my ex-wife and two sons wouldn't even be receiving my present payment of £80. Our situation has now become desperate and we would be grateful for any help and advice you could give us on this matter."

I supported the idea of the CSA, but I now regret allowing the Government to put a bad plan into operation just because I accepted the principle.

For the sake of the thousands of people all over the country who are suffering, I ask the Minister to take some caring action to end the terrible trauma that our constituents are facing—because the Government could not get it right.

8.30 pm

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): In the first two minutes of his 30-minute speech, the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) referred to parental responsibility. He also said that the Child Support Agency had been set up under an Act that enjoyed all-party support. I had no difficulty agreeing with the first two minutes of his speech. Significantly, they showed that there is unanimity at least on the principle and about the fact that an independent and responsible body in the form of the CSA is needed.

Unfortunately I could not agree with anything else in the remaining 28 minutes—

Mr. Dewar: What a relief!

Mr. Shaw: I thought the hon. Gentleman might be relieved. I shall now try to explain why I disagreed with him.

Most people outside agree with the idea of parental responsibility for children. Most fathers who come to our surgeries start by saying that they think it right that they should be responsible. The issue then boils down to cost. That is the problem. We can tackle it in many different ways; we can talk about the formula, or about whether to include certain factors in it or not. Ultimately, however, the basic problem is that, although many absent fathers are prepared to agree to the principle, they are not prepared to agree to the calculations devised by the DSS.

The same appears to apply in Australia and New Zealand, and to judge by my observations on Internet, of the child support system in America. One of the hottest debates around the world concerns the costs of bringing up a child. Because we are asking people to pay extra, no wonder the system has proved unpopular with those who have had to pay it.

It is interesting to contrast the work that the Social Security Select Committee is doing on the CSA with the

[Mr. Shaw]

work we did last year on the disability living allowance and the disability working allowance. The systems administering the latter were in difficulties because of the large number of new applicants rushing to claim. Why were they so popular? Because they were paying out more money to more claimants. The CSA is, of course, charging more people money—charging many absent fathers who refuse to contribute more money.

We should therefore not be surprised by the difficulties that the CSA has faced. We should, however, be disgusted by the campaigns that have been waged against the staff and the agency. I have with me large numbers of documents copied from various organisations opposed to the Child Support Agency. The Minister finds himself on a poster, "Wanted for Murder". The newspapers have attempted to attribute seven suicides to the CSA and the workings of the Act. No one has had a thought for the fact that there may have been human tragedies behind those suicides. Nor has anyone had a thought for the fact that there are 4,900 other suicides each year. Are they all to be blamed on Government or Opposition policies, or on some other policies? The very idea is ludicrous.

Mr. Wray: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the agency is being used as a rogue body—and that the Government are not worried about children: they are worried about the Treasury, and getting as much as they can for it? Of £210 million, it has been said that only £3 million went to the children. Of £530 million, only £50 million was going to go to the children. If the Government were sincere and compassionate, why did they not give all the money to the children? Why did the agency attack the high-income families who were already paying up? Why did it not target the absent fathers?

Mr. Shaw: The hon. Gentleman, having observed me operate on the Select Committee, anticipates me with impeccable timing. I was about to talk about the Treasury. The idea that all this money is going to the Treasury is grossly misleading. I challenge anyone to tell me which room in the Treasury I can find all this money in. Where are all the huge sums collected from absent fathers? I walk the Treasury corridors, and I have to tell hon. Members: the money is not there.

We are either taking less money from taxpayers or we are paying out more in benefits than we otherwise would. Saying that the money is in the Treasury is the biggest lie about the child support system. Today the BBC, which prides itself on neutral broadcasting, allowed itself, I was distressed to hear, to fall into the trap by referring to the Treasury. The media should not refer to the Treasury unless they accept that they are biased. The true position is that either the taxpayer benefits or the benefits recipient benefits.

What is wrong with the taxpayer benefiting? The Labour Government in Australia are not upset by that. The evidence to the Select Committee and to the social security committee in Australia showed that the Labour Government were proud that taxpayers were going to benefit. We should be proud of it, too.

I conclude by taking a look at three proposals from the Labour party. The problem with a disregard is that it gives rewards to certain people; a system based on rewards is not to be found anywhere else in our social security arrangements. It has also been suggested that the formula should include more allowances. The experience of the Australian, American and New Zealand systems shows that the formula should be made simpler. There is no worldwide evidence to support more allowances in the formula.

The evidence from Australia is that the appeals system is tough and limited. There is no evidence to suggest that we should have a broad-based appeals system that would allow hon. Members to argue the case for a few extra pounds for their constituents as opposed to constituents elsewhere. There is no way that Members of Parliament arguing such cases could do so fairly. While some aspects of the system could be examined and, according to the Select Committee, could be made better, the lessons from Australia, New Zealand and the United States show that it is difficult to improve the system to please those who will have to pay more and become more responsible for their children.

8.40 pm

Mr. Hugh Bayley (York): The hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) complained about a lack of objectivity and one-sidedness in the BBC, but what he said about Australia in the last few minutes of his speech showed that he is guilty of that to a much greater degree. If he had been honest in presenting the whole story, he would have told the House that in Australia there is a $10 a week disregard. Every parent looking after children gets $10 on top of the income support payment every week, plus 50 cents in every dollar that is paid in child support beyond that.

The hon. Member for Dover says that Australia has a limited appeals system. He forgot to say that the United Kingdom has no appeals system. If he purports to describe the Australian system fully and fairly and without bias, he should describe the whole situation and not just put those parts that suit his case, ignoring the Australian disregard arrangements.

Sixty-six of my constituents have raised with me cases of injustice and maladministration. Not one of them has objected to the principle that absent parents should pay, and only one has objected to the fact that she has to pay. She is a woman and lives in a one-roomed flat on invalidity benefit of £68 a week. She is expected to take less than the minimum amount that the Department of Social Security has determined as the required amount for invalids so that she can make a contribution to her ex-husband. He lives in a detached house, has two cars and farms 38 acres. He has horses and rides to hounds and goes fox hunting, but that woman is expected to contribute to him for their child.

The Minister will nod and say that that was what the Act intended. I wrote to the Minister and the CSA about this matter in March but neither has replied. I wrote again in June asking for a reply and I still have not received one. Throughout the debate the Minister has nodded sadly every time an hon. Member complained about the CSA's inefficiency. But nodding sadly is not enough. Somebody is responsible for the fact that simple answers to straight questions from people on the receiving end of the agency are not being answered. Either the agency is at fault, in which case the Minister should make heads roll over the failure of people to do their job, or he is at fault and he should do the honourable thing.

Nearly half the 66 constituents who approached me are women who are concerned about the way that the Act has

worked. They expected to be beneficiaries. In his speech the Secretary of State peddled the myth that the agency champions the needs of deserted women, and that complaints come only from fathers who are being asked to pay. I shall state the initials of one of my constituent's so that the Minister can trace her case by way of the letters that I have written. She is Mrs. W. L. and her husband left her in January 1993.

Mrs. W. L. applied to court for maintenance but was told that the court no longer dealt with maintenance and was referred to the CSA, which she approached in January last year. The agency refused to act because she was on family credit, and she was told to reapply when the credit ran out. She reapplied in July, and in November she telephoned the agency to ask how her application was being treated. She was told that nothing had happened. As a result of her telephone call early in November, on the 20th of that month the forms were sent to her husband. Thereafter there was silence.

She approached me in March and I telephoned the agency, to be told that nothing had happened because the file was missing. The agency agreed to set in train a search for the file, and after that things moved quickly. The Child Support Agency can move quickly when it wants to. It approached the former husband, and on 13 April the first payment of the backlog of £1,988 was made. It was paid to my constituent on 21 April.

Why did it take 15 months from the time that Mrs. W. L. applied to the agency for support for her children and telephone calls from her and from me to numerous people in the agency to get the maintenance for her children? Who is responsible for that delay and what compensation is there for a woman who has been left without the resources to bring up her children because of the agency's incompetence and inefficiency?

Another of my constituents, Mrs. Susan Arkle, regularly received maintenance for 15 years from her ex-husband. She and her ex-husband tell me that he never missed a payment. In October 1993 the CSA took over the case and the payments ceased. The money was still being paid by Mr. Arkle to the agency but when I telephoned, the agency told me that it had no record of payments. It had mistaken my constituent's husband for another man who was not paying. The upshot was that the agency was getting the money, but my constituent and her children were not.

The hon. Member for Dover said that money must be piling up somewhere in the Treasury. It is piling up in the agency and I hope that the Minister will tell us how much interest has been earned and whether the interest will be paid to parents for the benefit of children. That was the Act's intention, and when money is not paid to the parent with care, that parent has to go without or raise loans and pay interest.

The application of interest on money held by the CSA would have a dual benefit: it would help the children and compensate the parent with care who has had to take out loans. It would also give an incentive to the Child Support Agency to shift the money out of its coffers and into the hands of the parents who are caring for children.

In a letter to me, Mrs. Arkle stated:

"The CSA now owes me over £363.06 which it has received from my ex-husband and which I need to feed and clothe my children. I have had to go into overdraft, thus incurring bank charges and worsening my financial situation."

What will the Minister do to recompense my constituent for the suffering that she, and above all her children, have endured because of the agency's inefficiency?

The problems that have been brought to me by constituents do not just come from those who are having difficulty obtaining the money that is due to their children. They come also from absent parents who are due to pay. A constituent, Graham Lund, came to see me over the weekend and told me that his wife left him some time ago, and that he had given up his job to become a full-time carer for their three children. Later, the children decided to move in with their mother. At that point, he gave her the family home, because he felt that that was the best place for the children. He wanted the children to stay in the home.

Shortly afterwards, two of the children came back to live with him. He now has care of two of the three children. He has lost his home and is assessed to pay £66 per week on behalf of the third child, who is with the mother. He receives no child support from the absent mother for the two children for whom he cares. Having examined his budget, he is left with £29 per week for food, clothes and other expenses for his family. He now needs dental treatment. That will cost him £150 on the NHS. How is he going to pay for the dental treatment he needs when he does not have enough money under the Child Support Act to look after the two children for whom he is responsible?

What about when parents have split up and are both on income support? The absent parent loses 5 per cent. of his or her income, which gets paid to the CSA. The parent with care receives no increase, because, unlike Australia, there is no disregard. So the absent parent, who in the past, could perhaps save a little out of his or her income support to buy small treats for the children when they visit now finds that even harder to do. If the intention of the Act is to improve the lot of children, to draw children out of poverty, which is so important, as my hon. Friends the Members for Bow and Poplar (Ms Gordon) and for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Wicks) have said, a system that reduces the combined income of both parents when both are on income support must undermine that principle. If a disregard is brought in nowhere else, surely it should be used in cases where a parent has that contribution taken out of his or her income support.

The principle that parents have a lifetime responsibility for their children is clearly right, but a combination of the inflexibility of the CSA rules and the bungling incompetence of the agency itself—aided, I have to say, by the failure of Ministers to reply to hon. Members on behalf of issues to do with the CSA—threatens to bring the whole structure tumbling down like a pack of cards, destroying a principle that hon. Members on both sides of the House have said is important—that absent parents should pay for their children.

The agency needs to be either radically reformed or replaced by a new regime, which puts children, and children in poverty, first. A disregard needs to be introduced, as in Australia. Changes need to be brought in to take account of past property settlements, which were often made under clean-break settlements.

I recently had a case involving somebody whose children stayed with him for 97 days during the course of a year, yet he got no money to provide for them during that period, because they did not stay with him for the 100-day threshold. We need a new formula that realistically has

[Mr. Hugh Bayley]

regard to the needs of children of second families. Above all, we need a new agency that will operate efficiently and with compassion.

8.54 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): I welcome the opportunity to speak about the current operation of the Child Support Agency. In Northern Ireland, the agency has operated with appalling inefficiency, bringing distress and anguish in its wake. No one in the House is against the principle that was first mooted when the legislation was sponsored—the principle of protecting and providing for children deserted by a parent or parents, and left, in some circumstances, with a single parent who has to cope with inadequate financial support.

That principle is not questioned, and I deeply resent those who accuse other hon. Members who bring to the House those matters that need to be reformed. The finger seems to be pointed at all who have been advocating reform, and at all who have been bringing forward the matters that need to be dealt with, as though we had weakened on the principle.

I believe in parental responsibility. I believe that it is for the lifetime of the child. I believe that with all my heart. But that will not keep me silent when I see the gravity of the situation that has developed, and the child for whom this legislation was brought in completely put on the sidelines. Instead of being concerned about the child who was to benefit, we have set estranged wives and husbands against each another. We have broken in two not one but two homes. We have caused great grief, great hardship and great wounds in our society. The Minister must face up to that.

But, unlike all the other hon. Members who have spoken in the debate, I am at a serious disadvantage, because the CSA in Northern Ireland is a strange instrument. The report that is before us, "Child Support Agency: The First Two Years" was issued before the debate. It tells us two things about Northern Ireland—first:

"There is a separate Child Support Agency in Northern Ireland which provides a similar service under Northern Ireland law."

Secondly, it says:

"The Child Support Agency Centre at Belfast is an integral part of the Northern Ireland Child Support Agency. It also provides a service to an area of the mainland on our behalf."

But at the back of the report, where the places that are served by the agency are listed, no reference whatever is made to Northern Ireland. I want to ask the Minister this question: is it the report of the Child Support Agency for Great Britain or is it the report for the whole of the United Kingdom? If it is not, where is the report for the central agency in Northern Ireland? We have graphs about the people who have been employed. Are they for the United Kingdom or are they for Great Britain? The Minister must come clean with the people of Northern Ireland and tell them exactly what has happened in respect of their system.

If the situation is bad in Great Britain, it is 10 times worse in Northern Ireland. I refer the House to a hearing by the Social Security Committee in Belfast on 7 March, and to page 49 of the minutes of evidence, when Mr. Pat Devlin, the agency's chief executive, and Mr. John Johnston, director of Northern Ireland operations at the Child Support Agency in Belfast, were examined. I urge hon. Members to obtain a copy and to read for themselves what was said by those two individuals.

Such was the insulting behaviour and the answers given by the people in charge of the agency in Northern Ireland that the Chairman of that Committee said that he thought that they came from the old Russia.

A constituent of my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea), who is also a constituent of mine in another place, received a letter at his home from the agency, stating that he had fathered a child and that he would be levelled with the upkeep of that child. He was absolutely amazed. His wife read the letter, and the House can understand what it was like in that happy home, where there were little children and all was well—before an impudent, arrogant letter arrived that pointed the finger of accusation at the head of that happy household.

Action was immediately taken to contact the central agency. The two agency people who arrived acted as moral arbiters. The husband said, "I am not the man in question. I did not father that child. I was never with the woman concerned. I know nothing about it." The agency people said, "You needn't lie to us. You're the father of the child and we are taking action against you."

That happy family was broken up. The wife left the home and took the young children with her. That husband was a broken-hearted man, bereft of his wife and of his children, and his marriage was shattered.

Later, the agency sent a letter saying, "We are sorry. It was a man in the same town. We got the wrong address." What good was that, when that home had been shattered, the wife's faith in her husband had been destroyed, and he was distraught and broken? How can anyone say that we should not expose such matters on the Floor of the House, so that the Minister knows what is happening? It is happening not only once but all over the country.

The Minister needs to put on his running shoes. If one does not have the consent of the people, the law breaks down. When the law breaks down, there is anarchy. When there is anarchy, the law will be forced to change its ways. Why not make up our minds tonight to change the procedure, take the arrogance out of those people, and deal with the matter for the sake of the future of our communities and their families?

I have for 48 years been the pastor of a large congregation in the centre of Belfast. I know what pastoral care and homes are about. There is nothing so devastating as when a well-ordered home that manages its budget suddenly has a colossal demand made on that budget. It is devastating. The agency's actions have devastated people. If the court determined a settlement and decided that so much money should be paid and everyone was working to that budget, why did the agency have the right to overrule the court and say, "No—our law is greater than your law"? The Minister must take into account the amount of damage that has been done.

When the legislation was passing through the House, I understood that the real offenders would be found out. The real offenders are the parents who have skipped, disappeared and never paid a penny to the children they fathered. I shall ask the Minister a fair question tonight. How many people who were paying the benefit that the courts said they should pay have had their payments increased, and how many who never paid anything have

been found out and brought to book? Let us have those figures, because it is on those figures, and those alone, that we will judge the success of the legislation.

The Minister must take on board what has been said today. I do not know how one heals the wounds or makes up for what has gone astray, but I know that the time has come to change gear and to change course in this iniquitous system. Let us not do any more damage: there has been enough damage done and the Minister needs to face up to his responsibilities.

Please let the people of Northern Ireland have the report of their agency. Please tell us what the agency is doing. Please tell us how many of the people are not interested in Belfast, in our problem, but are doing something in the north of England. We have enough problems to attend to without doing the work for the north of England. With all due respect to the people of the north of England, I think that the agency has enough on its plate.

The report makes interesting bedside reading. Anyone reading it will become aware of the sort of officials who had weeks to prepare for examination and weeks of tutoring by those who tutor civil servants before they come before a parliamentary Committee. I used to chair the parliamentary Committee in Stormont that looked after the finances—the Finance Committee. I knew that the people who came to talk to the politicians had been tutored.

The two men who came before the Committee were tutored and their answers were laughable and disgraceful —so much so that the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) said that he thought they came from old Russia. The Minister had better consider those matters tonight and give us some answers. If he says that he cannot answer for Northern Ireland perhaps he will be good enough to write to me with the answers.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Alistair Burt) *indicated assent.*

Rev. Ian Paisley: I am glad to see that the Minister is nodding.

I want the answers. If we cannot get them tonight, we must get them later.

9.7 pm

Ms Jean Corston (Bristol, East): Having listened to most of today's debate, I do not think that one hon. Member—from either side of the House—has had unqualified praise for the Child Support Agency. There is no disagreement among hon. Members about the fact that there is such a thing as parental responsibility. It lies at the heart of the Children Act 1989, which had all-party support. Everyone accepts that being a parent continues for life. My children are young adults; I am still a parent and I still have a responsibility to them.

The cross-party concern comes as no surprise to me. I am secretary of the all-party parliamentary Child Support Agency monitoring group, which has been meeting for some time and taking evidence from interested agencies, including the Child Poverty Action Group, the National Council for One Parent Families and women's organisations. We shall meet the Secretary of State tomorrow on a cross-party basis.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Wicks) said in a thoughtful and analytical speech, the agency is involved in a part of public law that is a crucial element of social policy. What does parental responsibility mean? The CSA appears to reduce it solely to pounds and pence.

There has been much reference to the Australian model. I understand that, in its first year, the CSA in this country tried to deal with twice as many cases as the Australian child support agency, with half the staff. When we consider that fact, it is scarcely surprising that there has been such bureaucratic muddle and maladministration. As several hon. Members on both sides of the House have pointed out, at least Australia's Child Support Agency is concerned with eradicating child poverty. That is what should concern our CSA, but many people still feel that its rationale is to make a Treasury raid on the social security budget.

Hon. Members have cited constituency cases. That is a valid way of drawing attention not just to the effects of the Child Support Act 1991 and the way in which the formula works, but to the maladministration that people have had to put up with.

The hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) mentioned a constituent whose life had been turned upside down. A constituent of mine was telephoned at work one morning by his wife, who was hysterical: she had opened a letter addressed to him, asking him to pay maintenance for a child of whom he had never heard. He had also never heard of, or met, the mother of the child.

After a great deal of anguish, it was established that he did not know the woman and the child was not his; the child's father had the same name, and lived in the same part of Bristol. I am pleased to say that that marriage survived, but my constituent still does not consider that he has received proper redress from the CSA. It beggars belief that an agency could virtually trawl through the telephone book, find someone with the same name living in the same area and decide, "That must be him."

Another constituent has received seven different assessment figures from the CSA. To this day, he does not know which amount he is supposed to be paying; meanwhile, the clock is ticking, his arrears are building up and he has been denied access to his children because his wife is distraught at receiving no money at all.

Yet another constituent, whose income is low—we have a low-wage economy—cannot afford the one trip a year that he used to take to see his daughter in Essex and bring her back to Bristol. His only luxury was his telephone: he could ring his daughter twice a week to ask about her school work and what she was doing. Now he has had to have his telephone disconnected so that he can pay the child support, and his contact with his daughter may—I put it no more strongly than this—be reduced to one visit a year. How will that encourage that man to be a responsible father? How will it encourage a relationship between him and his little girl?

I have encountered cases in which the agency's procedure of disclosing a second wife's financial means to the first wife—because she is bound to see the correspondence—has caused intolerable anger and disruption when parties to a relationship are trying hard to be responsible and amicable and to get along in new circumstances. Stepchildren, and other children involved in second marriages, are a comparatively new phenomenon, as are the family patterns of which they are part. On many occasions the CSA appears to have tossed a hand grenade into those people's lives, leaving nothing but conflict and misery.

[Ms Jean Corston]

There has been most misrepresentation over what is termed the clean break. I have heard the Minister try to pretend that we should not take the clean break into consideration, because it has nothing to do with children. Let us consider the divorce jurisdiction. Here I declare an interest, as a former family lawyer.

When an ancillary relief hearing is in being, the court's paramount consideration must be the welfare of the children. Husbands were frequently leaned on to agree to clean-break settlements, with the result that all the equity in the family home was transferred to the woman. First, that secured a home for the children. Secondly, it took account of the fact that, in general, women were economically disadvantaged compared with men. If an agreement were made that the house would be sold when the youngest child reached 18, women would be too old to obtain a mortgage or would not have the means to do so, thereby causing homelessness in middle and old age.

The purpose of clean-break agreements was that the man would forgo a huge sum of money. A constituent of mine transferred equity of £51,500 in the former matrimonial home. Rightly, the court said that he would therefore have to pay a smaller sum of maintenance so that he could start again at the age of 44. He now finds that the agreement has been ignored, and he is being asked to pay a considerable sum of maintenance. His second wife has been to see me and is distraught. They believe that they will face repossession because they cannot afford to pay their mortgage. How can that be said to further the interests of family policy, the needs of children or the needs of parents?

Earlier today, I spoke to a former colleague at the Bristol Bar, a well-respected and experienced family lawyer. I asked him what had been the effect of the Child Support Agency on ancillary relief hearings. He said that it had created unhappy dads and bitter mums. It is now much more difficult to settle cases because men are more reluctant to agree to a clean break. They say, "What is the point of transferring the entire equity in the matrimonial home when it will be ignored by the CSA? I shall never be able to afford to get back on my feet, rehouse myself and begin another relationship."

That is leading to more problems for women. What used in family law to be called the Martin order, which was disapproved of, is now re-emerging. Under such an order, there is no clean break and the house is sold on death, remarriage of the woman or permanent co-habitation. At half-past 5 o'clock today, I was told by my former colleague in Bristol that the re-emergence of the order is once again leading to old questions like, "Is Mummy still seeing Uncle Bill?" If permanent cohabitation can be proved, the woman can be tipped out of the house, which can then be sold. That is what is happening in family law as a direct result of the agency. The hon. Member for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Heald) said that, as a barrister, he recognised that women want to keep the family home. The House must recognise that that is now less likely. I do not see how that can serve the interests of children.

Yesterday in *The Observer*, the Secretary of State for Social Security was quoted as saying that it was difficult to persuade the public that parents should be responsible for their children. I do not believe that to be true. Most people agree that parents should be responsible for their children, which is why the initial idea of the agency received such widespread support. The bitterness is in the experience. A few months ago, HTV held a phone-in after an hour-long debate asking whether the Child Support Agency should be scrapped. Such phone-ins are a bit hit and miss and anecdotal, but the response was staggering: 71 per cent. of people in the Bristol area thought that the agency should be scrapped, never mind modified.

The difficulty lies in persuading people that the agency is delivering a system which encourages parental responsibility, which provides that such responsibility is about things other than money—although money is very important—and which supports children. As so many hon. Members have said in the debate, children are so often ignored. The Government's own figures show that 3 million children in this country are living in poverty. They are the people whom we should be concerned about tonight and in the future.

9.19 pm

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): To conclude a long and interesting debate, I should like to say that I regard this last year as an enormous achievement. I say that deliberately, because this evening we have heard a catalogue of personal disasters. Yes, the administration of the Child Support Agency has gone awry, but let us also consider the other side of the equation.

There has been an enormous cultural shift, in that parents now realise that maintaining their children is not an option but an obligation. I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on bringing the agency into being with a tremendous amount of determination and despite considerable opposition from the Labour party. It was curious that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) tried to steal our clothing. He can try, but the truth is that we have got the CSA on the road.

Thousands of feckless fathers are being brought to book and are now paying maintenance. We are teaching society, and now society is learning for itself, that a child is for life—one cannot opt out of a child's upbringing and support. The Government should be congratulated on changing the climate in Britain in that way.

9.20 pm

Miss Joan Lestor (Eccles): I begin by putting on record exactly what the Labour party said when the Child Support Agency was introduced because, while the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) said that we opposed it on all counts, the Secretary of State said that we supported it. The reasoned amendment that we tabled at the time stated

"this House declines to give a Second Reading to a Bill which, while providing that absent parents should contribute to the support of their children, leaves lone parents on Income Support not one penny better off, makes lone parents worse off where they receive maintenance just above Income Support levels and thus lose access to passported benefits, allows maintenance payments to be disrupted if the absent parent defaults, does not take account of property settlements which could lead to an increase in orders for the home to be sold, leaves unclear in which cases the lone parent will be exempt from the requirement to help the Agency trace the absent parent and therefore from the penalty of loss of benefit imposed on the caring parent, and does not tackle more serious problems facing lone parents and their children, notably the provision of better childcare facilities."—[*Official Report*, 4 June 1991; Vol. 192, c. 194.]

I read that into the record again because I have been here long enough to have heard history being rewritten many times and want to make it clear what our position was.

It is clear from almost every contribution that we have heard tonight that what we said in our reasoned amendment has come to pass. Some of us also expressed grave concern about the plight of second families and stepchildren, and I hope to have time to comment on them.

Before I go any further, it is my great pleasure to congratulate the hon. Member for Eastleigh (Mr. Chidgey) on his maiden speech. Many of us felt that we knew Eastleigh pretty well by the time the by-election was over; but having listened to his detailed information about housing, rising crime and the jobs situation in Eastleigh, we realise that we clearly did not know it as well as he now does. I am also pleased that the hon. Gentleman found time to highlight his constituents' concerns about the CSA. We all look forward to hearing from him again—perhaps next time, he speaks he will not have to compete with the world cup.

In the reasoned amendment, we expressed our concern, but where do we go from there? One of the difficulties with the Child Support Act 1991 was the way in which it was sold to the House. Many hon. Members who voted for it have since said that, although they agree with the agency in principle, the application is a bit rough. We were told that people would benefit and that most of those who would be contacted would be the Jack-the-lads—

"the tower block stags who jump from one flat to the other with no responsibility for the children they father".

That quotation is part of the background to the Child Support Act 1991.

Mr. David Shaw: Name him.

Miss Lestor: The hon. Gentleman knows who said it; I remember it very well. That was some of the language that was used about the Act.

To be fair to the House, the Act was sold to us. It was a crusade, and hon. Members thought that the people targeted would, in the main, be non-paying people—absconding parents, not absent parents who were already paying. The Minister has said that 60 per cent. of fathers who were contacted were not paying maintenance. If that is true, 40 per cent. were, but the Minister always puts it the other way round. Some 40 per cent. of the men contacted were already paying.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House have made the important point that one-off settlements have not been taken into consideration. My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, East (Ms Corston) said that children have been put against children of new relationships formed before the Child Support Agency came in. Stepchildren have been put against other children in an effort to try to meet the agency's requirements. Women, and especially children —I am very much concerned with the children—have been taken off benefit, as we said in our reasoned amendment. Having lost their passported benefits, they are often worse off; and they are also worse off because the maintenance of the men concerned has often militated against those men keeping contact with the children.

It has been said—some of this has been documented —that fathers who have previously paid mortgages on homes for their first families will have to choose between meeting the Child Support Agency's assessment and paying the mortgages. The house will then be sold, with dire consequences for the children.

To show that I am even-handed—I am not making a case for fathers alone— let me tell the House that I am still appalled by the reply I have received which says that fathers who are abroad can get away with it because there is no means of contacting them. If we are concerned with both sides of the argument, we should look at that point a little more carefully.

People have also asked where the money is. The hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) said that he walked around the Treasury looking for the money, but could not find it. It has gone in administration: it has gone in paying the staff of the Child Support Agency; and it has gone in paying for the buildings, in exactly the same way as the money from the poll tax, which we do not mention any more, went on equipment, buildings and staff. And we know what happened to the poll tax.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): We were right about that, too.

Miss Lestor: We were.

Some hon. Members said that they were concerned about the taxpayer. Australia, which started this business, was also concerned about the taxpayer, but in Australia, half the money went to the children and there was a disregard, which we have asked Ministers to consider.

Several of my hon. Friends and other hon. Members have made points that we could all repeat time and again. My hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), who is so knowledgeable in these matters and who is Chairman of the Select Committee on Social Security, has asked the questions that should be answered tonight. The Minister is not an unfeeling man in these matters. I sat with him during a spirited lobby, and I know that he is under pressure. So let me ask him whether the CSA is working. Is it working for more people than the number for whom it is causing misery? Those questions should be answered.

Many of us are a little tired of the Government hiding behind the Select Committee. They hold off their hon. Friends who may want to vote with us, saying that they should wait and look at the Select Committee report. They say that they have made a few adjustments and that they will listen again. That should not be necessary, because we all know that many people are suffering under the Act and that few are benefiting. That is what we should consider.

We have asked how the formula works, but nobody has explained that in the House. I believe that it is computer programmed—that one presses a button and gets something out at the other end. That is why, when we try to deal with the agency, we find it so difficult to get any variation in its decisions.

It is important that we should consider the Child Support Agency alongside the Children Act 1989. The Children Act rightly seeks, in this year of the family and at all times, to ensure that people keep contact with their children. We all agree with that. The Children Act refers to the necessity at times of residence orders, joint residence orders, joint contact, contact with grandparents and a variety of other matters.

The CSA does not work as the Children Act works in that respect. The children must spend 102 nights with the father—if the father is the absent parent—before he can claim benefit. That does not take into account the 87 or 85 nights that are set against that. If the Children Act is to work properly and take into account the need for joint residence orders and so forth, the CSA must work with it

[Miss Lestor]

and ensure that the parent without care who wants contact with the children and wants to share responsibility for them does not find that he is financially unable to do so because the CSA does not take into account what it costs him.

Several hon. Members referred to the difficulties in which we find ourselves in dealing with CSA cases. My hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mrs. Kennedy) said that, in one of the cases that she took up with the agency, the harassment and demands continued, even though she had made representations about what she and her constituent considered to be an unfair assessment and application of the principle. I think that that is the experience of many of us here. We take up a constituent's case. It takes a very long time to have the case looked at and at the same time the wheels continue to grind relentlessly. Our constituents think that we are not bothering because it takes such a long time to obtain an answer.

The hon. Member for Orpington (Mr. Horam) was right —I never thought that I would have to say that about him —when he said that the legislation was rushed through; that no real consultative process took place; and that we had got ourselves into an unsatisfactory position. He made the point, as did other hon. Members, that arrears were cropping up before the final assessment was reached. That cannot be, and is not, right or fair.

Other hon. Members have made important points about the passported benefits and where we go from here. We will not go back to the courts. That is clear, because that system was unsatisfactory, but that does not mean that we have got it right now. I should have thought that it would be obvious to anyone that we are calling for a review to see what can be done to mitigate the worst effects. I hope that the Minister will give us some encouragement in that respect.

My hon. Friends the Members for Bow and Poplar (Ms Gordon) and for York (Mr. Bayley) said that the Children Act was supposed to be a child support Act. It was supposed to alleviate poverty among children. Instead, for obvious reasons, it is increasing poverty among many children. I am sure that the House never intended that to take place, but that is what is happening.

I agreed with my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Wicks)—we always seem to agree on these matters—that what was needed was a family social policy, and that the Child Support Act 1991 was operating in a vacuum. If one operates in a vacuum and tries to deal with one aspect of child poverty, one is bound to get it wrong. That is exactly what has happened.

It is also important to consider carefully the way in which men in particular—I am not defending only men; it is usually men, but not always—have been put in a position which makes it difficult for them to continue to visit their children. That should worry the House very much. In these days of increasing divorce and breakdown in relationships, organisations such as Relate and others say that they want things worked out properly. The interests of the children are paramount. They tell the parents that they must work the matter out in the interests of the children, whatever their personal difficulties may be.

Mostly men, but occasionally women, have said to us, "I cannot afford to visit my children any more. It is a long journey. My travel-to-work expenses are not taken into account. The amount that it costs me to visit my children, with all that is associated with a visit, is not taken into account." Rather than enhancing the life of the child, we are making it much worse. That surely cannot be what the House intended. Yet we all know from our surgeries that that is taking place. In some instances, we have created a monster that has got out of hand in that respect.

I must refer to what the hon. Member for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe) said about being harassed and treated unfortunately by people who are against the CSA, as it is important. We cannot be responsible for people who behave badly. I in no way excuse them, as the problem must be worked out through argument and discussion, not by trying to inhibit people who are making another point, and I do not support such action.

The hon. Members for Broxbourne and for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Heald) quoted Families Need Fathers and some of the things that it has allegedly said. People on the fringes of all organisations can sometimes cause grave embarrassment and behave extremely badly. My hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding) and I have met members of Families Need Fathers on several occasions. The members whom we met were not as concerned about the Child Support Act 1991 as they were about access to their children. They have pointed out that, in many instances, the Act militates against access, rather than enhancing it. If some fringe elements are giving foolish advice, most members of the organisation would not go along with it.

The House should be concerned about changing relationships in this country today and about the number of children who lose contact with one of their parents because of divorce or separation. That is happening to hundreds of children all the time, and if the House has done anything to encourage it, or to make it more difficult for contact to be maintained, the Government should give the matter their urgent attention. The situation is frightening.

Under the Children Act 1989, contact orders can be made for grandparents to keep in touch with their grandchildren, but for a variety of reasons the courts seldom uphold them. Such contacts are vital for children. If the CSA is assisting the process by unwittingly preventing access to parents—which was never the intention—the matter should be reconsidered as it is very serious.

When the Government first introduced the Child Support Bill, they said that it would operate on a straightforward principle and that it aimed to improve on the existing court system, which had failed so many children and their mothers, leaving more than 80 per cent. of lone parents on income support. We were told that that was the principle. Many hon. Members who did not support our reasoned amendment at the time thought, "Great—something is going to be done." We have learnt since the enactment of the Bill that family policies are never that straightforward.

Acts of Parliament—especially those such as the Child Support Act 1991—that have a strong and direct impact on the lives of children and their separated parents, cannot be viewed in isolation from a proper family policy. In this international year of the family, I should have thought that the Government would take that into consideration when studying the way in which the CSA is working.

I think that the Minister is aware that most sections of the House have expressed disquiet of one sort or another about the operation of the 1991 Act. Knowing the Minister,

I think that he will have taken to heart some of the criticisms, although we have not seen many changes—there have been some—in the Child Support Agency and the way in which it works. If we are concerned with children's welfare and with keeping them in touch with both parents rather than with driving wedges between new and first families, we need to reconsider. It is a pity that we do not have family courts of the type that some of us have described in the past, as that would be a good way in which to deal with such matters.

We have tried to be the voice of the child, not that of the father or mother. The agency was sold to us as a Child Support Agency, but we were then told that the money was to go to the Treasury, because, after all, taxpayers should not have to support children when their parents are in a position to do so. That is fine, but many parents are not in a position to do so. The fact that the terms of the Act were made retrospective, when people made arrangements without knowing that that would happen, is indefensible. That is why we have described some of the difficulties that have been encountered.

Conservative Members have expressed their disquiet about the Act, as they have done before, and said that, although they accept the principle—as we all do—the Act has gone sadly wrong for their constituents. They asked what the Government would do to make life better for their constituents and their children. I hope that those hon. Members will have the courage to join us in the Lobby tonight. I hope that they will not be put off by the Minister saying, as I know he will, that the Government are waiting for the Select Committee report, will consider what has been said today and will, if necessary, make adjustments as they have done in the past.

This is not a waiting game: it is important for all of us and for the children in our society. I hope, therefore, that some of the Conservative Members who spoke against the CSA will join us in the Lobby.

9.40 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Allistair Burt): The hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) is right. I will ask my colleagues to resist the motion standing in the name of the Leader of the Opposition, to read carefully the amendment standing in the name of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and to support it.

I begin by echoing what the hon. Member for Eccles said about the new hon. Member for Eastleigh (Mr. Chidgey). On behalf of all my colleagues, may I say how much we appreciated his kind references to Stephen Milligan and the work that he did for all too brief a period in the House. I enjoyed the hon. Member's strong contribution to the debate. He had the luxury of being the only spokesman for his party, and he took that role very well. I am sure that we will hear more from him in the future.

The debate was led off in fine style by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, who conducted the House through the affairs of the Child Support Agency with clarity and precision. He made it clear how difficult it has been to introduce changes in child support throughout the world, whether in the United States, New Zealand or Australia. He put the difficulties in context. I wish that more Opposition Members had taken more to heart what he said about the difficulties that were bound to be faced when introducing such legislation.

My right hon. Friend was supported by strong speeches from my hon. Friends the Members for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh), for Calder Valley (Sir D. Thompson), for Orpington (Mr. Horam), for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier), for Eastbourne (Mr. Waterson), for Shoreham (Mr. Stephen), for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe), for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Heald), for Castle Point (Dr. Spink), for Dover (Mr. Shaw) and for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland). I am grateful to my colleagues for the support they gave, notwithstanding the fact that they all had concerns and issues that they wanted to raise at the same time, which is only fair.

As the hon. Member for Eccles wanted to put the record straight about Labour's position, let me do just that. She may have read out the Opposition's reasoned amendment to the Second Reading of the Bill, but she did not go on to tell us that the Labour party did not vote against its Third Reading. The Opposition did not vote against the regulations on all the occasions when we discussed the formula in Committee. It is not true that the House has not had an explanation of the formula, because it was considered in regulations dealt with in Committee. To my knowledge, that formula was not voted against.

I should like to mention the comments of the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen), who was one of the Opposition spokesmen on social security in 1991. He said of the Child Support Bill:

> "The Opposition will adhere to the principle that the responsibility for children rests with the parents, and their welfare will always be paramount in our consideration of these issues. The Bill accepts that principle, and in that sense we accept its main planks."—[*Official Report*, 18 July 1991; Vol.195, c. 573.]

I should have thought that we have been discussing those main planks tonight, but, all too often, Opposition Members try to wriggle free of them.

The debate has centred on administration and policy and I should like to tackle the question of administration first. The debate takes place on the day that the first report of the CSA has been published. It reviews last year's work and its prospects for next year. I believe that it was the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) who referred to the report as an honest piece of work, and I am pleased that he did so.

Mr. Frank Field *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Burt: I am sorry; if it was not the hon. Member for Birkenhead, it must have been somebody else.

It has been a difficult and challenging year for the agency, for a number of reasons which my right hon. Friend mentioned. The project was taken on from scratch and the agency had to do a great deal of work under extremely difficult conditions. I admit that a number of targets have not been met, but the agency has made it clear that it wishes to do better. Ministers must also be responsible for that. I say straightforwardly that the agency has not achieved everything that I wished it to achieve, but it is important to understand the context in which it has worked and recognise not only where it has not done well but what we have done to secure improvements and change.

The Child Support Agency should not be judged on one year's operation. It was accepted when it was set up that it would take on its case load over four years and be

[Mr. Burt]

evaluated over 10 years. It must change a child support culture in circumstances which the hon. Member for Birkenhead described as the biggest change in social policy since 1945. It should therefore be judged over a longer period than a year, and Ministers have been determined to seek changes in the agency to improve its operation.

I repeat what my right hon. Friend said: although things were difficult last year, this year we are completing maintenance assessments twice as fast, we have doubled the number of cases in which we are enforcing maintenance, and we are taking steps to deal with the correspondence problems. Errors and delays in correspondence are known to all hon. Members, and I am sorry about all those cases in which the delay has been unacceptable.

Anyone who wants to know what it is like to be at the receiving end has only to listen to the hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham), who left me in no doubt about what "errors in correspondence", which is an easy phrase to utter from the Dispatch Box, means to constituents and hon. Members who are waiting for something to happen so that they can inform people. The hon. Gentleman put it just right and we are making every effort to improve that system. Of course, I apologise for those cases that have been delayed.

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: Given that many of the complaints to hon. Members on both sides of the House have been specifically about administration and the delays and mistakes that have caused such anguish to those concerned, should not the Government have adjusted more quickly the targets to which agency staff were working? If staff were working flat out to achieve impossible targets, was it not far easier to make mistakes?

Mr. Burt: The staff have always been aware of the agency's targets. It was clear from the rearrangement of work that had to be made within three months of setting up the agency and the reaction to changes made in February that certain benefit-saving targets, for example, would not be met. Staff knew that from an early stage. They have always worked as hard as possible and the administration has constantly adjusted to ensure that the work was more efficient. I assure the hon. Lady that adherence to unrealistic targets has not caused the problems.

The hon. Lady will be aware that the targets set for next year are based, quite properly, on the agency's experience. It is sensible to look at the work that has been done and, allowing for reasonable improvements, set targets on that basis rather than on assumptions that must be made when setting up an organisation with no experience in live running.

I am happy to reassure hon. Members that the Government take the problems of the agency's administration extremely seriously. A plan is in operation to secure recovery in all aspects of its work and there are already signs of improvement in that work. Standards must continue to improve, and they will.

The debate revealed a couple of other factors of which we have not seen enough in the past. More voices were raised on behalf of women than we have heard in past debates on this subject. One of the defining moments was when the hon. Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Wicks) said that trying to provide better maintenance, which is aimed at helping mothers and children—nine out of 10 parents with care are women—had somehow turned into an argument about men's problems. He pointed out that much of the debate and newspaper coverage had focused on men's concerns.

All too often in these debates that point of view is not put clearly. However, tonight, it was put across by the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms Jackson), it was put across most clearly by my hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne, and it was put across in an intervention by the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott). The points that have been made to recognise the importance of women's position in this argument have all too often not been heard, and I was pleased that those points were made.

It remains a cardinal principle for us that the maintenance system will produce more maintenance for more children over a period, and that maintenance will be a continual source of support to women, often as they go back to work and as their children grow older.

Another argument that raged in the debate was on the law. Clearly there are two different opinions about how the previous system worked. There was stout defence by the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Llwyd), but that had to be posed in opposition to my hon. Friends the Members for Gainsborough and Horncastle, for Shoreham and for Hertfordshire, North. They gave their practical experience of how settlements were made in the past, which all too often recognised the position of the taxpayer. The taxpayer was used to underpin settlements and then everyone drifted on.

It is no wonder that the parties were often happy with the arrangements that were made: the unspoken voice was picking up the bill. On the balance of opinion, and the way in which this matter was looked at before the Act was brought in, it has been proved that there is no going back to the courts.

My hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point raised the sensitive issue of lesbian parents and other such matters. As society changes, my feeling is that such cases are slightly unhappy. But as for responsibility, my hon. Friend was absolutely right. Where there is a biological father and the child has not been produced through sperm donation, which is protected by confidentiality, there can be no private arrangement that will leave the taxpayer picking up the bill. It is right to pursue the biological father, and the Child Support Agency will do that.

Let me touch on some policy points. The first one—this was the second defining moment of the debate—is the continual discussion that we have with Opposition Members about the role of the taxpayer. I know that the hon. Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Hall) has taken a great interest in these matters. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Conversations should take place a little more quietly. I can hear many voices which I can identify.

Mr. Burt: I would prefer it if conversations did not take place in the remaining nine minutes of the debate.

The hon. Member for Warrington, South suggested that the taxpayer's interest had been brought in only latterly by the Government, as a side issue. I refer him to both the foreword and page 1 of the White Paper, which set out clearly that the taxpayer's interest was always in our minds

and must therefore have been in the minds of his colleagues when they voted on the Bill, or when they did not raise it as an issue. I quote from the foreword:

"While many absent parents make regular payments, 70 per cent. regrettably do not. The inevitable result is that more and more caring parents and their children have become dependent on Income Support. This makes it more difficult for them to achieve greater independence through working. And, at the same time, it places the responsibility for maintaining the children on other taxpayers, many of whom are raising families of their own."

That was written in October 1990. The hon. Gentleman should not try to tell the House that this is a later issue that the Government have introduced. It is a cardinal point. The hon. Gentleman cannot avoid the importance of returning money to the taxpayer. That is part of the Act—and a part of the Act which he should continue to support.

It is interesting that the second defining moment of the debate was the silence that came upon the Opposition Benches when the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington referred to the fact that fathers found it all too easy to leave the mothers of their children on income support. The Opposition went very quiet then.

Mr. Robert Jackson (Wantage): Notwithstanding what my hon. Friend is saying, I know that he will recognise that there continues to be disquiet among Conservative Members about the operation and policy of the CSA. I shall support him in the Lobbies tonight, but on the basis that we await the report from the Select Committee, and that we shall be looking for a truly serious review in the context of that report.

Mr. Burt: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, and I shall cover that in my closing remarks.

Mr. Dewar: I am sure that the Minister would not like to leave the impression with the House or with those who read reports of our proceedings that the Government have no plans apart from waiting to see what the Select Committee produces. Can he give us any indication of any area in which he believes reform is necessary?

Mr. Burt: I shall come to that too in my closing remarks—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"]—because it is a serious point.

A number of hon. Members mentioned certain policy items to do with the formula or with something else about which they were worried. The Government showed by the way in which they introduced reforms in February that they do listen. The words that they used about keeping the agency under review when it came into effect were not empty. When they saw the need to change, and once the need for practical change had been proved, the Government acted.

A third defining moment in the debate came with the contrast between the speeches by the hon. Members for Garscadden and for Birkenhead. The hon. Member for Garscadden, asking us to support his motion tonight, falls into a trap avoided by his hon. Friend. He does not merely describe the problems with the agency; he defines the solutions, but only in the usual vague and unthought-through way. He talks about an appeal system, but he was unable to answer the crucial question, asked him by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, about who should be included in that system.

Some Opposition Members would take matters further; they urged the repeal of the entire Act. The hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Ms Gordon) clearly took that line. The House, however, should take note of what the hon. Member for Birkenhead said. He recognised how far the agency had come. That recognition means that we are in a position to keep it under review and to decide what must be done for the future. As he said, we still lack the information, even after the first year's running, to decide what to do about certain areas of policy.

The hon. Gentleman spoke about keeping an open mind on reform. The Government are clearly committed to responding to the need for change, as indeed they have already responded. That means that hon. Members should vote for the amendment, not for the motion.

Mr. Frank Field: What I said was that it was difficult for anyone to come to a conclusion because no one knew whether the agency was working or not. The Government have provided no figures to tell us whether it is a success, or whether the chaos is increasing. When will the Government provide us with the data to enable the House to come to a conclusion on these matters?

Mr. Burt: I do not accept that the issue is as stark as the hon. Gentleman suggests. He, more than most, should be aware of the number of cases being dealt with and of the work being done. Eight hundred and fifty thousand cases have been taken on. So far this year, 163,000 maintenance assessments have been cleared. Crucially, that is almost half the total—336,500—cleared in the whole of the agency's first year. That means that it is picking up speed; its case load is increasing and it is proving some sort of success.

As for the future, a great many concerns on a variety of issues, to which I have listened carefully, have been raised in the debate. A number of hon. Members know that I have personally spoken to them about those issues. It is still not clear precisely what changes may be needed and when they might be introduced. Our strong commitment was shown by the way that we introduced changes in February. When there is a need for change, the Government will make it. We are committed to keeping the agency under proper review, and we shall consider carefully how that should be done. We are not making vague suggestions and promises. The Opposition cannot suggest concrete ideas, and that is why our amendment should be accepted.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 273, Noes 311.

Division No. 279] **[9.59 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane	Bermingham, Gerald
Adams, Mrs Irene	Berry, Roger
Ainger, Nick	Betts, Clive
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*	Blair, Tony
Allen, Graham	Blunkett, David
Alton, David	Boateng, Paul
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*	Boyes, Roland
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*	Bradley, Keith
Armstrong, Hilary	Bray, Dr Jeremy
Ashton, Joe	Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Austin-Walker, John	Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Barnes, Harry	Burden, Richard
Barron, Kevin	Byers, Stephen
Battle, John	Cabom, Richard
Bayley, Hugh	Callaghan, Jim
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret	Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.	Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Bell, Stuart	Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony	Canavan, Dennis
Bennett, Andrew F.	Cann, Jamie
Benton, Joe	Chidgey, David

Chisholm, Malcolm
Church, Judith
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hodge, Margaret
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Sheffld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
MacShane, Denis
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stern, Michael
Stevenson, George
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Timms, Stephen
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John Cummings and
Mr. Ray Powell.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushf)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shr)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony

Dykes, Hugh
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, Sir John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Rt Hon Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. James Arbuthnot.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments) and agreed to.*

MADAM SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House reaffirms its support for the principle, to which the Child Support Act 1991 and the Child Support Agency give effect, that parents should support their children where they are able to do so; accepts that the taxpayer should only have to provide this support when parents cannot afford to; welcomes the help the Agency has already been able to give many parents with care and the support it has received from organisations representing lone parents; condemns deliberate attempts to obstruct the workings of the Agency; recognises the changes introduced in February and the urgent steps being taken to improve the service the Agency gives parents; and acknowledges the continuing concerns over child support issues and therefore welcomes the Government's commitment to continue to keep the scheme under scrutiny and to bring forward further changes should these prove necessary.'.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Vehicle Excise and Registration Bill [*Lords*] and the Value Added Tax Bill [*Lords*] may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

Orders of the Day

Vehicle Excise and Registration Bill *[Lords]*

Order for Second Reading read.

10.15 pm

The Solicitor-General (Sir Derek Spencer): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The Bill is the first of two consolidation Bills before the House tonight. It was produced by the draftsmen of the Law Commission and consolidates the enactments relating to vehicle excise duty and the registration of vehicles. There is a need for consolidation because provision about the subject has been made by numerous Finance Acts and other Acts since the last major consolidation in 1971.

In addition, the peculiar history of the provisions has the result that the current law cannot be ascertained by referring to the provisions in the body of the Vehicles (Excise) Act 1971 alone. It is necessary, in addition, to refer to modifications contained in the schedule which had originally been expected to operate transitionally for a few years only. During its passage in another place, the Bill was considered in the usual way by the Joint Committee on Consolidation Bills.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North) *rose—*

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. When the Minister sat down, I stood up. Am I entitled to participate in the debate?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): I missed the hon. Gentleman, or he missed me, and I am afraid that it is too late for him to speak now.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House. *—[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

Bill immediately considered in Committee; reported, without amendment.

Mr. Marlow: I merely wanted to ask a brief question of my hon. Friend the Minister on whether clauses 1 to 20 should stand part of the Bill. An article in today's edition of the *Evening Standard* suggests that the form sent in when a vehicle passes from one party to another contains a box stating the mileage at the time of transfer. That box is filled in voluntarily, but if people were required to fill it in it would be much easier to prevent the clocking of vehicles. It would be possible for the authorities to assess the mileage as vehicles were transferred from one owner to another. There would also be a record of the mileage on the vehicle when the vendor passed it on to the purchaser. That seems an interesting and positive suggestion and I was wondering how my hon. Friend would react to it.

The Solicitor-General: As the House knows, this is a consolidation Bill. The Joint Committee on Consolidation Bills certified that it was purely a matter of consolidation and did not change the existing law. The point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) is not a matter relating to the consolidation Bill, but out of courtesy to him I shall pass on his comments to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport.

Motion made, and Question, That the Bill be now read the Third time, *put forthwith and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed, without amendment.

Value Added Tax Bill [*Lords*]

Order for Second Reading read.

10.19 pm

The Solicitor-General (Sir Derek Spencer): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

This, too, is purely a consolidation of the enactments relating to value added tax that are now found in the Value Added Tax Act 1983 and a number of subsequent Finance Acts.

10.20 pm

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): May I ask my hon. and learned Friend what the effect would be if, when you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, read out the various clauses on stand part in Committee, the House divided on them? I understand that, as the Bill is a consolidation measure, we could do nothing about it.

The Solicitor-General: That would be a point of order for the Chair, not a matter for me.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House. *—[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am sorry to try your patience. If the House were to vote against any of the clauses on stand part, this being a consolidation measure, what would be the effect?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): I thought that the hon. Gentleman was aware that the House was entitled to vote against anything it wishes to vote against.

Mr. Marlow: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If the House then votes against any of the clauses, the consolidation measure will not be as brought before the House, although the Committee has looked at it in detail. Can the rest of the Bill then go through, with bits struck out because the House has voted against them?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have no doubt that whoever is in charge of the Bill will consider the position.

Bill considered in Committee; reported, without amendment.

Motion made, and Question, That the Bill be now the Third time, *put forthwith and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed without amendment.

PETITION

Road Traffic, Collingham

10.23 pm

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): I beg to ask leave to present the following petition.

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled.

The Humble Petition of the undersigned people of Collingham in the County of Nottingham and elsewhere SHEWETH that:—

The level of road traffic through the village of Collingham aforesaid is unacceptable and is increasing, and that the need for a bypass is urgent.

The petitioners therefore request the House of Commons to urge the Secretary of State for Transport to ensure that in conjunction with the County Council of the said County of

And your petitioners, as duty bound, will ever pray, etc.

I am aware that I am not allowed to make a speech and I do not propose to make one. I merely wish to point out that 854 people from the village of Collingham have signed the petition, which shows the seriousness of their plight and that nothing has been done by the county council or under the guidance and urging of the Department of Transport. I have no alternative, therefore, but to present the petition to Parliament, which I do with pleasure and honour on their behalf.

To lie upon the Table.

Apple Industry

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

10.26 pm

Sir Roger Moate (Faversham): I welcome this chance briefly to raise on the Floor of the House the serious problems facing the English apple industry.

It is now widely understood that the problems facing the industry are indeed serious. The word "crisis" is much over-used in politics, but that is what some growers are facing now and what the whole industry could be facing if, heaven forbid, the 1994-95 season is a repeat of last year's. If some crop forecasts for Europe are correct, this will be the third year in a row in which growers will face serious financial hardship, and many will go out of business altogether. The loss to them, the rural economy, the countryside and the consumer would be great indeed.

I welcome my hon. Friend the Minister of State to the debate. He has, with his personal knowledge of the industry—I say this deliberately—been working phenomenally hard to find answers. I welcome, too, the Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Clwyd South-West (Mr. Jones), who, with the Minister's permission, hopes to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and speak for a couple of minutes in the debate; my hon. Friend the Member for Medway (Dame P. Fenner), who is secretary of the newly formed all-party parliamentary British industry fruit group; and many other hon. Friends, who have so strongly supported the apple and fruit industry.

I know that there is tremendous support in both Houses for early action to help the English apple industry to stave off an immediate crisis and to secure long-term viability in a tough free-trade environment. I emphasise that the industry is not looking for subsidy or handouts. It has always had to stand on its own two feet, but it cannot do so in the face of a tidal wave of imports generated by what can reasonably be called, in the broadest terms, unfair competition.

That unfairness results from the distortions of the intervention system of the European Community, from subsidised growing over long periods in the third world and from predatory pricing. In addition, the United Kingdom is the most open market for fruit in the world, and we grow only 30 per cent. of our total apple consumption. Only 30 per cent. does not sound much, but we should remind ourselves that the figure represents employment—full and part time—for nearly 100,000 people in the rural economy. It represents some of the finest—I would say the best—fruit, with the best flavour, in the world.

Our orchards are an essential part of our countryside. Figures for 1992 show that the wholesale value of fruit to, as it were, United Kingdom Ltd. was some £257 million, with a retail value of £736 million, so someone in the middle is making a good margin.

I do not exaggerate when I say that all that is at risk. I think that the Minister and the Ministry could help greatly by publishing authoritative statistics to emphasise the importance of British horticulture in terms of value, employment and the number of people who are dependent on this tremendously important sector. How long can

[Sir Roger Moate]

growers survive if prices this season, like those last season and the season before, literally cover only half the cost of production?

Without subsidy, the industry has dramatically improved its marketing, packaging, advertising and grading. It produces the highest quality apples and, given an orderly market and fair competition, can increase its market share in the United Kingdom and move into exports.

Now is not the time to record all the work that the industry can do and is doing for itself, but it is summed up in the words of David Browning, the executive chairman of English Apples and Pears Ltd. In his latest newsletter, he states that:

"political support alone will not reverse the fortunes of our industry and we must press on with our measures of self-help."

I pay tribute to a number of organisations for the work that they have done—English Apples and Pears Ltd, of course; the National Farmers Union; and the British Independent Fruit Growers Association, all of whom are fighting valiantly for the industry in these challenging times.

Before I deal with political support and the steps that need to be taken, I think that it is right to say something about the supermarket buyers who, to a large extent, hold the answer in their hands.

I do not doubt the good intentions of the great supermarket chains. As a rule, their support for the industry is genuine. I do not denigrate them in any way, but, if the industry "delivers the goods"—in terms of quality and price—the retailers that dominate the market can surely give better, longer-term contracts for the quality fruit that the British grower can produce. That applies equally to vegetables. One hopes that, in view of the possible political measures and those which the industry can take itself, supermarket buyers can go further and provide longer-term contracts to suppliers.

What do we want from the Government and the European Economic Community? First, I should like my hon. Friend the Minister to tell us the latest on the grubbing grant proposals which were adopted, I understand, by the Council of Ministers on 23 June, but which have yet to receive final approval. We welcome the scheme. It is a crucial step towards reducing the enormous structural surplus in Europe.

However, I quote verbatim from a note sent out by the National Farmers Union, which has been playing a major role in the fight to protect the industry. A paragraph entitled "Grubbing Up" states:

"We would like the UK Government to insist that the proposals adopted at the Council of Ministers meeting on 23 June be resubmitted at the Council meeting on 16 July with the following amendment:

the removal of the age limit for eligible orchards; in the current proposals orchards must be less than 20 years. We suggest that if an age limit is imposed, a derogation be allowed for Bramley trees of up to 75 years to address the issue of poor quality fruit associated with old orchards"

The UK Government should treat the matter with the utmost urgency and press for an early implementation of the grubbing up scheme by using the fast track method in invoking the appropriate Statutory Instrument".

It seems illogical to exclude older orchards, which can be highly productive, but produce lower-quality fruit.

I have a letter from a grower, which makes the point very effectively. It states;

"Recent financially poor years have caused considerable postponements of our replanting programme and I now find that much of my farm has trees on it that are over twenty years old and will not qualify for grant aid . . . If the twenty year rule is kept in place it will fail to ensure the reduction of the surplus products the grant was designed to prevent. It will stop those who are willing to get out because they will not be able to afford to."

I ask the Minister please to seek a derogation or some flexibility for older dessert orchards—perhaps 25 years or more. We must have flexibility if we are to make the scheme work well.

Secondly, I ask my hon. Friend to say something about the intervention system and where we have got to in trying to reform or, preferably, eliminate it. It is clearly unacceptable, some would say obscene, that in France, for example, more than one third of production was grown to be destroyed, partly at the expense of the British taxpayer. In Greece, 76 per cent. of nectarines and 61 per cent. of the peach crop went into intervention. It is a mad system, and I hope that we shall see the end of it fairly soon.

Thirdly, I ask my hon. Friend please to tell us, or to press the European Commission to tell us, the full implications for top fruit of the general agreement on tariffs and trade and of the agreements with Chile, which may set the pattern for other third countries. If the agreements, which I understand go beyond GATT obligations, result in a flood of imports during our principal selling season, without any agreements from the countries concerned about orderly marketing, all our efforts, whether political efforts or the internal efforts of the industry, will have been in vain. We have to be strenuous and robust in dealing with any dumping and any unfair competition—and I mean robust.

Although my hon. Friend has been pretty robust so far, I am not sure whether he completely meets the suggestion from David Browning last year. Mr. Browning says:

"We are not asking for something which is illegal. We are merely asking our civil servants to take on their new role in Europe on the same basis as our competitors' Governments, which have been more generous, more ingenious and possibly, in some cases, more devious, in using national aids of various kinds to assist their producers."

Fourthly, there has been talk of more specific help in the form of grants for modernising or completely replacing cold store facilities. This is, I understand, permissible within European Community rules and perhaps my hon. Friend could say a word about that.

Fifthly, is there any more help that the Government can reasonably give to support new marketing initiatives, such as the encouragement of apple consumption in England? It is odd that we still eat fewer apples than people in most other European countries, although we produce the best. Perhaps the Government could give further help with the encouragement of new varieties. What the English grower can offer, above all, is quality, flavour and greater variety, all of which can help to secure a premium price. Any developments and reasonable help that the Government can give in those aspects of apple development and growing would be very helpful.

I include there a special note for my hon. Friend to help, if he can, the Brogdale horticultural trust, the home of the national fruit collection in my constituency, of which I am proud to be a trustee. That, too, is the ideal location for the development of other varieties, which will be tremendously helpful to the industry.

Time does not permit me tonight to develop other questions relating to other aspects of research and development or, for example, the encouragement of

English apple juice, although most of us feel that that is a tremendous untapped resource which could help to sustain the British apple-growing industry. Again, any assistance that we can direct there to encourage an industry that is already important, but which could be of even greater importance will be helpful, and I believe that it is the right area for the Government to help.

I stress that the apple industry, so much of which is in Kent, but which is truly a great British industry, is ready to meet the challenge of tough world competition. However, we need the robust political help which, I strongly believe, the Minister is able and willing to give, to ensure that the competition both in Europe and around the world is absolutely fair. That has not been the case so far, but all the efforts that are being made by everyone now can make that come right. I hope that tonight's debate will help in one small respect in that way.

10.38 pm

Mr. Martyn Jones (Clwyd, South-West): I congratulate the hon. Member for Faversham (Sir R. Moate) on obtaining the debate, and I am grateful to him for allowing me a few minutes to support his case.

He has highlighted the crisis in the apple industry. The Opposition believes that it is not just a blip in the normal agricultural cycle of production but that there is a structural problem. The apple regime has failed and the Government must ensure that Britain has a level orchard, so to speak. One gets fed up with hearing about level playing fields, and orchards are perhaps more appropriate.

United Kingdom apple growers receive 2 per cent. of intervention payments, but the United Kingdom pays 12 per cent. of all the costs of intervention. Therefore, by pure mathematics, UK apple growers miss out by 85 per cent. on the funds. The industry has had a good record of standing on its own two feet, as the hon. Member for Faversham said, but it is essential that the Government should now step in.

I hope that the Minister will tell us that he can give some real assistance to the industry, which employs 100,000 people throughout the United Kingdom, but particularly in Kent, as the hon. Gentleman said. The hon. Member for Faversham also made some real suggestions about how that can be done, and I hope that the Minister will take them on board.

10.39 pm

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Michael Jack): I add my congratulations to my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham (Sir R. Moate) on gaining this particular debate. It is an important subject and one on which I certainly share his passion, having, as he kindly mentioned, made my living in the horticulture industry and been closely involved in buying apples and building up a packing business that goes with it.

I am delighted that in the Chamber this evening we have my hon. Friends the Members for Medway (Dame P. Fenner), for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord), for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice), for Hastings and Rye (Mrs. Lait), for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) and for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) and the hon. Member for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Jones). Their presence for an Adjournment debate in which normally there is only one hon. Member and the Minister present, shows the importance which is attached to this crucial subject.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham said, the subject is crucial to the rural economy of this country. We often forget that, in addition to the growing of apples, there is the industry of packing, storage, distribution and machinery. All that goes with it and is very important.

My hon. Friend the Member for Faversham opened the debate by rightly reflecting on some of the problems of last year's season. He mentioned the excellent work done by English Apples and Pears Ltd. I take my hat off to David Browning and others in the industry, because, in a season of great difficulty, they managed to raise about £1.5 million as a fund to promote English apples and to make certain that in spite of problems they did not take the difficulties lying down. In the same newsletter from which my hon. Friend read, he will see that David Browning highlights one area in which the industry intends to help itself.

I am glad that my hon. Friend took that theme as underlying much of what he said. The industry intends to improve its crop forecasting. If anything went wrong last year, it was that the industry did not properly anticipate the additional stock of apples. Therefore, proper and orderly marketing could not be arranged. The industry has learnt from that. I do not think that the same problem will occur this year.

My hon. Friend posed several questions, and I shall do my best in the time available to respond to them. He rightly drew the attention of the House to the subject of imports. If the industry has set one positive image, it is that it is not per se against imports. It recognises that southern hemisphere fruit has an important part to play in ensuring that there is a good demand of apples 52 weeks of the year, but it is right to emphasise that difficulties arise when there is unplanned marketing of fruit.

For example, large quantities may come from South America and Chile in particular. Where the marketing of that fruit is not properly planned, it coincides with the end point of our season and causes difficulty for growers who have incurred cost in long-term storage of some of their very best fruit. That is a matter which requires almost a world solution.

My hon. Friend asked me to comment on our general agreement on tariffs and trade obligations and the effect that that would have on our prospects for fruit. In coming to an agreement on a more manageable system for controlling southern hemisphere fruit coming into this country at very low prices, the negotiation on the Chilean challenge to the European Union made it possible for Commissioner Brittan to propose a positive date by which he wanted to see the grubbing scheme come before the Council of Agriculture Ministers. That accelerated the whole process of reform of the fruit and vegetable regime, in particular focusing on the subject of grubbing. I shall say a few words about that in a moment.

The way in which the arrangements work with Chile, through GATT, to control third-country imports will be to the advantage of our industry because the scheme will be more transparent, and it has occasioned the arrival of the grubbing situation. It still means that there is a problem, which we will have to continue to discuss with some senders of fruit from the southern hemisphere.

My hon. Friend mentioned authoritative statistics and on that subject I am at one with him. I can assure him from this Dispatch Box that, in the work that I am undertaking

[Mr. Michael Jack]

to study the horticultural industry, I have laid special emphasis on trying to ensure that we first deal with some of the problems of the apple industry. Good statistics—produced using our position as a Ministry of overview—are vital so that people can take informed decisions. I will certainly do my best to find out what we can do to respond positively to the point that my hon. Friend made.

My hon. Friend also mentioned price versus yield. That is crucial for the Cox. One of the results of one thing that the Department has been doing to help the industry—running a seminar for everyone from the inspired individual or independent, who was there at the beginning of the English apple industry, to those representing some of the major co-operative ventures in the industry—was an insight into the way in which new varieties that are being developed may well, under the right circumstances, have yields that will put them on a par with their continental competition. That is a very exciting development.

In concluding, my hon. Friend mentioned the importance of new varieties, and I side with him about that. In addition to the yield and economics of new varieties, there is a growing recognition that the taste of apples is changing. We rightly place much emphasis on the Cox, which lies at the heart of the English apple industry. It is the very tradition—the essence—of what we call English apples. The industry rightly recognises that there is more work to be done in research and development to ensure that the flavour that is the Cox apple is sustained and maintained.

In the long term, we have to look to new varieties. Representatives of one of the supermarkets, who saw me during my studies, said that they had recognised a trend towards some of the newer varieties, such as Braeburn and Gala to name but two, especially among younger fruit eaters. The industry is also looking at Fiesta. That development is encouraging, because it seems to be in tune with the way in which the consumer is going. We spend about £2 million a year on research and development, and it will assist the industry in that work.

My hon. Friend is also a trustee of the Brogdale horticultural trust and I congratulate him on what he does for Brogdale and for the enthusiasm that it shows on the question. The trust made an interesting point. While the search for new varieties continues, it has about 2,300 varieties of apple at Brogdale, which represent an almost untapped potential for looking forward in the industry.

While the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food gives about £200,000 per year to help Brogdale to move forward, I hope that my hon. Friend will not lose sight of the marketing development scheme, which provides grants of up to £150,000 for innovative projects to improve the marketing and operation of large parts of the horticultural industry. I quietly suggest to my hon. Friend a little innovative thought—Brogdale might find the marketing development scheme helpful to it in its wish to exploit its knowledge and resource. I put that on record to show that positive action is available.

While we are talking of additional resources, I suggest that my hon. Friend reminds members of the industry, who may not have seen the press release that we released a week go, that bids are open for the new scheme of processing and marketing grants—the so-called FEOGA scheme. The Commission has not yet come up with the final details of the exact nature of projects that will be supported, but we have a fairly good idea of what they will be.

Some people have already said that they want to make an advanced start on works. Innovative projects in the processing and marketing field in top fruit could well find that those FEOGA grants, which are serious money—£100 million during the next six years—are an area worth exploiting, to assist the industry positively through some of its difficulties.

On positive help, my hon. Friend mentioned cold storage. He may be interested to know that in the submission on the reform of the fruit and vegetable regime to the Commission, the United Kingdom has said that it could accept grant aid for improvements of storage facilities, particularly in the apple sector. We have tried to get that debate going, because I recognise from my discussions with industry representatives that cold storage facilities are a source of concern.

In highlighting research and development, the group marketing scheme, the FEOGA grants and some of the contributions that we have already made to the debate about reforming the fruit and vegetable regime, I hope that my hon. Friend will appreciate that we have taken matters further by trying to provide ways of giving concrete help to the English industry.

At the heart of the current debate is an issue on which my hon. Friend rightly concentrated many of his remarks—the grubbing up scheme. It is a sadness to me that I cannot confirm tonight the precise details of that scheme. It was my earnest hope that the matter would have been agreed at the recent meeting of the Agriculture Council. As my hon. Friend will know that, sadly, no final agreement was made on that occasion. I believe, however, that the issue will be discussed at the next meeting of the Agriculture Council, which will be held this month. I firmly hope that it will come to an agreement.

It is important to put that scheme into context. It is effectively a temporary one, in recognition of Commissioner Brittan's intervention and the needs of the industry. It does not, however, address some of the wider issues of the reform of the fruit and vegetable regime throughout Europe. My hon. Friend was right when he counselled us not to forget the inequities of the intervention scheme. That scheme, which operates throughout Europe, effectively rewards production for no particular end purpose. My hon. Friend was right to say that we gained little advantage from it and that it fuelled the production of apples that are not required.

To that extent, we have advocated a reform of the fruit and vegetable regime, a removal of intervention, coupled with grubbing, because we believe that the two go together. The interim scheme will enable matters to move forward and I know that that will benefit the industry.

My hon. Friend asked whether it was possible to address the question of orchards in which the trees are more than 20 years old. I must tell him that it will be extremely difficult to do that. As matters move forward, however, I will undertake to see whether there is anything that can be done. I must emphasise that that may be a long shot and I should not like to say any more at this stage. I will investigate and evaluate that proposal, because I understand its importance to the industry.

My hon. Friend was right to refer to the consumption of apples. The level of fruit consumption is this country is low. My hon. Friend has highlighted, however, a real

opportunity for our industry. A real gain can be made in the marketplace by English apples, not only the traditional Cox but new varieties, and by English pears. If we consider such consumption in the wider context of the work undertaken as a result of "The Health of the Nation", we can see that the work of the nutrition task force, as well all the other efforts to encourage a healthier style of eating, in which fruit plays a vital part, our apple industry can play its part. The debate comes almost full circle, because the very fact that the industry was able to raise £1.5 million to assist the promotion of its own fruit shows that it, too, is taking that issue extremely seriously.

My hon. Friend mentioned English apple juice, which I enjoy drinking. I refer him back to the subject of FEOGA, because it may offer opportunities. It is interesting to consider whether there can be more integration and co-operation within the industry, in which juicing may play a part. I know that the industry is debating that question.

I hope that my hon. Friend will see that much positive work is being done within that package of measures. He made a salient point about supermarkets' positive support of the industry and the fact that they must take seriously the quality, excellence and safety of English fruit. I guarantee that I will take up that challenge. I intend to invite senior buyers from supermarkets and to underscore that point to them. Although they support the industry, in my humble view they must, on this occasion, put their money where their mouths are and understand that, if they want supplies of the best fruit in Europe, they must continue to give the industry the support that it deserves and recognise the qualities that mean good sales on their shelves and good sales for our apple growers.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at five minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 5 July 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

LONDON UNDERGROUND (GREEN PARK) BILL

Lords amendments agreed to.

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON BILL

Read the Third time, and passed.

CROSSRAIL BILL

Motion made,

That the Crossrail Bill be recommitted to the former Committee.

That it be an Instruction to the Committee to reconsider its decision on the preamble of the Bill as reported by it to the House. —[*Mr. Lidington*]

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. Points of order come after questions. Otherwise, the hon. Gentleman is using up the time for questions.

Mr. Greenway: It is on this.

Madam Speaker: After questions in the usual manner, please.

Oral Answers to Questions

HEALTH

Clinical Waste Incineration

1. **Mr. Shersby:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make it her policy to encourage hospitals within the NHS to make arrangements for the incineration of their clinical waste in such a way as to avoid pollution of the environment in residential areas.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tom Sackville): It is the Government's policy to ensure that all national health service hospitals comply with the requirements of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Mr. Shersby: Is my hon. Friend aware of the environmental and occupational risks that can be caused by the disposal of clinical waste by incinerators such as the one at Hillingdon hospital in my constituency? Is he aware of the report published by the British Medical Association only last week on 30 June? Will he consider the desirability of earmarking resources for a national network of incinerators to dispose of clinical waste well away from residential areas?

Mr. Sackville: We shall be studying that report with interest, as we do all the utterances of the BMA. In particular, I am fully aware of my hon. Friend's consistent representations on behalf of his constituents about the hospital incinerator. However, he must remember the advantages of on-site clinical waste incineration and must take that into account in any other environmental considerations.

Elective Operations

2. **Sir Paul Beresford:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of elective operations are now carried out on a day care basis; and what was the comparable figure 10 years ago.

The Secretary of State for Health (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): The number of day cases in the general acute sector has already doubled since 1988-89, the earliest year for which figures are available. In 1993-94, the proportion of elective admissions treated as day cases reached 48 per cent.

Sir Paul Beresford: This type of day care facility is being used as a specialty by many of the high-quality private health clinics and hospitals in Britain. Is there any trend to encourage health authorities to use those services, which are cost effective, to ease their workload?

Mrs. Bottomley: Where such services provide good value, the health authority is certainly free to establish a contract with an independent provider. The key is that day care provides good value for money. However, my hon. Friend will know that his local hospital, the Mayday trust, did the fifth best in the country in terms of cataract extraction: 90 per cent. of its cases are dealt with on a day basis. The hospital received four stars for cataract operations, four stars for arthroscopy, four stars for laparoscopy and three stars for hernia repair. My hon. Friend has a great deal to be proud of in the Mayday trust.

Ms Lynne: Is the Secretary of State aware that no one will believe the assurances that she gives on day surgery or any other aspect of the health service? If it is all sweetness and light in the health service, can she tell us why the British Medical Association, the Royal College of Nursing and a majority of other medical bodies, and now the Bishop of Birmingham, say that the health reforms are not working? They surely cannot be on their own in that. Will the Secretary of State answer that point?

Mrs. Bottomley: Change is always difficult, but it has to be grasped if we are to protect a remarkable achievement. Today, the anniversary of its founding, the national health service is providing treatment available to all on the basis of clinical need. That means embracing new technology, taking difficult decisions and resisting the temptation to scaremonger rather than lead people forward.

Sir Anthony Durant: Following my right hon. Friend's comments on day surgery and cataracts, will she congratulate the unit at Royal Berkshire Trust hospital, which she visited last Friday and which has had great success in day surgery? Will she congratulate the nurses and doctors on the success of that unit?

Mrs. Bottomley: Most certainly I will. I will also report to the House the comments from the patients whom I met when visiting the unit. They said that they were appalled by the scaremongering which suggested, for example, that patients over the age of 65 would not be treated by the NHS. Those patients, many of them well into their 60s and 70s, gave an account of the quality of the care that they received: they went in in the morning *and returned home* in the evening. Although that hospital got one star in the league tables, it is already achieving 45 per cent. of its cataract operations on a day basis because, since those tables were compiled, it has seen the future and invested in a day unit particularly to deliver day cataract surgery.

Mr. McCartney: First, I congratulate the Secretary of State and the Minister of State on attending their last Health Question Time, as I understand that, like so many acute beds in the NHS, they are about to be closed down and shuffled out of the Department of Health.

Last week, the Secretary of State said that she was giving stars to star performers in her league tables. Why, then, is Manchester's Withington hospital—which achieved 100 per cent. ratings in casualty, in ear, nose and throat, ophthalmology, urology, gynaecology, oral, neurology and general surgery—not being congratulated but being given notice to quit? When such a wonderful hospital is receiving five-star ratings from the right hon. Lady, why is she allowing the regional health authority and the Department to close it down?

Mrs. Bottomley: If the hon. Gentleman has difficulty believing me, he may like to consult *The Guardian*, which reported that last week's league tables represented a milestone in the NHS and that the Opposition had made fools of themselves in their attitude towards those league tables.

Perhaps I may quote to the hon. Gentleman the following comments:

"Within the next 20 years, new technology, minimally invasive surgery and new diagnostic and treatment facilities will transform the delivery of health care in the developed world."

Those are not my words; they come straight out of the Labour party's own policy document.

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the agreeable benefits derived by patients from day care surgery are well supplemented by the Government's initiative on community care, which must be for the good of patients and their families?

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend is exactly right. Day surgery must be developed in context. The dramatic investment in primary care and the resources committed to community care ensure that those discharged from hospitals are properly supported at home. The idea that we should be in the business of trying to retain hospital beds as our prime preoccupation rather than increasing the number of patients treated conveniently is only the rhetoric espoused by the Opposition parties. We believe in patients, not furniture.

Residential Care and Nursing Homes

3. **Mr. Pickthall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the proposed review of registration and inspection of residential care and nursing homes.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. John Bowis): We expect shortly to issue for consultation a draft circular on improving the regulation of residential care and nursing homes.

Mr. Pickthall: What does the Minister intend to do about the rising incidence of professional misconduct and even abuse in residential care and nursing homes, as highlighted in the United Kingdom Central Council report? How does he intend to provide enough registration and inspection officers to ensure that the affairs of those homes are properly conducted and that the elderly residents are secure?

Mr. Bowis: The hon. Gentleman referred to the UKCC report. When the report was published, I said that a single case of abuse was a betrayal of nursing trust and I stand by that. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will accept that the rise in the number of cases investigated from 15 to 28, 27 and 35 in the past four years must be judged in the context of the fact that the number of residents in nursing homes has gone up by tens of thousands. In that context, I shall be talking to the Royal College of Nursing about ways of enabling nurses to spot problems, as well as with the associations of matrons and managers about improving supervision and with the National Association of Health Authorities and Trusts, NAHAT, to discuss training and inspection. In that way, we shall ensure as far as we possibly can that people will be safe and secure in their residential nursing homes. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will do nothing to alarm people unnecessarily, because in the vast majority of cases loving care is given.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Does my hon. Friend share my concern at the recent case of a lady who was apparently severely scalded, a fact which was discovered only by accident? Is that the tip of an iceberg? If so, is it possible to have a proper inspection system at all times and on every aspect of care in nursing homes, because that is what is needed?

Mr. Bowis: The case to which my hon. Friend refers occurred, I think, at a residential care home rather than a nursing home, and so is a matter for inspection by the social services. That particular case is also the subject of a police investigation, and I would not wish to comment on it.

My hon. Friend is right to say that we must maintain a secure and effective programme of inspection by social services departments of residential care homes in the private, voluntary and public sectors to ensure the safety and well-being of the people in those homes.

Mr. Hinchliffe: Has the Minister had an opportunity to study the report on a recent survey conducted by the charity Counsel and Care, which shows that the Government are seriously mistaken in believing that registration and inspection are regarded by private homes as burdens? Has he studied the recent letter sent to his Department by the relatives association which speaks of the anger and concern of relatives at the possible reduction of inspections? Does he now accept that applying the political gimmick of deregulation to the care of vulnerable people is totally inappropriate and wrong?

Mr. Bowis: I hope that the hon. Gentleman accepts that the only circular that has been sent from my Department summarises the points that have been put to the

Department as a result of the consultation period. I hope that he will also accept that the Government have not spent the past decade putting into place regulations to support and safeguard vulnerable people to see them swept aside now. We are carefully considering the system of regulation and inspection to see whether it can be streamlined and simplified, and duplication avoided, so that the care in those homes can be devoted more effectively to the residents, and not in the interests of any form of bureaucracy.

Capital Equipment

4. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on new patient-treating capital equipment installed in hospitals in the past five years.

Mr. Sackville: In recent years, there has been a rapid rise in the use of non-invasive and minimal invasive techniques which has involved the acquisition of much high-tech medical equipment.

Mr. Shaw: Is my hon. Friend aware that in east Kent we now have available in our hospitals a new £1.25 million linear accelerator and a new computer tomographic scanner? Is he further aware that more patients are being treated by the new magnetic resonance imaging scanner, and that we are looking forward to tomorrow's visit by the Secretary of State formally to open the scanner?

Mr. Sackville: All that equipment has led to new techniques, with shorter hospital stays and better recovery. My hon. Friend's area has an enviable record, and about £1 billion worth of such equipment is now being acquired each year throughout the country.

Mr. Ashton: Is the Minister aware that it is not much use having all that magnificent equipment if anyone can walk in and fiddle with it, as has happened at Bassetlaw hospital's intensive care unit on 16 occasions? The Secretary of State has said that that has nothing to do with her, because the hospital is run by a trust. Three days ago at Nottingham, somebody walked into a hospital and walked off with a four-hour-old baby, who has not yet been found. Will the Secretary of State again say that it has nothing to do with her because it is all down to the trust? Will there be investigations into the way in which hospitals are run, or are five stars just awarded ad lib?

Mr. Sackville: We are very aware that security needs to be much higher on the agenda of each hospital, but we cannot dictate what level of security to impose on each hospital. Hospitals are open places where people expect to visit their friends and relations, and each hospital must find a balance.

Dr. Liam Fox: Has my hon. Friend had a chance to assess the amount of new equipment opened and the number of new patients treated in the Birmingham area? Has he had a further chance to assess whether those have any link whatever with falling church attendance and church closures in the area?

Mr. Sackville: The bishop and I had some exchanges at a distance over the weekend. That is probably sufficient.

Mr. Blunkett: Does the junior Minister agree that if the Secretary of State opens something tomorrow, there is a fair chance that it will be closed within the next six months? Will he take this opportunity to whisper in the right hon Lady's shell-like ear that her credibility and future prospects could be enhanced today, on the 46th anniversary of the founding of the national health service, if the £150 million spent at Philip Harris house and the £44 million donated in charitable giving were put to good use and saved by the right hon. Lady announcing today that she will save Guy's from her closure plan?

Mr. Sackville: I remind the hon. Gentleman that right through two severe recessions in the 1980s and 1990s we saw a constant rise in the hospital building programme —in sharp contrast with an earlier Government who, faced with a little local trouble in 1976 as a result of their own financial incompetence, reacted by slashing the NHS capital budget.

Mr. Oppenheim: As to capital equipment, does my hon. Friend agree that a caring and a more business-like approach in the NHS are not mutually exclusive, but mutually interdependent? Fine words and hand wringing do not treat more patients, but using necessarily finite resources does. Conservative Members, together with hundreds of thousands of people working in the NHS, can be justifiably proud of the enormous increase in NHS services since we came to power in 1979.

Mr. Sackville: I agree absolutely with my hon. Friend. Nothing could be more un-Christian than running the health service in such a way as to produce longer waiting lists and less patient care.

Pay Beds

5. **Mrs. Anne Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the effect of pay beds in the national health service on the principle that treatment is determined by clinical need rather than ability to pay; and if she will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Pay beds have existed since the NHS was founded 46 years ago. They have no impact at all on the principle that NHS patients are treated according to clinical need rather than ability to pay. Any private work that a consultant does is additional to his or her NHS duties and is carried out in his or her own time.

Mrs. Campbell: Nevertheless, will the right hon. Lady investigate whether pay beds or private referrals at Addenbrooke's hospital are responsible for one of my constituents, Megan Thompson, being told that she must wait until 1999 to see an orthopaedic consultant?

Mrs. Bottomley: Once again, that is a typical example of scaremongering from the hon. Lady. If she had made the investigations that I have made, she would know that the other orthopaedic surgeons at Addenbrooke's have waiting lists within 18 months. The hon. Lady referred to a particularly popular orthopaedic consultant, who has a longer waiting list. It is a question of freedom of choice for patients: if they insist on seeing a particular consultant, they must wait longer, but they can have an appointment with another within the 18 months.

Mrs. Roe: Does my right hon. Friend agree that pay beds provide an extremely valuable source of extra income for the NHS, but that the Labour party clearly does not

appreciate that? Does that not clearly show that despite the soft-focus imaging that the Labour party is undertaking at the moment, it does not permit freedom of choice?

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend has it exactly right. I am concerned about the dispute in the Labour party. I notice from early-day motion 1436 that the hon. Members for Bristol, South (Ms Primarolo) and for Cambridge (Mrs. Campbell) both support putting an end to NHS pay beds. Is that the political sweetener for the unions about which Barbara Castle used to speak?

Ms Primarolo: Is the Secretary of State aware that the number of private patients treated in the national health service has risen by 10 per cent. since she introduced the internal market? The NHS is subsidising private patients while health service patients are waiting longer for treatment. Will the right hon. Lady agree to establish the full cost of providing private health care, including the training of doctors and staff time in hospitals? Will she also ensure that private patients cannot queue-jump those in greater need?

Mrs. Bottomley: Pay beds bring in £157 million for the NHS—the equivalent of 41,000 hip replacement operations. There are clear rules. There may be no queue-jumping for priority or urgent operations, and the private sector may not disadvantage the NHS. It so happens that most people signed up to private health insurance in the winter of 1979-80 and in 1980-81. As ever, the private sector recruiting sergeant was Labour's stewardship of the NHS and the winter of discontent.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: Bearing in mind the relationship between private medical care and the national health service, and the fact that we are now celebrating 46 years of the health service, does my right hon. Friend recall the attitude of the British Medical Association on the formation of the health service, and will she therefore take with a pinch of salt the sort of nonsense that we are currently hearing?

Mrs. Bottomley: The current BMA conference is the fifth that I have experienced since I have been at the Department of Health. The script varies little from year to year. The doctors' trade union has a job to do, which it has done since 1948. I am pleased that behind the rhetoric there is a great deal of practical progress, such as reducing junior doctors' hours, improving out-of-hours arrangements for general practitioners and progress in other areas. The BMA is not talking about dismantling the reforms, but only about reforming them. That is progress indeed.

Continuing Care

6. **Mr. Gunnell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures she intends to take to clarify health authorities' responsibilities for continuing care.

Mr. Bowis: We shall shortly be issuing, for comment, clarification on the guidance to health authorities on their long-term health care responsibilities.

Mr. Gunnell: How many of the 50,000 beds that the Secretary of State plans to empty are currently filled by continuing care patients? How can health authorities follow the rulings of the health commissioner on the Leeds case if patients cannot afford private beds and cannot find public beds because the Secretary of State has disposed of the furniture?

Mr. Bowis: It is for health authorities to plan and provide the beds that they need. The hon. Gentleman misses the point that the Leeds case on which the commissioner made his judgment pre-dated community care and the discharge agreements that every local authority has to have in place with its local health authority. It is not for politicians to decide when a patient should remain in a bed; that is a matter for doctors. When they have decided that a patient no longer needs a bed, the discharge arrangements are put in place. Until the needs of the patient have been assessed and arrangements to meet them are in place, the patient should not be discharged from hospital.

Mr. Sims: Is it right that a patient who no longer needs hospital treatment and is capable of being cared for in a different setting can insist on remaining in hospital and, at his own wish or under pressure from relatives, is legally entitled to occupy a much needed bed? Is the balance between rights and responsibilities accurate here?

Mr. Bowis: My hon. Friend makes a fair point. I shall not prejudge the guidance clarification that we are about to issue, but I assure him that we have looked carefully at the issue that he raises so as to ensure that we provide for patients who need hospital beds and do not give patients the right to have beds when they no longer have a clinical need for them.

Mr. Simpson: I am sure that the Secretary of State is aware of the nightmare abduction from Queen's medical centre last week of Abbie Humphries, who was taken from her parents' arms. Will the Minister take this opportunity to offer support and sympathy to Roger and Karen, her parents, at this terrible time, and will he congratulate Queen's medical centre staff who, within five minutes of the abduction, were on the main roads outside stopping buses and questioning passengers? Will the Minister resist pressure for premature endorsement of the idea that infant tagging would have prevented that abduction rather than made the response time longer? Will he support calls from the police who say that members of the public must know the woman who took baby Abbie and that if they have even a fragment of information that can help to solve this crime they should contact the police so that Abbie can be returned safely and quickly to her parents?

Mr. Bowis: The hon. Gentleman makes his point eloquently. I am sure that we all share the anguish of the parents of little Abbie. Our prayers are with those who are hunting for her, with her family and with her; our pleas are with the person who took her to return her to her family. I am sure that every maternity hospital and every maternity unit up and down the country is examining its security arrangements very carefully, to ensure that babies are safe in their care.

General Practitioner Fundholders

7. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the latest figures for the proportion of patients in the United Kingdom treated by general practitioner fundholders.

The Minister for Health (Dr. Brian Mawhinney): There are now more than 2,000 general practitioner fundholding practices in England covering just over 35 per cent. of the population, with more practices preparing to join next April.

Mr. Coombs: Given the irresponsible scaremongering of the British Medical Association before the introduction of GP fundholding—it said that drugs would run out and that pensioners would go untreated—is not it highly significant that no fewer than 85 per cent. of my constituents are treated by GP fundholders, and are receiving a far higher standard of service as a result? Is not that evidence that the comments of Dr. Sandy Macara, the head of the doctors' trade union, should be treated with the contempt that they deserve?

Dr. Mawhinney: Both the BMA and the Opposition got the issue wrong, and both are now edging towards an admission of that. I am not in the least surprised that 85 per cent. of my hon. Friend's constituents are happy with the GP services that they are receiving.

Mr. Austin-Walker: The Minister will know that at the beginning of the last financial year millions of pounds were held in health authority bank accounts, representing the surplus or underspend on GP fundholders' budgets, at a time when hospitals and beds were closing because health authorities did not have sufficient funds. Would not it have been better for the money to be spent on treating patients? What steps will the Minister take to monitor such expenditure?

Dr. Mawhinney: That is exactly what the money is to be spent on: it is to be spent to benefit patients, as I suspect the hon. Gentleman knows. Only last week, I announced that we were reviewing the extent of the services on which the money might be spent to benefit patients, and that I would make an announcement about that question in the autumn.

Mr. Duncan Smith: Is my right hon. Friend aware that yesterday I attended the opening of Handsworth medical centre in my constituency, which was financed by money from central Government under the London implementation zone programme? Is he aware that, as a GP fundholding practice, the centre now has 14,000 satisfied patients? Does not he agree that that is a good way of demonstrating to the BMA and the Bishop of Birmingham that they should stop making political capital out of such matters, and start backing us?

Dr. Mawhinney: My hon. Friend has made two important points. The first is that, increasingly, the development of primary care is much more focused on what the GP feels able to do for his or her patients. The second—which flows from that—is that at the heart of the reforms was an understanding that if decisions were made as close to the patient as possible, they were more likely to be correct. That is fully borne out by what is now happening in GP fundholding practices throughout the country.

NHS Authorities (Appointments)

8. **Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what changes she is proposing to the system of appointments to NHS authorities.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The system of appointing chairmen to NHS authorities is largely unchanged, and has been supported by successive Governments. We are introducing further improvements to make the system more standardised and open to support our objective of attracting people of the highest quality on to health authorities and trusts.

Mr. Milburn: Is the Secretary of State aware that the appointments that she has made to both health authorities and trust boards have made them less and less representative of the communities that they are supposed to serve? When will she abandon the process of making such appointments in secret, behind closed doors, so that credibility can be restored to a system that has lost all public confidence—or does she believe that jobs for the boys and jobs for the girls are more important than public accountability in the national health service?

Mrs. Bottomley: Public service is the key criterion that I consider when making appointments to NHS authorities and trusts. Like a number of other hon. Members, I spent many years as a magistrate and chairman of a court. No one thought that that was a political appointment; it was made after careful vetting. The same applies to health authority appointments.

Unless the hon. Gentleman is trying to reopen the argument between Herbert Morrison and Nye Bevan, which was put to bed 46 years ago, I suggest that he ensure that members of his party no longer put the frighteners on Labour people who wish to serve on trusts and health authorities, to make certain that we have good people from all political parties serving the interests of the public.

Mr. Hayes: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the appointment of wicked Tories such as Rabbi Julia Neuberger and the former Labour Member of Parliament, Helene Hayman as chairmen of trusts shows that the hon. Gentleman is talking nonsense?

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend is right. If the Labour party wishes to hark back, I do not think that the health service benefited from the appointment of the disqualified Lambeth councillors to the local health authority, or from that of the three prospective parliamentary candidates by Greenwich Labour party to its local health authority.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: Does not the Minister accept that there would be far more confidence in the system that she propounds if there were much more local discussion about the kind of appointments that should be made, rather than the process appearing to take place behind closed doors? Openness should be part of the right hon. Lady's policy.

Mrs. Bottomley: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. That is why, based on best practice, we are ensuring that in every region there is a process of open advertisement and nominations, including self-nominations, are encouraged. I hope that the hon. Gentleman and other hon. Members will look for people with the skill, expertise and commitment to help us to take forward the extremely important NHS reforms.

NHS Hospital Treatments

9. **Sir David Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients were treated in national health service hospitals in the most recent year for which figures are available; and what were the comparable figures for 1978.

Mr. Sackville: There were 9.6 million finished consultant episodes in 1992-93, compared with 6.5 million in 1978—an increase of 47 per cent.

Sir David Knox: Does my hon. Friend agree that those figures provide strong evidence of the improvement in the health service since the Government came to power? Will he confirm that the increase in the number of patients treated has been faster since the NHS reforms were introduced?

Mr. Sackville: Yes, indeed, and in hospitals that have become trusts, the number of patients treated rose faster than in other hospitals. Throughout our hospital system, a rapid increase both in the quality of care and in the number of patients treated is taking place.

Mr. Blunkett: On Sunday evening, the hon. Gentleman described the comments of the Bishop of Birmingham, saying that he lived "in a fairy-tale world" where no attempt at competitiveness existed. Is not such competitiveness best exemplified by today's revelation about the business plan at Charing Cross hospital, which involves headhunting a specialist from the Royal Marsden hospital, in order

"to assist in destabilising a competitor".

Is not that entirely to do with business and commercial ethics, and nothing to do with serving the people?

Mr. Sackville: Health service management personnel are central and vital to the NHS. Unless we attract top-level management to run our hospitals it will be patients who suffer, because hospitals will be less well used, there will be a lower quality of care and fewer patients will be treated.

Mr. Rowe: Is my hon. Friend aware how pleased we all are that the Front-Bench team is unmarked by the Santer claws? Does my hon. Friend agree that the opportunities for using volunteers—for example, in freeing beds by escorting patients home at weekends—are under-used, and will he ensure that more health authorities and trusts are aware of the opportunities for making full use of volunteers?

Mr. Sackville: One of the greatest features of our national health service is the commitment of local people to their local hospitals. Anything that we can do to encourage that further is good for patients.

NHS Service

10. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the extent to which the NHS provides a comprehensive service.

Dr. Mawhinney: My assessment is that the national health service is excellently comprehensive.

Mr. Michie: Is that the best that the Minister can do? May I remind the Secretary of State that the availability of the legal abortion of pregnancies, long-term care for the elderly, infertility treatment for women and physiotherapy for old people are not universally available on the national health service? Added to that are the possible closure of the accident unit in Sheffield and threats to the children's services in Sheffield. Is not it true that the Secretary of State has failed to provide a comprehensive national health service in that city, too? Is not it about time that she either got on with the job or got out—or preferably both?

Dr. Mawhinney: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has responsibility for an excellently comprehensive national health service, for which she deserves great credit. As for the various things that the hon. Gentleman has mentioned, all of them are available on the national health service to those whose medical practitioners believe that they have a clinical need. Of course, the hon. Gentleman did not tell the House that the resources in Sheffield have gone up in real terms year on year, that the number of patients treated in Sheffield has gone up year on year—both in-patients and day-case patients—and that there has been a reduction in the waiting lists in Sheffield. All that is also part of the excellently comprehensive national health service.

Mr. John Greenway: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the health service is comprehensive from the moment a child is born in one of our maternity units? I am sure that the House and the country will wish for the safe return of Abbie Humphries, but, rather than rejecting the possibility of introducing electronic tagging in maternity wards, will he and his right hon. and hon. Friends visit York district hospital maternity unit, where an electronic tagging system introduced last year has been extremely effective in improving security?

Dr. Mawhinney: I associate myself with what my hon. Friend said about Abbie, and our prayers and thoughts go out to her parents and to her at this time. I agree with my hon. Friend that the national health service provides a comprehensive service from the day that babies are born, but I would add that it continues until people die. I take pride in the fact that 40 per cent. of the national health service resources are devoted to that 16 per cent. of the population who are of retirement age.

Mr. Burden: But is not the market mechanism that the Government have imposed causing chaos in terms of the ability of the NHS to provide a comprehensive service? That is known by patients, who have to wait longer to see a consultant. Rather than attacking the Bishop of Birmingham for telling the truth, should not the Government reject a system that treats patients as mere commodities?

Dr. Mawhinney: The hon. Gentleman is precisely wrong. I always wish to be positive about the national health service. I want to welcome the extra number of patients who have been treated since the reforms came in, and I hope that the bishop agrees with me. I want to welcome the improvement in the quality of service of the national health service since the reforms came in, and I hope that the bishop agrees with me. I want to welcome the £100 million package of extra resources for Birmingham which was announced on Friday, and I hope that the bishop agrees with me. When I go to Birmingham again tomorrow, I shall be making it clear that, if the bishop would like to have a full briefing on what is actually happening in the national health service, I shall personally be happy to provide it for him.

Suicides

11. **Mr. Brandreth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received concerning the "Health of the Nation" targets for the reduction in the number of suicides; and if she will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I have received a number of representations from professional bodies, representatives of high-risk groups, voluntary organisations and members of the public. Recent representations have been constructive and broadly supportive of the targets.

Mr. Brandreth: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the White Paper "The Health of the Nation" represents the first time that suicide has been treated and tackled as a public health issue? In anticipation of the exhibition by the Samaritans that is coming to Westminster in two weeks' time, will my right hon. Friend give us an update on the progress that has been made in tackling the targets, under the "Health of the Nation" strategy.

Mrs. Bottomley: I look forward to the event organised by the Samaritans. On behalf of many, I should like to express my appreciation for their work and for the work of the great number of volunteers across the country who man the telephone lines.

More people die by taking their own lives than are killed in accidents on the roads. One of the areas in the "Health of the Nation" strategy where we set out to achieve marked improvement was that of mental health—for the first time it has been identified. A great number of measures have been taken to help us to meet the targets, which we are determined to do.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Will the Secretary of State accept that when people are so distressed that they try to take their own lives—as a young man in my constituency did yesterday—one of the best ways of reducing the number of suicides is to ensure that they are as close as possible to the best possible medical treatment, to prevent their attempts turning into deaths and that the preservation of nearby acute services is of the essence? Will the right hon. Lady ensure that we have the hospitals and accident and emergency units to keep people alive?

Mrs. Bottomley: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's point—but frankly it is a misuse of the question. Suicide is a serious matter, and good general practice and primary care services are the key. Six out of 10 people who take their own lives have consulted a family doctor in the fortnight beforehand, and the changes that we are seeking to achieve in London are designed precisely to ensure that London has the same quality primary care services as are available elsewhere. That is the single most important factor.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Bayley:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 5 July.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton) *rose—*

Hon. Members: Where is he?

Mr. Newton: Hang on, and I will tell the House. I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is in Edinburgh to greet the King and Queen of Norway at the start of their state visit.

Here in Westminster we await the visit of the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) to discuss the Police and Magistrates' Courts Bill.

Mr. Bayley: What help will the Government give to the victims of a £30 million theft—that is to say, Asil Nadir's creditors, who yesterday announced that they were suing the Conservative party for the return of £400,000 given by Mr. Nadir to the Conservative party before the general election?

Mr. Newton: I think that the hon. Gentleman knows the position. My right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler) has made it quite clear that the Conservative party will of course return the money received from Polly Peck and Unipac—if it proves to have been stolen.

Mr. Forman: In the interests of enhancing the aesthetic and architectural attractions of central London, particularly some of our finer buildings and their surroundings, will my right hon. Friend have another look, within Whitehall and with his colleagues, at the apparent determination of Ministers to endorse the decision, suggested to them by senior civil servants, that Horse Guards parade should continue to be used, unusually, for the parking of motor cars by senior civil servants? Surely, its architectural and other beauties should be enhanced by leaving it as a public open space.

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend will be well aware of the discussions that have taken place on these matters. I shall certainly bring his observations to the attention of my right hon. Friend.

Mrs. Beckett: Why does the Lord President think that the British Medical Association's conference is saying that the Government's health service changes have failed the nation?

Mr. Newton: The British Medical Association's conference is making those remarks, but it appears to be overlooking the fact that the number of patients treated in hospital has grown by record amounts, that the quality of care has improved and that the number of patients waiting more than a year has fallen by 100,000 to not much more than 60,000.

Mrs. Beckett: But does not the Lord President understand that the remarks that he makes are recognised only by the Cabinet as a depiction of the picture of the health service and that those people at the sharp end of the national health service, including—but not only—the doctors, are talking about alienation, despair and a two-tier health service? They said yesterday:

"treatment except in emergencies has now become a national and local lottery."

How can he defend that?

Mr. Newton: I do not accept for a moment—and I do not think many of the people to whom I talk in hospitals and general practitioner practices up and down the country accept for a moment—what the right hon. Lady is saying. As for two-tierism, the Government stand four square on their 1991 agreement that common waiting lists apply to

all urgent cases; that all emergencies will be treated immediately; and that no hospital is to offer contracts to one purchaser which will disadvantage patients of another.

Mrs. Beckett: But the BMA is telling the Government that this is happening. Does the Lord President dispute the fact that there are three times as many managers and 12,000 fewer nurses than when all this started? I remind him again of what the BMA said yesterday:

"business plans override clinical priority. Money does not follow the patient—The patient has no choice but to follow the money until it runs out."

The Government are destroying the principle on which the health service is based. What will it take to make them realise, acknowledge and stop that?

Mr. Newton: The right hon. Lady's criticisms and those she attributes to others simply do not stand up alongside the fact that, for every 100 patients treated in hospital in 1990-91—the last year before the reforms—the NHS expects to treat 121 this year. That is a 20 per cent. increase.

Mr. Alexander: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the concern about the granting of legal aid on occasions to people of apparently significant means and sometimes to foreign nationals of very great means? Is not it time that the legal aid authorities looked far more closely at the applicants who come before them and said that under no circumstances should legal aid be granted to nationals of foreign countries unless there is a reciprocal arrangement in force?

Mr. Newton: I am sure that my hon. Friend will understand that it would wrong for me to be drawn into commenting from the Dispatch Box on an individual case. I want to recognise the concern that he and others have expressed. He will know that my right hon. and noble Friend the Lord Chancellor does consider carefully, and has made a number of adjustments of, the legal aid arrangements and will certainly want to look at what my hon. Friend has said.

Q2. **Mr. Betts:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 5 July.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Betts: Is the Leader of the House aware that, among its many inefficiencies, the Child Support Agency is regularly taking up to two weeks and sometimes longer to pass the maintenance that it receives on to parents with care? Is he further aware that that not only creates problems for those people, but means that the agency accrues large sums in interest on the money that it holds? Does he believe that the money should be paid back to those people making maintenance payments or those receiving them, or does he believe that the agency should continue to make a profit out of its own inefficiencies, and that the Government should make a profit out of the misery that they have inflicted on those people because of this appalling legislation?

Mr. Newton: This subject was rightly debated extensively in the House yesterday and the hon. Gentleman, who no doubt was here, will have heard my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security acknowledge that there is a need for improvement in the administration of the Child Support Agency and indicate that steps are being taken to bring that about. Indeed, that commitment is backed by some 700 extra staff and an increased budget to tackle just the sort of problems to which the hon. Gentleman has referred.

Q3. **Mr. Sims:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 5 July.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Sims: Does my right hon. Friend agree that neither side in the signalmen's dispute merits much credit for the way in which the dispute has been handled? Does he further agree that not only are his constituents and mine becoming increasingly frustrated by the weekly disruption of their business and social life but the economy is being damaged? Is not it time for all parties in the House to condemn this foolish and unnecessary strike?

Mr. Newton: I very much agree with my hon. Friend. Once again, I must regret the extent to which the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) felt unable to make her position clear. I am sure that my constituents and those of my hon. Friends regard a strike in support of an 11 per cent. pay rise with no productivity or restructuring as one that should be reconsidered and called off with a view to returning to sensible negotiation.

Mr. Chisholm: Did the Leader of the House see the research from North Thames health authority last week, which showed that more money is spent on average on the patients of GP fundholders than on those of non-GP fundholders? Has he seen the report in this morning's papers to the effect that a trust hospital in Kent has admitted operating a two-tier system with the tacit approval of the local health authority? Will he act against this blatant inequity and instruct Scottish Office Ministers to withdraw their edict that 30 per cent. of patients in Scotland should be looked after by GP fundholders by next April?

Mr. Newton: I have already commented on the allegations of a two-tier service that were made by the right hon. Member for Derby, South. Let me make one thing absolutely clear: GP fundholders are not preferentially funded. They make contracts with trusts on the same terms as health authorities.

Q4. **Mr. Matthew Banks:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 5 July.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Banks: My right hon. Friend will be aware of the strong support on both sides of the House, particularly given recent tragedies, for the introduction of seat belts in minibuses and coaches. Britain has been at the forefront in Europe in introducing measures to reduce road casualties, but will he assure the House that Britain will continue to be at the forefront on this issue?

Mr. Newton: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport has already indicated his support for some of the moves that are being proposed in Europe, but, more comprehensively, we are reviewing the fitting of seat

belts in minibuses and coaches, including the technical and cost implications. My right hon. Friend hopes to publish the report, and our conclusions, before the summer recess.

Q5. **Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 5 July.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Is the Lord President prepared to commend to all our people for study and action the Alzheimer's Disease Society's publication "Home Alone"? Does he agree that more doctors should be aware of the disease and more ready not simply to diagnose people as suffering from old age when they are suffering from Alzheimer's disease?

Mr. Newton: I very much agree with the hon. Gentleman. He will know that, like him, I have had many contacts with the excellent Alzheimer's Disease Society over the years. It is important with that disease, as with others, that general practitioners are alert in identifying it and do not see it simply as a phenomenon of age. They should be able to steer people in the right direction, and part of the aim of our care in the community policy, not least the emphasis on carers as well as sufferers, is to improve our capacity to deal with such difficulties when they arise.

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: Is my right hon. Friend aware that last week a pioneering project was opened in my constituency sponsored by Shaftesbury housing, which combines housing with long-term care? Does he agree that that represents the very best of community care in action? Not only does it debunk Labour's accusations of decentralisation but, more important, it gives residents a secure environment in which they do not have to sacrifice their independence.

Mr. Newton: At the outset, I had better acknowledge that I was not aware of the scheme in my hon. Friend's constituency, which certainly sounds excellent. It is representative of a number of community care schemes throughout the country that are assisted by the Housing Corporation, a mixture of public and private finance and voluntary organisations. Such schemes greatly improve our capacity to care for Alzheimer's disease sufferers and for the others whom my hon. Friend has in mind.

Q6. **Mr. Gerrard:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 5 July.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Gerrard: Does the Leader of the House agree that it is completely unacceptable for the privatised electricity companies to apply a surcharge for consumers using pre-payment meters, such as key charge? Such consumers are nearly always those who are least able to afford to pay a surcharge. What action will the Government take to stop the practice?

Mr. Newton: In general, charging policies for electricity companies or any other private operations are for the owners and managers of the individual operations to determine. Additional costs will often be incurred in providing a facility of the sort that the hon. Gentleman has described. That factor is one which, rightly, should be taken into account.

NEW MEMBER

The following Member took and subscribed the oath:
Mrs. Helen Liddell, for Monklands, East.

Point of order

3.31 pm

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): On a point of order Madam Speaker. With great respect, what precedent is there for a Chairman of Ways and Means to veto a Bill that would have enormous implications for jobs and economic development in my constituency of Ealing, North and in constituencies throughout London and beyond? I refer, of course, to the Crossrail Bill.

Madam Speaker: I fully support the course of action taken today by the Chairman of Ways and Means. The future progress of the Crossrail Bill is for the Government to determine.

Statutory Instruments, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

INSURANCE PREMIUM TAX

That the Insurance Premium Tax (Taxable Insurance Contracts) Order 1994 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

HOUSING

That the draft Stonebridge Housing Action Trust (Area and Constitution) Order 1994 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

Question agreed to.

French Words (Prohibition)

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. May I draw your attention to pages 528-29 of "Erskine May"? The first heading on page 528 is "Proceedings on Royal Assent". Within that section there are the following words:

"The Clerk of the Parliaments subsequently endorses the Acts with the customary Norman French formulae".

On page 529 there appear the formulae for the Royal Assent for public and private Acts:

"'La Reyne le veult', and for personal Acts 'Soit fait comme il est desire'."

As the hon. Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) introduces his Bill, it could undermine the Royal Prerogative in terms of Royal Assents to Acts and could interfere with the ability of the Clerk of the Parliaments to provide the Royal Assent to both Houses of Parliament. It seems to me that the proposed Bill might infringe the rights of the Clerk of the Parliaments and the Royal Prerogative.

Madam Speaker: As the right hon. Gentleman has just made clear to the House, court French of the 14th century is entirely permissible in the instances that the right hon. Gentleman has demonstrated. We shall now have to see whether the hon. Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen), who is proposing the Bill, is going to interfere with that Norman French of the 14th century. I must hear what the hon. Member for South Hams has to say before I rule on the point or order.

3.35 pm

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to prohibit the use of French words in written and spoken English; and for connected purposes.

I seek the leave of the House to introduce a Bill to outlaw the use of everyday French words in the English language, whether spoken or written, which, if infringed, would be punishable by a fine. I am doing this principally to make a point, not to be taken too seriously, to highlight the bizarre situation which has resulted in the French language prohibition Bill or le loi relatif a l'emploi de la langue Francaise tabled by Jacques Toubon, the Gaullist Culture Minister, which passed all its stages in the French National Assembly and the Senate last Friday.

That Bill banned the use of English words or expressions such as software, hamburger, football and tee-shirt on advertising boards, in the media, on television or radio, in work contracts and instruction leaflets; and, even where English is the chosen language at international congresses held in France, all French contributions must be delivered in French. If someone were to flout the law and sneak in an English word or two, that person could be sent to the Bastille for six months or fined £5,000. Mr. Toubon's Bill tears up completely the entente cordiale which was signed by Edward VII on 8 April 1904 at the end of 100 years of hostilities between the French and the English.

Mr. Toubon's measure also makes a mockery of the French commitment to a federal Europe. Every country in the European Community is proud of its status as a nation state, but the French have tipped the scales towards chauvinism. They want harmonisation, but on their terms. When Jacques Delors preaches a united states of Europe, he no doubt wants the capital in Strasbourg, the currency in francs and a single spoken language—French.

Some may conclude that the French language Bill is ridiculous but for the fact that Mr. Toubon insists that the Bill will be enforced rigorously. However, without employing battalions of language police, it will not be possible to prevent Frenchmen from using certain English words or expressions when they feel inspired to do so. To think otherwise is to live in cloud cuckoo land. My hunch is that the Bill will probably go the way of so many other French Bills—locked away in an anti-tilting filing cabinet marked "No further action".

I stress that my Bill is solely retaliatory—a cause célèbre. My aim is to introduce an equivalent measure as a tit-for-tat response. I am no enfant terrible and I am wholly in favour of the French—their food, their drink and their beautiful countryside. While some will see Toubon's Bill as a big joke, others see it as a discriminatory measure which is offensive.

What is the raison d'être, Madam Speaker—if you will excuse the phrase—for Mr. Toubon introducing his Bill? Perhaps the French fear an invasion of English words shooting through the channel tunnel and so infecting their language with impurities. However, is not the French Government's idea of a pure language a stone's throw from a policy of ethnic cleansing and purity of race?

Outlawing the use of English words is especially rich coming as it does exactly four weeks after D-day celebrations and commemorations where we stood shoulder to shoulder with the French remembering past events. However, the entire French Cabinet has endorsed a Bill outlawing the language of the very people who liberated them 50 years ago and who are close market partners. It is a clear case of discrimination, not of race, age or sex but of language.

Languages are strengthened, not weakened, by the introduction of words from other countries. Purity of language is a contradiction in terms. English is a mélange, if I may so, of Saxon, Norse, Icelandic, Dutch, German and French. There is also Urdu—take a dekko is Urdu—and Arabic, including words such as raffia. To stand up for English is to defend the constantly evolving and expanding entity which cannot be restricted or controlled. English could produce Shakespeare and Joyce only because of its inclusion of foreign words. Without French words—and some 1,400 of them are in regular use—the English language would have holes as large of those found in a gruyère cheese.

Madam Speaker: Order. It is not clear to me whether the hon. Gentleman is speaking in favour of his Bill or against it.

Mr. Steen: Madam Speaker, if you give me a couple more minutes, you will see which way I am turning.

The fantasy of the French to believe that their language can ever be pure flies in the face of the fundamental promise and premise of what language is all about. It is about having sufficient words to describe life. As life gets more complex, we need more new words and phrases, not fewer.

How would my Bill work? It would work by utilising a much under-utilised national resource—by giving traffic wardens additional duties. Last night, 1,000 extra wardens were announced for London, undoubtedly in anticipation of this Bill getting through the House. In addition to using their eyes and gazing at parking meters, they would be invited to keep their ears open in public places for any French word that might escape the lips of a passer-by. The law would empower them to issue an on-the-spot language fine of £10 for every French word used. The service would be self-financing, with £1 of every £10 collected going towards the wages of the warden, and the balance of £9 going towards paying the deficit in our balance of payments with France.

We should forget words like baguette or croissant—they are out. We would not be able to visit a café or brasserie. There would be no apéritifs or hors d'oeuvres—in fact, there would be no restaurants. We should forget the table d'hôte; there is no question of the à la carte instead. There would be no left or right-hand side of the menu and no nouvelle cuisine. Bon viveurs would be banned. One would not be able to shower one's fiancée with bouquets, meet at a secret rendezvous, or buy her haute couture clothes. There would be great difficulties in having a ménage-à-trois. Crime passionnel would be out of the question and negligée would make a liaison dangereuse a little risquée.

If one is a gambling man, one would no longer hear the familiar words faites vos jeux or rien ne va plus when playing the tables. There would be no question of feeling déjà vu and there is no way that one could live in a pied-à-terre. If by chance one drives in a cul-de-sac, that would be a bit of a faux pas. In short, everyone in the country would have to mind their language and pardon their French because Mr. Toubon's Bill is a fait accompli. However, he does not realise that, if he ever came to Britain, he would be refused entry unless he changed his name to Mr. Allgood.

Our parliamentary processes would also grind to a halt. There would be no messages from the Commons to the Lords, but I think that that can be taken care of by the 14th century French. Royalty would also resent the fact that their coat of arms would be laid bare with the removal of the words "honi soit qui mal y pense". In fact, Parliament would exist no more because it is a French word. But what a relief—no more 10-minute Bills.

At one fell swoop, the French, by their actions, will bring our nation's communications to its knees without a bone being broken. While Englishmen have free access to travel and frontiers have come down, their words must stay at home. Perhaps the French will argue that their Bill banning English words is dealt with under subsidiarity. But just as the Maginot line of fortification which was intended to stop the German invasion failed, so too will the French Words (Prohibition) Bill. It will not stop the invasion of English words into French, and that is how the French see it—an invasion.

The purpose of seeking leave to bring in the Bill is to introduce legislation which I hope will not cause a furore but which will highlight the absurdity and unenforceability of French law. I am raising the matter now to prevent a hairline crack in Anglo-Franco relations from growing into a chasm.

For those who say that this is all a waste of time, I remind them that the House sat for 1,978 hours and 14 minutes in 1987-88 and for 1,373 hours and 53 minutes in 1991. So 10 minutes is but a drop in the ocean in the affairs of state. Furthermore, the French clearly do not think that their Bill is frivolous. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Guillotine him.

Mr. Steen: Otherwise, they would not have passed it through Parliament. I personally believe that discrimination against the country's language has serious implications, if for no other reason because it deprives the individual of his freedom of speech—

Madam Speaker: Order. The guillotine has fallen.

3.45 pm

Mr. Gyles Brandreth (City of Chester): Given the élan, the éclat, the insouciance and savoir faire with which my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) has presented his Bill, it may seem churlish to oppose it, but I believe that, both for the sake of Franco-British relations and for the sake of the English language, a brief word of protest is called for.

English is the richest language in the world, but it is rich precisely because it is not pure. It is a mongrel tongue. Emerson called it

"the sea which receives tributaries from every region under heaven."

My hon. Friend has pointed out the many countries which have contributed to the English language, including, of course, France. The French have given our language more than a certain je ne sais quoi. They have enriched our vocabulary for centuries and will do so for many more.

For centuries, too, the French have been attempting to preserve the purity of their language, with the net result that their vocabulary is much smaller than ours. Shakespeare had a vocabulary of 30,000 different words in all his plays. James Joyce in just one work, "Ulysses", used a vocabulary of 30,000 words—several of which, Madam Speaker, I hope you have not come across. However, Molière, in his entire work, used a vocabulary of only some 9,000 words.

I understand the desire of the French to preserve the integrity of their language, but I fear that, in an age in which, happily for this country, English is the lingua franca of the global village, they face an uphill struggle. So in the bistro, the restaurant and the café—which my hon. Friend would obviously like us to call eateries in future—it will still be easier for a Frenchman to ask for "un sandwich", even if the Assemblée Nationale would prefer him to ask for "deux morceaux de pain avec quelque chose au milieu". I reckon that, when it comes to the linguistic exchange rate mechanism, one cannot buck the market.

My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary, the exemplification of sang froid—in this case, it certainly is the mot juste—and his opposite number Mr. Alain Juppé have just produced a joint publication to mark the 90th anniversary of that special relationship for which there is no fitting English phrase. That is why we call it the entente cordiale.

Exactly half a century ago, the then Prime Minister reminded the House that all his life he had been grateful for the contribution that France had made to the glory and culture of Europe, above all for the sense of personal liberty that has radiated from the soul of France. In the name of personal liberty, in the spirit of rapprochement, and on the day that the Tour de France comes to Tunbridge Wells, I must oppose the Bill.

Question put, pursuant to Standing Order No.19 (Motions for leave to bring in Bills and nomination of Select Committees at commencement of public business):—

The House proceeded to a Division—

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. If the hon. Gentleman gets the hat, I will take his point of order; otherwise, I cannot hear it.

Mr. Marlow *(seated and covered):* On a point of order, Madam Speaker. It is a relatively simple matter for you to rule on. As the treaty of Rome, as amended, includes the words "acquis communautaire", may I ask whether, before we vote on the Bill, I am right in assuming that, if my hon. Friend's Bill were to be successful, the treaty of Rome would then cease to have effect?

Madam Speaker: I think that the hon. Gentleman is indulging in a lot of wishful thinking.

The House having divided: Ayes 45, Noes 149.

280] **[3.49 pm**

AYES

Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Ashby, David
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Beggs, Roy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Booth, Hartley
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Congdon, David
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dover, Den
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Durant, Sir Anthony
Gallie, Phil
Gillan, Cheryl
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Harris, David
Hawksley, Warren
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Marlow, Tony
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Steinberg, Gerry
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Trimble, David
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Whittingdale, John
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Anthony Steen and
Mr. Michael Fabricant.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Chisholm, Malcolm
Church, Judith
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Corbett, Robin
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dalyell, Tam
Davidson, Ian
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dykes, Hugh
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Gapes, Mike
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hendron, Dr Joe
Heppell, John

Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hodge, Margaret
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Lewis, Terry
Liddell, Helen
Livingstone, Ken
Loyden, Eddie
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
Mackinlay, Andrew
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
MacShane, Denis
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Oiner, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Page, Richard
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rooker, Jeff
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Spink, Dr Robert
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Stephen, Michael
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Timms, Stephen
Tipping, Paddy
Tyler, Paul
Wareing, Robert N
Wicks, Malcolm
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Jeremy Corbyn and
Mr. Alan Simpson.

Question accordingly negatived.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Is it in order for my hon. Friend the Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth), having spoken against the Bill, to fail to follow his voice with his vote?

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman declared his intention, but he had absolutely every right to abstain. That was in order.

Orders of the Day

Police and Magistrates' Courts Bill
[Lords]

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered Ordered,

That the Police and Magistrates' Courts Bill *[Lords]*, as amended, be considered in the following order, namely: new Clauses except those relating to Magistrates' Courts, new Schedules except those relating to Magistrates Courts, Amendments relating to Clauses 1 to 62, Amendments relating to Schedules 1 to 6, new Clauses relating to Magistrates' Courts, new Schedules relating to Magistrates' Courts, Amendments relating to Clauses 63 to 85 and Schedule 7, Amendments relating to Clauses 86 to 90 and Schedule 8.—*[Mr. Charles Wardle.]*

New clause 13

APPLICATION OF CERTAIN PROVISIONS TO POLICE AUTHORITIES ESTABLISHED UNDER SECTION 3 OF THE POLICE ACT 1964

'.—(1) Any relevant legislative provision which, immediately before the passing of this Act, applied to police authorities constituted in accordance with section 2 of the Police Act 1964 shall, except where the context otherwise requires, apply in the same way to police authorities established under section 3 of the Police Act 1964 (as substituted by section 2 of this Act).

(2) Subsection (1) above is subject to any provision to the contrary made by or under this Act.

(3) For the purposes of subsection (1) above, a provision is a "relevant legislative provision" if it is a provision (other than a provision which applies only to specified police authorities) of an instrument which—

(a) was made before the passing of this Act under a public general Act, and

(b) is of a legislative character.'.—*[Mr. Charles Wardle.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

4.2 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Charles Wardle): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Madam Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to discuss Government amendments Nos. 39 to 42, 38 and 75.

Mr. Wardle: New clause 13 concerns secondary legislation that currently applies to police authorities. As the Bill amends the Police Act 1964, some existing references to police authorities in secondary legislation would cease to have effect. The new clause does not make any changes of substance, but simply allows existing secondary legislation to continue to apply to police authorities as they will be constituted under the Bill.

Government amendments Nos. 39 to 42, 38 and 75 are technical in nature, and I commend them to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New clause 14

PROVISION OF ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE TO INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS ETC.

'. After section 15 of the 1964 Act there shall be inserted—

"Provision of advice and assistance to international organisations etc

15A.—(1) Subject to the provisions of this section, a police authority may provide advice and assistance—

(a) to an international organisation or institution, or

(b) to any other person or body which is engaged outside the United Kingdom in the carrying on of activities similar to any carried on by the authority or the chief officer of police for its area.

(2) The power conferred on a police authority by subsection (1) of this section includes a power to make arrangements under which a member of the police force maintained by the authority is engaged for a period of temporary service with a person or body within paragraph (a) or (b) of that subsection.

(3) The power conferred by subsection (1) of this section shall not be exercised except with the consent of the Secretary of State or in accordance with a general authorisation given by him.

(4) A consent or authorisation under subsection (3) of this section may be given subject to such conditions as the Secretary of State thinks fit.

(5) Nothing in this section authorises a police authority to provide any financial assistance by—

(a) making a grant or loan,

(b) giving a guarantee or indemnity, or

(c) investing by acquiring share or loan capital.

(6) A police authority may make charges for advice or assistance provided by it under this section.

(7) In its application in relation to the metropolitan police this section shall apply—

(a) as if the power conferred by subsection (1) were conferred on the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis (and accordingly as if the references in subsections (1)(b) and (2) to a police authority were omitted), and

(b) as if in subsection (6) the reference to a police authority were a reference to the Receiver for the Metropolitan Police District.

(8) The provisions of this section are without prejudice to the Police (Overseas Service) Act 1945 and section 10 of the Overseas Development and Co-operation Act 1980.' — *[Mr. Charles Wardle.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Madam Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to discuss also the following: Government new clause 15—*Reports from police authorities.*

Government new clause 16—*Police grant and other grants.*

Government new clause 17—*Regulations under section 33 of the 1964 Act.*

Government amendments Nos. 34, 35, 24 to 29, 36, 37 and 30 to 33.

Mr. Wardle: The new clauses and consequential amendments deal with service overseas by British police officers. Their principal effect is to permit police officers from the United Kingdom to serve abroad not only with foreign Governments—which is already possible under existing legislation—but with international organisations such as the United Nations.

New clauses 14 and 15 relate to England and Wales, and new clauses 16 and 17 apply the same substantive provisions in Scotland. I commend them to the House.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): If the Minister had spoken a little longer, I would have intervened. He said that the clauses would enable members of British police forces to serve overseas. Am I right in thinking that the clauses do not extend to the Royal Ulster Constabulary? Are there any proposals to enable members of that force to serve overseas, because it has an enormous wealth of experience that many countries would find relevant?

Mr. Charles Wardle: As I said, the new clauses apply to England, Wales and Scotland, but I understand that the provisions will extend to the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New clause 15

POLICE OFFICERS ENGAGED ON SERVICE OUTSIDE THEIR FORCE

'. After section 53B of the 1964 Act there shall be inserted—

"Police officers engaged on service outside their force

53C.—(1) For the purposes of this section "relevant service" means—

(a) temporary service on which a person is engaged in accordance with arrangements made under section 15A(2) of this Act,

(b) central service (as defined in section 43(5) of this Act) on which a person is engaged with the consent of the appropriate authority,

(c) service the expenses of which are payable under section 1(1) of the Police (Overseas Service) Act 1945, on which a person is engaged with the consent of the appropriate authority,

(d) service in the Royal Ulster Constabulary, on which a person is engaged with the consent of the Secretary of State and the appropriate authority, or

(e) service pursuant to an appointment under section 10 of the Overseas Development and Co-operation Act 1980, on which a person is engaged with the consent of the appropriate authority.

(2) In subsection (1) of this section "appropriate authority" has the same meaning as in section 43 of this Act.

(3) Subject to subsections (4) to (7) of this section, a member of a police force engaged on relevant service shall be treated as if he were not a member of that force during that service; but, except where a pension, allowance or gratuity becomes payable to him out of money provided by Parliament by virtue of regulations made under the Police Pensions Act 1976—

(a) he shall be entitled at the end of the period of relevant service to revert to his police force in the rank in which he was serving immediately before the period began, and

(b) he shall be treated as if he had been serving in that force during the period of relevant service for the purposes of any scale prescribed by or under regulations made under section 33 of this Act fixing his rate of pay by reference to his length of service.

(4) In the case of relevant service to which subsection (1)(c) of this section refers, the reference in subsection (3) to regulations made under the Police Pensions Act 1976 shall be read as including a reference to regulations made under section 1 of the Police (Overseas Service) Act 1945.

(5) A person may, when engaged on relevant service, be promoted in his police force as if he were serving in that force; and in any such case—

(a) the reference in paragraph (a) of subsection (3) of this section to the rank in which he was serving immediately before the period of relevant service began shall be construed as a reference to the rank to which he is promoted, and

(b) for the purposes mentioned in paragraph (b) of that subsection he shall be treated as having served in that rank from the time of his promotion.

(6) A member of a police force who—

(a) has completed a period of relevant service within paragraph (a), (b) or (e) of subsection (1) of this section, or

(b) while engaged on relevant service within paragraph (c) of that subsection, is dismissed from that service by the disciplinary authority established by regulations made under section 1 of the Police (Overseas Service) Act 1945 or is required to resign as an alternative to dismissal, or

(c) while engaged on relevant service within paragraph (d) of that subsection, is dismissed from that service or is required to resign as an alternative to dismissal,

may be dealt with under regulations made in accordance with subsection (3) of section 33 of this Act for anything

done or omitted while he was engaged on that service as if that service had been service in his police force; and section 37 of this Act shall apply accordingly.

(7) For the purposes of subsection (6) of this section a certificate certifying that a person has been dismissed, or required to resign as an alternative to dismissal, shall be evidence of the fact so certified, if—

(a) in a case within paragraph (b) of that subsection, it is given by the disciplinary authority referred to in that paragraph, or

(b) in a case within paragraph (c) of that subsection, it is given by or on behalf of the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, or such other person or authority as may be designated for the purposes of this subsection by order of the Secretary of State.' — *[Mr. Charles Wardle.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

New clause 16

PROVISION OF ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE TO INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS ETC., SCOTLAND

'. After section 12 of the 1967 Act there shall be inserted—

"Provision of advice and assistance to international organisations etc

12A.—(1) Subject to the provisions of this section, a police authority may provide advice and assistance—

(a) to an international organisation or institution, or

(b) to any other person or body which is engaged outside the United Kingdom in the carrying on of activities similar to any carried on by the authority or the chief constable of a force maintained by it.

(2) The power conferred on a police authority by subsection (1) of this section includes a power to make arrangements under which a constable of the force maintained for the area of the authority is engaged for a period of temporary service with a person or body within paragraph (a) or (b) of that subsection.

(3) The power conferred by subsection (1) of this section shall not be exercised except with the consent of the Secretary of State or in accordance with a general authorisation given by him.

(4) A consent or authorisation under subsection (3) above may be given subject to such conditions as the Secretary of State thinks fit.

(5) Nothing in this section authorises a police authority to provide any financial assistance by—

(a) making a grant or loan,

(b) giving a guarantee or indemnity, or

(c) investing by acquiring share or loan capital.

(6) A police authority may make charges for advice and assistance provided by it under this section.

(7) The provisions of this section are without prejudice to the Police (Overseas Service) Act 1945 and section 10 of the Overseas Development and Co-Operation Act 1980.".' — *[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

New clause 17

CONSTABLES ENGAGED ON SERVICE OUTSIDE THEIR FORCE

'. After section 38 of the 1967 Act there shall be inserted—

"Constables engaged on service outside their force

38A.—(1) For the purposes of this section "relevant service" means—

(a) temporary service on which a person is engaged in accordance with arrangements made under section 12A(2) of this Act,

(b) central service (as defined by section 38(5) of this Act) on which a person is engaged with the consent of the appropriate authority,

(c) service the expenses of which are payable under section 1(1) of the Police (Overseas Service) Act 1945, on which a person is engaged with the consent of the appropriate authority,

(d) service in the Royal Ulster Constabulary, on which a person is engaged with the consent of the Secretary of State and the appropriate authority, or

(e) service pursuant to an appointment under section 10 of the Overseas Development and Co-operation Act 1980, on which a person is engaged with the consent of the appropriate authority.

(2) In subsection (1) of this section "appropriate authority" has the same meaning as in section 38 of this Act.

(3) Subject to subsections (4) to (7) of this section, a constable of a police force engaged on relevant service shall be treated as if he were not a constable of that force during that service; but except where a pension, allowance or gratuity becomes payable to him out of money provided by Parliament by virtue of regulations made under the Police Pensions Act 1976—

(a) he shall be entitled at the end of the period of relevant service to revert to his police force in the rank in which he was serving immediately before the period began, and

(b) he shall be treated as if he had been serving in that force during the period of relevant service for the purposes of any scale prescribed by or under regulations made under section 26 of this Act fixing his rate of pay by reference to his length of service.

(4) In the case of relevant service to which subsection (1)(c) of this section refers, the reference in subsection (3) of this section to regulations made under the Police Pensions Act 1976 shall be read as including a reference to regulations made under section 1 of the Police (Overseas Service) Act 1945.

(5) A person may, when engaged on relevant service, be promoted in his police force as if he were serving in that force; and in any such case—

(a) the reference in paragraph (a) of subsection (3) of this section to the rank in which he was serving immediately before the period of relevant service began shall be construed as a reference to the rank to which he is promoted, and

(b) for the purposes mentioned in paragraph (b) of that subsection he shall be treated as having served in that rank from the time of his promotion.

(6) A constable who—

(a) has completed a period of relevant service within paragraph (a), (b) or (e) of subsection (1) of this section,

(b) while engaged on relevant service within paragraph (c) of that subsection, is dismissed from that service by the disciplinary authority established by regulations under section 1 of the Police (Overseas Service) Act 1945 or is required to resign as an alternative to dismissal, or

(c) while engaged on relevant service within paragraph (d) of that subsection, is dismissed from that service or required to resign as an alternative to dismissal,

may be dealt with under regulations made in accordance with subsection (2A) of section 26 of this Act for anything done or omitted while he was engaged on that service as if that service had been service in his police force; and section 30 of this Act shall apply accordingly.

(7) For the purposes of subsection (6) of this section a certificate certifying that a person has been dismissed, or required to resign as an alternative to dismissal, shall be evidence of the fact so certified, if—

(a) in a case within paragraph (b) of that subsection, it is given by the disciplinary authority referred to in that paragraph, or

(b) in a case within paragraph (c) of that subsection it is given by or on behalf of the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, or such person or authority as may be designated for the purposes of this subsection by order of the Secretary of State.'. — *[Mr. Charles Wardle.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

New clause 22

DELEGATION OF FUNCTIONS OF SCOTTISH POLICE AUTHORITY

'. In section 63 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (arrangements as to police authority functions etc.), after subsection (2) there shall be inserted—

"(2A) The officers who may discharge functions of a police authority in pursuance of arrangements under section 56(1) or (2) of this Act shall include the chief constable of the police force.

(2B) Where, pursuant to arrangements made by virtue of subsection (2A) above, a chief constable may discharge functions of a police authority, he may himself arrange for the discharge of any of the functions in question by a constable of the police force or by a person who is employed by the authority but is not under their direction and control.".'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Madam Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to discuss also Government amendment No. 70.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The clause clarifies the power of police authorities to delegate functions to the chief constable. It will also allow a chief constable to delegate responsibility to police officers or civilian staff where a function has been delegated to him by the police authority. The reason for the amendment is to allow maximum devolution of management responsibility for his force to the chief constable. That is an important aspect of the Government's policy on police reform. A similar amendment on delegation of functions by chief constables in England and Wales was passed in Committee. The amendment to clause 46 is consequential. The provisions will be permissive, not mandatory. Decisions on delegation will be matters for police authorities and chief constables. We will issue guidance on delegation on financial management after appropriate consultation.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New clause 1

LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS TO PROMOTE CRIME PREVENTION

'After section 1 of the 1964 Act there shall be inserted—

"Local partnerships to promote crime prevention

1A.—(1) It shall be the duty of every police authority to facilitate the crime prevention activities of a local authority in its area.

(2) It shall be the duty of every local authority in a police area—

(a) to take reasonable steps to prevent the commission of crime;

(b) in consultation with the police authority, the chief officer of police and the chief probation officer of the area which includes the local authority and with such other organisations as the local authority shall see fit, to publish together with the police authority a joint strategy for the prevention of crime;

(c) together with the police authority to promote the active involvement of local residents and voluntary organisations in understanding the incidence of crime in their own community and the design and the local implementation of joint strategy; and

(d) to review and publish annually with the police authority a report on the strategy and the extent to which its objectives are being achieved.

(3) In this section 'local authority' shall mean a county council, a district council or a London borough council.".'. — *[Mr. Blair.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Madam Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to discuss also amendment No. 81, in schedule 4, page 65, line 26, leave out from beginning to end of line 30 and insert—

'(2) In sub-paragraph (1) of paragraph 6A after the words "joint authority", there shall be inserted the words "or a Police Authority established under section 3 of the Police Act 1964".'.

Mr. Blair: The new clause proposes to place a statutory responsibility for crime prevention on local authorities, thereby putting crime prevention in a proper and structured framework. The proposal is supported by the Association of Chief Police Officers, the Police Federation and every senior police body. It is supported by virtually all the agencies connected with crime prevention and by local authorities. In short, it is supported by everyone except the Government. The proposal is also in line with the explicit recommendation of the Government's last published report on crime prevention.

Behind the new clause lies an important debate about the future of policing and the type of policing that we wish to see in our society.

There are essentially two views of the role of the police. First, it is seen as simply a law enforcement agency to catch the criminal after the crime has been committed. The other view encompasses that vital role, but also sees the police as a public service working within its local community. That notion of community policing is not just consistent with the British system of policing but has been vigorously developed in recent years by the police themselves.

The Government tend to the narrow view of policing, but we strongly favour the police as a public service working in local communities. Community policing sees the police as part of a local partnership working with other agencies that have an interest in fighting crime—schools, businesses, social services, local authorities and local community organisations. Therefore, the involvement becomes much more than law enforcement: it is also about preventing crime and tackling its causes. All over Britain, Labour councils are leading the way on crime prevention and have exemplified that approach.

The reason for our approach is perfectly simple. Only one crime in 50 leads to a conviction. Therefore, any policy that deals simply with catching the criminal after the crime has been committed is one-sided and incapable of offering a solution. Up to a point the Government agree, but they say that there is no need for statutory responsibility to be placed on local authorities. They simply say, "Let it happen and if it happens, fine." If it does not happen, they do not intend to act.

Precisely that argument, however, was rejected by the Government's own report—the Morgan report, published three years ago in 1991. That report expressly rejected the ad hoc approach taken by the Government. It said that, as the provider of a range of services that have a direct impact on the causes of crime, the local authority is a natural focus for the co-ordination—in collaboration with the police—of the broad range of activities intended to improve community safety. It concluded:

"local authorities, working in conjunction with the police should have clear statutory responsibility for the development and

stimulation of community safety and crime prevention programmes, and for progressing at a local level a multi-agency approach to community safety."

In other words, the very report set up by the Government's own standing conference on crime prevention—the very people who were asked to analyse the way forward for crime prevention—came out with a solution—

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I apologise to you and to my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) for interrupting the proceedings.

Is it in order for a Government Whip to ask one hon. Member to leave, and then walk around the Chamber and ask another to leave as well? Is it not a fact that the entire Conservative party is not the slightest bit interested in law and order and crime prevention?

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. I wish to confirm what my hon. Friend said: I also saw what occurred. The Whip went over to the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans), and subsequently turned round from where he is now sitting.

As you know, Madam Speaker, for some time Conservative Members have been asking when they will hear from my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair). The Whips are now deliberately organising matters so that not a single Tory Back Bencher is left in the Chamber. That shows their complete lack of interest in any matter concerning the police and criminality. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. I think that I can deal with this. I do not know what the Whips are up to; personally, I am riveted by the speech of the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair).

Mr. Blair: I am delighted, Madam Speaker. It is a pity that the attention of more Conservative Members is not on my speech, and on the issue of crime and crime prevention. It is interesting that Opposition Members are the ones who are really talking about such issues.

The Morgan report set out a strong framework for crime prevention. It said that such a framework was absolutely necessary, and that without it the policies of crime prevention would not be co-ordinated in the right way. That is not merely the view of the report; it is the view of ACPO and every other police body.

Far from agreeing with the report, the Government are undermining the position of community policing. First, they are to set national objectives centrally, rather than allowing local priorities to take precedence. Secondly, as was pointed out today by senior police officers and chief constables, their review of the core functions of the police has provoked a widespread fear that they intend to strip out their community service functions, leaving only those connected with law enforcement.

The dangers of that can be seen from experiments in crime prevention all over the country. There are examples everywhere of the fact that crime prevention—carried out on a proper, structured basis and led by police and local authorities—can actually work. In Reading, crime reduction groups have been set up under the Thames Valley policing initiative, resulting in a 50 per cent. drop in crime in certain areas. In the King's Cross area, as a result of work done by a partnership of local businesses, police and the local authority, drug dealers have been driven off the streets and the place has been made safer for local people to inhabit. In Wigan—again, as a result of a partnership between local authority and police—vandalism in schools was dramatically reduced; that has now resulted in a £250,000 reduction in the insurance premiums paid by Wigan schools. If such examples, from those and from other authorities throughout the country, were built on and brought within a proper framework, they could lead the way in developing proper crime prevention measures.

That is not prescriptive, but it sets a clear plan within which community policing can develop. Why do the Government not carry it out? Their own report said that it should be done, every body connected with policing advocates it, and local authorities want such a duty to be put on them. Why do the Government resist the recommendation of their own working party? The answer is: dogma about local government. There is no other reason. If anybody but local authorities had been given the task of co-ordinating the measures, the Government would have agreed overnight. But because local authorities were given the lead role, they did not.

4.15 pm

Now that the Government are spending more money through unelected, unaccountable quangos than through local government, it is surely a scandal that they are unwilling to give local authorities that statutory responsibility. Had they done so, it would have provided a boost for crime prevention, and that could have been happening over the past two or three years.

The public are entitled to better. Every part of our communities should be mobilised in the fight against crime, and should be entitled to the type of partnership that has worked successfully where it has been tried.

It is the Opposition who take the issues of crime and of law and order seriously, and the Opposition who are prepared to put in place the proper statutory framework, backed by Government, to fight crime in our local communities. If the Government and Conservative Members vote against the new clause, they will be showing that they are just not serious about law and order today.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I suspect that the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) has come to the House to set down a personal marker on law and order and crime prevention. *[Interruption.]* The presence of a number of his supporters on the Opposition Benches makes it clear that the hon. Gentleman's appearance at the Dispatch Box today has been trailed as a landmark contribution on law and order. Yet all that we have heard, other than some interest in the Morgan report, is one bland generalisation after another.

It is little wonder that the shadow Cabinet national executive monitoring group has asked the hon. Gentleman to redraft his law and order document, and in particular to beef up the crime prevention section. Perhaps that is what he intended to do today. But if the hon. Gentleman really is an advocate of law and order, and seriously wishes to challenge the achievements of the Home Secretary in that regard, he will have to explain to the House why he voted against the Police and Criminal Evidence Act in 1984, the Public Order Act in 1986 and the Criminal Justice Acts in 1988 and 1991, and why he abstained on Third Reading of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill now passing through Parliament.

[Mr. Charles Wardle]

The hon. Member for Sedgefield will have to concede that virtually every one of his suggestions, except his recommendation that we provide a statutory obligation for local authorities on crime prevention, is already in practice. When he talked about the Thames Valley scheme and others, including the scheme in Wigan, of course the hon. Gentleman failed to mention that there is no need for any such statutory obligation, because the partnerships already exist; they are already working successfully without the Morgan recommendation.

No doubt the House will recall that the Government have taken up with enthusiasm some of the recommendations of the Morgan report. Morgan emphasised partnership. No Government have ever done more than we have on partnership for crime prevention at local level, and the partnerships are already working. What the hon. Gentleman provides instead is his theme song about Morgan.

All that would lead to is not greater crime prevention, but an auction; a series of bids for extra funding to do a job which is already being done locally. The hon. Gentleman ignores the fact that the Bill and reforms that my right hon. and learned Friend has set in train already provide for locally focused policing plans, so that local interests may be taken into account. That is precisely what exists already in the Bill, and it has been greeted with enthusiasm by those involved in crime prevention up and down the country.

I have the greatest respect for the hon. Gentleman. I wish him well in his search for another job. I do not know about other hon. Members, but I see him as eternally youthful, pleasantly earnest and capable of singing a catchy refrain, but not necessarily with much substance. I think that he thinks that he is the Labour party's answer to Cliff Richard. Unlike Cliff, he has not succeeded in getting anything into the charts, and certainly his law and order single will not get there, either.

Every force and every police authority—and, indeed, every local authority—already acknowledges the importance of crime prevention. We do not need the statutory requirement. The prevention of crime is already one of the fundamental roles of the police. It has been since 1829. To single it out now as one specific function, as an addition to the provision that sets out the duties of police authorities, would not make any sense at all. The Government strategy in dealing with crime already provides for partnership, and it is working successfully. I have already made it clear that the whole community has to play its part in crime prevention. Until the hon. Gentleman realises that everyone must have a vested interest in preventing crime, that everyone must involve himself or herself in crime prevention schemes, he will never understand that simply imposing a statutory obligation would encourage people to shrug off that responsibility.

The spread of crime prevention initiatives at local and national level is testimony to the success of the partnership approach. The House will be familiar with the success of the national board on crime prevention, with the work of the ministerial group on crime prevention, with Crime Concern, started by the Government and with the success of closed-circuit television schemes brought in by many partnerships. The House will be familiar with the growing success of the parish constable scheme, of more than 130,000 neighbourhood watch schemes and other watch schemes, of the success of crime prevention panels and of estate action. The list could go on and on.

In every police authority, in every area, strategies are being developed for targeting crime and are linking with local community groups, with local authorities, with local businesses and with individuals to ensure that crime prevention schemes are initiated and expanded. It does not need an additional statutory push of the kind that Morgan recommended and, now, the hon. Gentleman recommends. For those reasons, I urge the House to reject the new clause.

May I now turn to amendment No. 81, about which I have better news for the hon. Member for Sedgefield? As the Bill stands, the chairman of a police authority is to be appointed at the annual meeting. That means that there is a risk of the chairmanship changing part of the way through the budgetary process, if the annual meeting has to be held between December and January. That seems to be a perfectly good argument in support of amendment No. 81, and the Government are therefore prepared to accept it.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): What a disappointing speech from the Minister. I suppose that it was not to be expected that the Home Secretary would dignify the debate about crime prevention by speaking himself, but the fact that he sat there and allowed the matter to be handled by a junior Minister in such a manner was testimony to the Government's low level of interest in crime prevention. We are quite familiar with that.

The Minister's first four minutes of roustabout might have amused a Conservative party wine and cheese gathering, but would certainly not have impressed anyone who was interested in the reduction of crime in this country.

The reality is that the Minister and, indeed, the Government have failed to grasp the significance of crime prevention in the battle to reduce crime. They do not speak on these matters with any great authority, having presided over an explosion of crime during their tenure of office. Successive Home Secretaries have asked the House to believe that the latest piece of criminal justice legislation would be the panacea, and when Opposition Members have not necessarily accepted that view, that has been held up against us as evidence of our lack of faith.

After crime has doubled in this country, it is scarcely surprising that we regard the implementation of yet another criminal justice Bill as unlikely to be the panacea. The truth is that crime prevention is one of the most hopeful, purposeful and effective ways of dealing with a scourge which afflicts society and which the Government have ignored too long. It is not enough to say, "We favour partnership; let a thousand flowers bloom," but to give no leadership whatever in the area of crime prevention.

I would take issue with the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) only if he sought to imply—I do not think that he did, because his speech was peculiarly non-partisan—that it is only Labour authorities that have been effective. The truth is that Liberal Democrat authorities throughout the country have promoted effective schemes of crime prevention, even against a background of serious cuts in Government expenditure which have borne down directly on those areas of discretionary expenditure which include crime prevention.

Sutton council is a case in point. Even in a year when its budget had to stand still, the council thought it right to appoint a crime prevention officer. But the Government have done nothing—

Mr. Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford): The hon. Gentleman has treated us to a tirade against the Government, saying how little they have done and how crime has increased. Now that our serious crime figures show a decline, can he name a single country in western Europe where overall crime has decreased?

Mr. Maclennan: The encouraging short-term trend is certainly not statistically significant, or internationally comparable—as the Home Secretary was frequently at pains to argue when he was shrugging off, month by month, the most appalling crime increases in Europe.

Mr. James Clappison (Hertsmere): Would the hon. Gentleman care to justify his comment about statistical insignificance? In the Metropolitan area, residential burglaries have fallen by 16 per cent., and in my constituency, which is part of that area, house burglaries have decreased by 50 per cent. Is that not good news for householders?

Mr. Maclennan: It is excellent news, but it does not establish a trend. I hope that it will be the forerunner of a general improvement in the effectiveness of community policing—an area in which the Metropolitan police, especially with Operation Bumblebee, have shown a lead.

The fact is that the Government have turned a deaf ear, not only to parties in the House that have advocated strong crime prevention measures, but to their own advisers. I will not labour the point that the hon. Member for Sedgefield eloquently and cogently made—that to shrug aside the advice of the Morgan report is highly irresponsible and does not impress those who are interested in results, as opposed to Government rhetoric.

The Government ought to be analysing local crime prevention schemes, drawing together the information about what is effective, disseminating best practice, encouraging it and exhorting those who are working as volunteers, or in commercial groups, or in local government, to come together and build on best practice.

Even without Government resources at our disposal, a year ago the Liberal Democrats published evidence of what we were doing in our local authorities, showing what was effective and disseminating it among other authorities, regardless of their political complexion. We suggested that they start to do likewise and that they come up with other ways of doing even better. The Government have subsequently come up with comparable ideas of their own.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Michael Howard): I was extremely interested to hear what the hon. Gentleman said about the importance of disseminating best practice on crime prevention and I entirely agree with him. Is he not aware that Crime Concern, an organisation which the Government have set up and are funding, and which he should be aware of, because its chairman is president of the Liberal Democrats —demonstrating our non-partisan approach to these matters—is doing precisely what the hon. Gentleman has said should be done? It is doing it effectively and disseminating best practice about crime prevention across the country. Does not the hon. Gentleman know about that?

4.30 pm

Mr. Maclennan: Of course I know about the excellent work done by Crime Concern under the leadership of Tim Clement Jones, who, as it happens, is not the president, but a distinguished member, of my party. I am also aware that the resources that the Government have made available to Crime Concern are not of the magnitude that would enable it to do the work that could and should be undertaken by the Home Office in drawing together information.

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): Surely the Government should recognise that Britain has the finest network of local authorities, which could operate crime prevention more successfully than central Government can. All advice and information should generally be available through the local government network.

Mr. Maclennan: I am a strong believer in decentralising authorities in these matters, but the Home Office and its counterpart in Scotland have a role to play in ensuring that the best experience of local government and local police authorities is made widely available, and that that best practice is followed and added to by further and better examples.

The Under-Secretary seemed to sweep aside the central importance of crime prevention in policing, and I agree with the hon. Member for Sedgefield that that reflects very much the Minister's attitude to policing. One is increasingly fearful that the Government intend to tackle crime only after it has been committed, to put to one side the causes of crime and crime prevention, and, possibly, to contract out most of the rest of the matters that are handled by the police, which play such a significant role in making the civil order in which we live one where people are not smitten by fear and the expectation that crime will blight their lives.

The proposal in the new clause was canvassed in Committee and I spoke strongly in favour of giving police authorities a specific and express duty to treat crime prevention as a priority. The Government have been only too willing to impose national objectives on police authorities, a trend which I deplore and regard as counter-productive to community policing. Crime prevention, however, does not fall into the sort of national objective category that the Government appear to favour. It goes to the core of what policing is about.

I agree with only one thing that the Minister said—it is implicit in policing that the police must be concerned about crime prevention. Such a general statement, however, goes nowhere near to addressing the importance of the task, the importance of the allocation of responsibilities and resources for crime prevention, and the importance of the involvement of the community in that task, wherein lies the best hope of reducing the impact of crime on the lives of our citizens.

Mr. Blair: With the leave of the House, I shall reply briefly to the Minister's comments.

I thank the Minister for accepting amendment No. 81, but I should deal with his central argument. As I understand it, he agrees that partnerships should be set up throughout the country, but says that that is already happening. The fact of the matter is that it is happening not everywhere but only in certain parts. It should happen everywhere.

[Mr. Blair]

Why do not the Government give the lead? If they were prepared to place these partnerships in a proper framework, there would be a chance of extending them throughout the country.

The Home Secretary mentioned Crime Concern. I understand that it is fully behind the Morgan report and its recommendation that local authorities should be given statutory responsibility. Ultimately, we are driven back to the conclusion that the recommendation is being resisted merely because local authorities were given this responsibility. It is dogma standing in the way of progress. We should have none of it: we should vote for the new clause.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 246, Noes 280.

Division No. 281] **[4.35 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Church, Judith
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Gapes, Mike
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hodge, Margaret
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Bdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
MacShane, Denis
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
Olner, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Straw, Jack
Timms, Stephen
Tipping, Paddy
Trimble, David
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Peter Kilfoyle and
Mr. John Spellar.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*

Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Cran, James
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, Sir John
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Rt Hon Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Riffkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Andrew Mackinlay and Mr. Derek Conway.

Question accordingly negatived.

New clause 2

PUBLIC INQUIRY ON REDUCTION IN NUMBER OF POLICE AREAS

'After section 23 of the 1964 Act there shall be inserted—

"Public inquiry on reduction in number of police areas

'23A.—(1) This section has effect where—

(a) the Secretary of State has proposed an alteration to the area of a police force which would have the effect of reducing the number of such areas in Schedule 1A to this Act;

(b) an objection has been duly delivered in accordance with section 21A(4) above; and

(c) that objection has not been withdrawn within three weeks of the Secretary of State having given notice under that subsection that he does not accept it.

(2) In any case to which subsection (1) above applies the Secretary of State shall cause a local inquiry to be held in respect of any objection by a person appointed by him (who shall not be an officer of police or of any Government department).

(3) The Secretary of State shall consider the report of the person holding the inquiry before determining whether the proposed reduction in the number of areas should be made and if so subject to what modifications, if any.

(4) Where a proposal has been subject to a public inquiry in accordance with this section, the Secretary of State shall not lay a draft order under section 21B(3) above until 7 days after he has laid the report of that public inquiry before Parliament.".'. — *[Mr. Michael.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): With this it will be convenient to discuss also the following: New clause 5—*Metropolitan Police Force*—

' .—(1) The Secretary of State shall by order made not later than 30th June 1997 provide that there shall be a police authority for the metropolitan police district.

(2) A police authority established under this section shall be a body corporate to be known as the Metropolitan Police Authority.

(3) A police authority established under this section shall secure the maintenance of an efficient and effective police force for its area.

(4) A police authority established under subsection (1) above shall have a scheme of membership specified in accordance with section 3A of the Police Act 1964 and the Secretary of State shall before issuing any order setting out such a scheme consider the exercise of his power in subsection (2) of that section.

(5) For the purposes of this section, a council is a relevant council in relation to a police authority if it is the council for a London borough.

(6) Schedules 1B and 1C to the 1964 Act shall apply with respect to appointments to a police authority established under this section.'.

Amendment No. 2, in clause 13, page 7, line 25, at end insert

'and where a reduction is proposed section (*Public inquiry on reduction in number of police areas*) shall apply.'.

Amendment No. 3, in page 8, line 42, at end insert

'provided that a further notice of the revised proposals shall have been given to the recipients of the original notice under subsection (1) of this section and that the recipients of the further notice shall have a further period of four weeks beginning with the date of the further notice within which to lodge objections with the Secretary of State, who, on receipt of such objections, shall follow the procedure outlined in subsection (4) of this section.'.

Mr. Michael: The new clauses and amendments relate to the accountability and independence of the police. The House should be aware that that accountability and independence are under threat as a result of the Bill. The essence of policing is that the police are the police of the people, not of the state. That is the message of the Association of Chief Police Officers, but those words should have a resonance with every hon. Member and with the general public.

Policing is not through imposition from the centre, but by the consent of the local community who are represented for policing purposes by the locally elected members who sit on the police authority. It is through the police authority, constituted with a majority of elected members, that a legitimate relationship exists between the police and the community.

With regard to the office of chief constable, and again according to ACPO,

"The Chief Constable of the police force is accountable to the community through the police authority, but is operationally independent. That independent role is vital if the integrity of policing in this country is to remain."

Those words should also have resonance for every hon. Member. Accountability and independence are threatened by a Bill which places great powers in the hands of the Home Secretary to influence and undermine the independence of the chief constable and to influence and undermine the independence and accountability of the police authority.

New clause 2 seeks to ensure that if a local authority or a local police authority objects to a proposal to merge police forces, there will be a local inquiry and, as a result of that local inquiry, the Home Secretary will be required to consider the report of the independent person holding the inquiry before he reaches his conclusions. According to the new clause, the Home Secretary shall not lay a draft until he has had time to consider the views of that individual and the outcome of the inquiry before he places his conclusions before Parliament. That basic principle is contained in the Police Act 1964, but the centralising Police and Magistrates' Courts Bill seems to remove that principle from the statute book. That is wrong and we seek to restore it through the new clause.

Through new clause 5, we seek to ensure that, not later than June 1997—a date which is not far distant, but far distant enough to allow for planning—there shall be a police authority for London. It is wrong that there is no police authority for London. The Home Secretary does not fulfil that function except in relation to statute. He does not fulfil it in reality. It is right that we should state today that there shall be a police authority for London.

The amendments grouped with new clause 2 seek to ensure that notice shall be given of revised proposals. There are also minor amendments to improve the quality of the Bill and the accountability and independence of local police forces.

The effect of clause 13 would be to repeal schedule 3 of the Police Act 1964. That schedule requires the Home Secretary to set up a local inquiry to be held by a person appointed by him—so the Home Secretary still has that choice—if a police authority or council objects to a proposed scheme for policing or, in other words, a merger.

Mergers threaten the police forces of this country. When the Chancellor of the Exchequer was Home Secretary, he was part of the centralising tendency. There is an influence which is seeking to bring police forces under the greater control of the Home Secretary—which is what this Bill does—and to merge local police forces into large regional police forces in which the character of individual areas and individual police forces will be lost and submerged. We wish to resist that. If the Minister is true to the comments that he made in Committee when he insisted that there was no plan to merge police forces, and to the comments of his ministerial colleague in the House of Lords where an assurance was given that there was no intention, within many years, to merge police forces, he must accept the new clause.

The Government's position as expressed in the House of Lords is that the Home Secretary would not propose to alter police areas unless he was satisfied that that was in the interests of police efficiency and effectiveness, but we cannot take that for granted, because the Home Secretary during his period of office has taken many steps which have not been in the interests of police efficiency and effectiveness.

If the Home Secretary does not accept the objections, he must give reasons. If he wishes to proceed, an affirmative resolution of both Houses of Parliament is necessary. That is true. The argument that we heard in Committee from the Minister was that public inquiries would cause delay. I repeat the point that I made to the Minister in Committee:

delay occurs only if the Government want to go ahead with mergers. If they do not wish to go ahead with mergers, there is no need for the expedited course for merging allowed for in the Bill.

Let us consider the hurdles that the Home Secretary would have to overcome. According to the Minister, the Home Secretary considers proposals for amalgamation or alteration of police areas carefully and is bound to give reasons for rejecting objections. We expect that. Is the Minister suggesting that the Home Secretary should not have to give serious thought to proposals? However, it would be desirable for the Home Secretary to expose his reasoning to open discussion in a public inquiry, which would allow people to express the views of the locality and would allow the views of the police in that area to be heard.

The Government have expressed enthusiasm, which we heard again from the Minister a few moments ago, for the involvement of the local public in policing. The Government support, as we do, neighbourhood watch, other kinds of watch, parish constables, increasing the number of special constables, multi-agency crime prevention and police-community consultative groups. The interests of local democracy in those approaches should be preserved in any change to police areas, and that requirement should outweigh the requisites of administrative convenience.

An affirmative resolution in Parliament is required for a change to be made, but that is not a safeguard because an order would contain a mass of detail and would be unamendable. There would thus be a dilemma if a particular point—such as the siting of headquarters, which can be a very important element in local decision making—needed attention. Members would be under pressure from Ministers to approve the order, and not to reject it so that the procedure has to be started again. Moreover, it is extremely rare for an order not to be approved.

With regard to delay, it seems that some public inquiries in the 1960s took several months and the Minister used that point to great dramatic effect in Committee. In fact, the inquiries took several months, but implementation took two to three years or longer. The greater part of the delay was caused by implementation rather than by the period taken up by the public inquiry. In one case cited by the Minister it was conceded that the public inquiry lasted only 13 days.

It is the quality of proposals that matters, not the quantity of proposals. The Minister made a case for making public inquiries more effective and targeted, and we agree with that. However, he has not made a case for sweeping away public inquiries and trying to still the voice of the police and the community when considering decisions on the future of a police force.

Amalgamation orders last a long time. The period of reorganisation of any organisation, particularly the police, is a period of great disruption to the service and the quality of the service provided locally. It should therefore not be entered into without great thought. That is why a period of uncertainty is a price well worth paying to be sure that we get the answer right. The basic principle should be, "Don't reorganise unless you are absolutely certain." Consistent with that is the requirement to have a public inquiry so that the public as well as the Minister can be fully informed and take a balanced view of any proposals.

It must be helpful for the Home Secretary to hear any case against amalgamation argued through an inquiry which offers the possibility of oral discussion and exchanges of views. With today's police forces—irrespective of mergers—we are dealing with larger areas and populations than was the case after the Police Act 1964. Cleveland has an area of 59,000 acres and Dyfed Powys has more than 1 million acres, despite being the smallest police force. Gwent has a population of nearly 500,000, while the West Midlands area has about 2.5 million. We are talking about much larger police forces than those which were merged in the 1960s. The arguments that applied in respect of delay, of which the Minister made great play, therefore do not apply.

Although the marginal note to clause 13 is "Alteration of police areas", it is obvious that mergers and amalgamations are intended. They will make the police service more remote from local communities. I repeat my question to the Minister because he did not answer it successfully during the hours we spent debating these issues in Committee. If there are no plans to make amalgamations or to merge police forces, or to have vast and remote regional police authorities, why introduce such drastic streamlining methods in the Bill?

The Government's continued resistance to incorporating a provision for a public inquiry is ominous. I must tell the Minister that, pleasant though his responses often are, we distrust the Government's intentions and those not only of the present Home Secretary but of future Home Secretaries—following the imminent reshuffle—as to the way in which they could use the powers in the Bill.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): The hon. Gentleman is speaking while the Local Government Commission is sitting. Whatever the outcome of the Local Government Commission, there will be a marked change in the boundaries. Is it not prudent of the Home Secretary to take powers which would allow the police authorities to be adjusted to the new local authorities?

5 pm

Mr. Michael: The hon. Gentleman was not a member of the Standing Committee, and I can forgive him for regarding that as a valid point. The changes to local government in Wales, for instance, have been decided by the Local Government (Wales) Bill, which was passed by the House. Later tonight, the Minister will seek powers—this will undoubtedly be subject to a little debate—to deal with the new local government boundaries in Wales.

That is different from the power that I am contesting here, which is the power to merge police forces without the need to have regard to new local government boundaries, without a public inquiry and without having to take account of the views of local people and the police who deal with a particular area. That is the point, and I am grateful to the hon. Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) for giving me an opportunity to make that absolutely clear. The point is that if there is a change to police boundaries which has everyone singing and dancing in the streets because it will improve the standard of policing, a public inquiry will not be necessary. The issue arises only where there is an objection by the appropriate bodies.

The problem is that we must deduce from the Government's resistance to the minor improvements which we have sought that further centralisation and further increases in the size and remoteness of police forces is intended. Those considerations place in context the denial

[Mr. Michael]

of natural justice, including the removal of the provision for a public inquiry, especially when significant changes to the most sensitive of public services are intended.

As for the situation in London, it is outrageous that democratic accountability does not exist in relation to the police in London. I should make it clear that our criticism is not of the police or of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis, but of the Home Secretary for failing to take the opportunity to create an accountable body. I know that my hon. Friends have taken the opportunity of meeting police in various parts of the capital recently, and those who represent London feel particularly strongly on this point.

The police seek a partnership approach, which includes working with the boroughs in London as well as with the local community. The police respect the important role of local government. Unfortunately, however, as my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) said in a previous debate, that respect is not shown by Tory Members. The missing players in such local partnerships are, as usual, the Government.

Technically, the Home Secretary is the police authority for London, but that cannot and does not work. In effect, accountability is in the hands of Whitehall for most of the time, apart from the odd annual occasion when the Home Secretary comes out of the box to speak to the House. That shows disrespect for democracy. In a decade of democracy —I think that it can be characterised in that way—when accountability is extending widely in society, particularly to police forces in the former Soviet Union, in South Africa and on the west bank, it seems odd that London does not have proper accountability and democracy. The former Chancellor promised it and then snatched it away from us within a short period. That shows a disgraceful lack of confidence in the people of London.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): I am following closely and understanding to some extent the point that the hon. Gentleman is making. I accept that there is a case for making police authorities accountable to elected representatives. However, one of the things that has always irked me is that, like hon. Members representing London, I can table parliamentary questions and raise debates about policing in London before the ultimate arbiter of democracy—this House—but when I want to question the operational conduct of the Humberside police, I cannot do so. There is no opportunity for me as an elected representative to ask the Humberside police to account to me; yet perversely—ironically, I would argue—London is the only case in which hon. Members, through the Home Secretary, can ask the police authority to account to us. We cannot do that in the counties. How does the hon. Gentleman explain that?

Mr. Michael: As my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) pointed out, it is a fat lot of use the Home Secretary being accountable, as he refers operational matters to the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis. He is not accountable to the House for operational matters.

If the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) has trouble contacting the chief constable in his police authority, I would be happy to tell him how to go about it. I know that my hon. Friends spend a considerable amount of time talking to members of their police authorities and to chief constables, and find that they are ever responsive to our concerns. If the hon. Gentleman has the good fortune to be in an area where the majority of members of the police authority are Labour, he will have an excellent police authority—I have every confidence in that. Indeed, I visited that police authority and discussed some of the policing issues which I believe are important in every part of the country.

Two issues are paramount: there should be a body that is accountable to local people, and the Home Secretary should be accountable to the House for his actions. We get a fat lot of answers on many of those issues as well. We need that accountability, and it is wrong that it does not exist for London, as it does for other parts of the country.

Finally, the Minister in this House and the Minister in another place have used these words—I quote the Minister in another place:

"My right hon. Friend has no intention at present of amalgamating anything, but it is perfectly possible in the course of the next 10, 20 or 30 years that amalgamations will have to take place."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 17 February 1994; Vol. 551, c. 324.]

If there is a belief that mergers of police forces should take place, that should be tested by a public inquiry which gives local people and local police forces the opportunity to have their voice heard before a decision is taken. That is why this debate about accountability, responsibility and the independence of the police force is so important.

Mr. Maclennan: I rise to support new clause 2, the first proposal to which the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) spoke, which calls for inquiries to be retained in the case of expected amalgamations. When the matter was first discussed in another place and Lord Harris of Greenwich spoke about the need for public local inquiries in the event of proposals for amalgamation, he was assured by the Minister that he was looking for slugs under stones.

It was suggested that the prospect of amalgamation was unreal. Earl Ferrers said:

"He says that we are producing arrangements for amalgamations, but we have no intention of doing any. I have no hesitation in telling the Committee what the position is. My right hon. Friend has no intention at present of amalgamating anything, but it is perfectly possible in the course of the next 10, 20 or 30 years that amalgamations will have to take place."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 17 February 1994; Vol. 551, c. 323-24.]

In the few months that have elapsed since then, the Government's true intentions have become much more clear.

Only this morning, I received a letter only this morning from the chief constable of Gwent constabulary, Tony Burden, expressing alarm about the Government's intentions for amalgamation in Wales. He asked me to agree that the principle that nothing useful can be gained from police force amalgamations, and that policing as a service should remain local, should be imported into our discussions today. He is right to be worried about that prospect in Wales.

The Minister communicated with me—and undoubtedly with other hon. Members, including perhaps the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth—in a letter dated 30 June, outlining intentions to amalgamate forces in Wales. We shall have an opportunity later to consider those proposals in detail. I do not propose to dwell on the matter now, except to say that the Government have not played a wholly frank hand during the discussion of the procedures for amalgamation. Throughout the deliberations, we have

been told that the Government have nothing so sinister in mind—it was simply that contingency arrangements were being made. Even before the Bill is out of the House, we are being told of the Government's present and, indeed, urgent intentions to do just what Lord Harris spoke of.

Inquiries play a significant part in the argument for amalgamations and in ensuring that local considerations are properly taken into account. Major amalgamations took place in the 1960s when my noble Friend Lord Jenkins of Hillhead was Home Secretary. Local inquiries were carried out. No one argued that the major programme of amalgamations was in any significant or serious way damaged or that the police service was adversely affected by the delays caused by the local inquiry system. It was seen to be reasonable and it did not affect the efficiency of the relevant police forces.

The Minister has not so far produced any good reason why we cannot adhere to the practice that I have outlined. It appears to be a strengthening of central authority to dictate the disposition of the police authorities without proper checks and controls of a democratic nature and to exclude from the deliberations precisely the local interests which would be ventilated in local inquiries. I hope that, even at this late stage in the progress of the Bill, the Government will concede the force of the case for the use of local inquiries.

The arguments on the other amendments, which deal with the case for a local police authority for London, have been canvassed many times in the House and fought by Ministers of the present Government wearing different hats. There can be no dogmatic view against the desirability of such a police authority. Certain functions of the police in the Metropolitan area might properly remain within the oversight of the Home Office, although I must say that Home Secretaries have not shown themselves to be notably successfully in preventing intrusions into the royal palaces or always to be the most effective police authority to deal with international matters of diplomacy and the protection of the Government. Those cases have traditionally been deployed against a police authority for London.

I believe that those arguments have been overtaken by events and that there is now a strong balance of opinion within the police force itself and among the public in favour of the development of a police authority for London. That should be given expression at the earliest possible date. I therefore propose to support that proposal, too.

5.15 pm

Mr. Charles Wardle: I hope that the House will allow me to clarify some remarks that I made in the short debate on new clauses 14 to 17 in response to an intervention from the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble). He asked me whether the new clauses applied to the Royal Ulster Constabulary. I made an error. I apologise to the House. New clauses 14 to 17 would apply where English, Welsh or Scottish police officers served with the RUC, but they do not apply to officers of the RUC serving abroad, because the clauses amend the Police Act 1964, which does not extend to Northern Ireland. I am grateful for the opportunity to clarify that point.

New clauses 2 and 5 deal with the issue of public inquiries and amalgamations, which was debated twice in another place and twice during the recent Commons Committee stage. On all those occasions, amendments were defeated. I believe that the arguments against the new clauses are overwhelming. The procedures in the Bill for altering police areas are thorough but not cumbersome. They involve five separate stages. That gives full opportunity for any objections to be raised and fully considered. New clause 2 would add a sixth stage to all the others by requiring my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary to hold a public inquiry which could produce an interminable delay.

The House will be aware that previous experience of public inquiries in the 1960s showed that they caused delay and were often convened to consider fairly trivial issues that did not add anything useful to the process of considering changes to force areas. Those delays sometimes had adverse effects on police morale.

We have no plans to change the number of police forces. The hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth asked me to confirm the point again. No sensible Government could promise to preserve intact every police force in perpetuity, but we have no plans to make any changes. If we made the promise that the hon. Gentleman a little mischievously sought from me this afternoon and in Committee, the effect would be that there would never be any change in the number of police forces. If that promise had been given in 1964 when the Bill that became the 1964 Act was debated, we would still have 125 separate police forces. For those reasons, I urge the House to disregard the entreaties of the hon. Gentleman.

I mentioned five stages. Before anything else happens, my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary must be satisfied that any alteration would be in the interests of efficiency and effectiveness. Secondly, he has to give interested parties formal notice of his proposals. Thirdly, those interested parties have a minimum of four months to consider the proposals. Fourthly, when my right hon. and learned Friend receives any representations from those who have been consulted, he is under a statutory obligation to consider them. If he still wishes to proceed after all that, he must make proposals in an order which must be laid before Parliament. Hence, we do not need a sixth stage.

New clause 5 deals with a police authority for London. Successive Governments of different political complexions have made it absolutely clear over the past 165 years that there should be special and separate arrangements for policing the capital. It is not an accident of history that the Home Secretary is the police authority for the Metropolitan police. We have had a developed system of local government for more than a century, but we have consistently declined to give local government the responsibility for policing.

We are talking not about party politics but about questions and judgments of vital national interest which go beyond local government. The differences between the Metropolitan police and other forces are not simply a matter of size—although we should not overlook the fact that it is a huge body of men and women, 13 times larger than the average police force. The differences also arise from the Metropolitan police force's unique functions, which include national functions such as anti-terrorist activities, functions undertaken on behalf of the whole police service, and local functions of vital national concern,

The Government have publicly examined the various possibilities, as the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth said. I make no apology for that. It was right that

[Mr. Charles Wardle]

we should do so. In doing so, we decided that we should stick with the status quo. It is impracticable and, in some cases, impossible to draw a clear and permanent line between national and local interests in policing London —hence the arrangements as they now stand. So our conclusion is that the Home Secretary must remain the police authority for the Metropolitan police, to safeguard the national interest in their work and make them fully accountable to Parliament, as my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) reminded the House a few moments ago.

We are not, however, simply maintaining the status quo, because we are establishing a new non-party political body, the Metropolitan Police Committee, outside the Home Office, to help my right hon. and learned Friend and Londoners to get the best from the reforms. We believe that the new committee will add real value to the existing arrangements. It will help my right hon. and learned Friend to apply the reforms administratively to the Metropolitan police without disturbing or confusing the direct lines of accountability from the force to the Home Secretary and Parliament.

For those reasons, I urge the House to reject the new clauses tabled by the hon. Member for Cardiff,South and Penarth.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 249, Noes 287.

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AYES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Church, Judith
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Gapes, Mike
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hodge, Margaret
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Liddell, Helen
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
MacShane, Denis
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
Olner, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Timms, Stephen
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm

Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Eric Illsley and
Mr. Jon Owen Jones.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, Sir John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jankin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Rt Hon Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Irvine Patnick and
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope.

Question accordingly negatived.

New clause 3

OFFICE OF CONSTABLE IN A DESIGNATED POLICE FORCE

'.—(1) A person may be attested as a police constable only if he serves in a police force which is either a force constituted under a Police Act or in a force designated under this section by the Secretary of State.

(2) Subject to subsection (4) below, the Secretary of State may by order and after consultation with persons representative of police authorities and chief officers of police specify the jurisdiction and responsibilities of a constable.

(3) No order may be made under subsection (2) above unless a draft of the order has been laid before and approved by resolution of each House of Parliament.

(4) A duly attested constable serving in a designated force shall have all the powers and privileges of a constable under a Police Act but only—

(a) where no other constable is present and available to exercise his powers as a constable and he is satisfied that the circumstances require him to exercise those powers and privileges, or

(b) in pursuance of a request for assistance from another police constable serving in a force constituted under a Police Act.

(5) The Secretary of State may by order apply such provisions as he considers appropriate of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 to constables serving in a designated force.

(6) For the purposes of this section, a "Police Act" means the Police Act 1964, the Police (Scotland) Act 1967, the Metropolitan Police Act 1829 or the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 1970.'.—*[Mr. Michael.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

5.30 pm

Mr. Michael: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

We now come to an extremely important issue which was debated in Committee in respect of police forces other than the ordinary police forces. Those are sometimes called Home Office police forces, but they should be regarded as the police forces of local people, which we have in different functions in the country.

The new clause deals with the office of constable, and asks what a constable or a police officer is. It relates to the confidence of the public in recognising a police officer and knowing that that somebody whom they have identified as a police officer is, in fact, a constable. The new clause is designed to meet the Minister's objections to some of the ways in which we proposed to tackle the smaller, non-regional and non-local police forces. I refer hon. Members to the debates in Committee, and particularly to some very well-informed speeches by my hon. Friends. I do not intend to repeat the arguments that were made at that stage.

It is more important than ever that we should know how to recognise a police officer. In an age of vigilantes, core functions, national targets, privatisation and centralised control within Whitehall, it is important that we know who is a police officer. I underline the fact that we are talking about the police of the public, and not the police of the state.

The new clause seeks to determine who is a constable and what is a police force, and the public have a right to know with certainty who fulfils those categories. The new clause states that somebody can be recognised as a police officer only

"if he serves in a police force which is either a force constituted under a Police Act or in a force designated under this section by the Secretary of State."

That seems to be a fairly simple and straightforward way of dealing with the issue, and it also takes into account the problems raised by the Minister in Committee.

It is only right that there should be something specific about the jurisdiction and responsibilities of the constable. It is also right that we should deal with the difficulties facing members of the British Transport police. The new clause says that if somebody is a designated and trained police officer who has the responsibility and experience of a police officer, he should have

"all the powers and privileges of a constable under a Police Act but only where no other constable is present."

If an officer from the British Transport police was on the way to Ystrad Mynach and an accident or incident occurred which required the help of a police officer, that officer should be able to act until a member of the South Wales police force was available to fulfil the functions of policing. That British Transport police officer, or an officer of any of the other non-regional, non-local police forces, should have no doubt that he has the powers of a constable, and members of the public should be in no doubt about his status and his powers to act.

A variety of other arguments were made in Committee, and I do not intend to rehearse them, but I was disappointed in Committee by the way in which Conservative Members sought to diminish and minimise the importance of the issues. The Minister made reference to the Barnet dog handlers and, as someone who was bitten by an alsatian in Barnet at the age of 13, I intend to find out more about that body and why its strength at present is zero.

The Minister said in Committee that it was a centralising idea to bring the forces together and to combine them under a single authority. That is not required by the new clause. We have overcome the difficulties that the Minister brought out, but the choice is clear for the Government. The Minister should say either that the organisations concerned are police forces staffed by constables and that they should be brought within the ambit of the relevant law, or that they are not police forces. In that case, the Minister should describe how they must be governed and regulated, because it is certain that they should be governed and regulated in some way.

If members of the forces are police officers, they should come within the proper ambit of the law. If not, they should be acknowledged as something different. The Minister failed to tackle those issues in Committee and I hope he will tackle them today, perhaps by accepting the new clause.

The Minister also said in Committee that some of the constables outside the local police forces are in tiny forces. That is true, but what does it mean? Does it mean that because they are small, such forces should be outside the scope of the Police and Magistrates' Courts Bill and the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984? Should they be outside the jurisdiction and supervision of the inspectorate, the training requirements for police officers and any formal supervision? Is that what the Minister maintains on the Floor of House, as he did in Committee? I hope not.

There is a need for certainty to be given to the public and to those who should be recognised as police officers in the vital role of constable, wherever and under whatever conditions they exercise those functions. The new clause would give that clarity, and I appeal to the Minister to accept it.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) is at his most dangerous when he says that he appeals to me. I have listened to his entreaties, but I fear that I must disappoint him, as I did when we debated this subject in Committee.

New clause 3 is an only slightly rejigged version of what we discussed in Committee. A range of useful, complementary and—in many cases—rather small policing arrangements are already in place. The House has already given necessary powers and provided jurisdiction to those individuals concerned, and also provided a system of complaints where that is needed.

We do not want or need the Home Department gainsaying those powers and providing a top-heavy, centralised system. That would not serve non-Home Office forces well. It is not a question of a legislative gap. The House made wise legislative arrangements for the various undertakings and classes of undertakings involved on an individual basis, which makes for flexibility and allows arrangements to be tailored to individual circumstances. It also allows problems and proposals to be dealt with on their merits, as they arise.

That approach is reflected in the arrangements for applying the provisions of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 to non-Home Office forces. In Committee, I explained that section 96 of PACE allows its complaints and discipline procedures to be established for those forces along the lines of those for forces maintained under the Police Act 1964. That is fundamentally important.

The new clause makes the somewhat radical proposal to extend the jurisdiction of all constables in non-Home Office forces so that, in effect, they could exercise their powers anywhere in England and Wales to assist the public or local police force. There is a constitutional point. The limited jurisdiction of the forces in question reflects their constitutional position as decided by the House. By and large, non-Home Office forces are not about policing the general public but about protecting private property and specific interests. Their members are recruited and trained for specific purposes, and their accountability, management and control arrangements reflect that.

It would not be acceptable to the public or to the House for members of such forces to exercise full constabulary powers anywhere in England and Wales. Local public accountability would not be there, and training, discipline and management arrangements are different, and rightly so. I must therefore disappoint the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): I support new clause 3 and will respond to some of the Minister's erroneous arguments. There is a plethora of so-called non-Home Office forces. Some are highly regarded, highly valued, highly skilled and of historic importance. There are also small forces valued by the public, but not in the same league.

Among the big players are the British Transport police, whose training, ethos and traditions are almost indistinguishable from those of Home Office forces. I couple with them the Ministry of Defence and Atomic Energy Authority police and the Royal Parks constabulary. Three of those forces operate within a stone's throw of the House. If you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, were to walk with me down Whitehall, we might meet a police officer whose appearance would lead us to think that he was a member of the Metropolitan police but who was a Ministry of Defence officer. We might cross the road into Horse Guards Parade and meet a member of the Royal Parks constabulary. British Transport police also operate in the vicinity.

I present that scenario because many members of the public cannot understand why such officers would have any hesitation in responding to an incident. Non-Home Office officers would have at least momentary hesitation because they do not have powers as police officers, except in the immediate vicinity of a railway station, the Ministry of Defence, the Atomic Energy Authority or St. James's park—yet all could witness an incident in the street to which they would want to respond, but are not at liberty to do so.

In Committee, the Minister acknowledged that non-Home Office police have no more powers than you or I, Mr. Deputy Speaker, yet—unfairly, I thought—he never suggested that they would be duty bound to respond. That is the spirit in which those proud police officers respond, but they risk being placed in jeopardy. If a complaint were made about their conduct or they suffered injury, the question would arise of their competence and insurance. The matter should be regularised for that if for no other reason.

Three London boroughs and other authorities throughout the country have appointed police forces to patrol their parks—where, unhappily, there is an incidence of crime. Those officers wear traditional uniforms, but they do not have the training of other officers and are not subject to PACE or to the Police Complaints Authority. The Minister said that it is within his competence to ensure that they are subject to the authority. Perhaps he ought to exercise that power, and not leave that to the new clause. However, it beefs up the arguments and emphasises the public need for change and to ensure standards.

5.45 pm

A number of bodies are appointing police officers, but there is no central knowledge of who holds the office of constable, which is irresponsible. It is also unfair to the majority of police in the Home Office forces, Metropolitan police and quality forces to which I referred, that people whose names are not known centrally can be arbitrarily sworn in after receiving poor training. They place in jeopardy not only their own status as police officers and the reputation of their small forces but those of other officers and forces.

It would be prudent to make the proposed modest addition to the Bill to ensure that the Home Secretary has the capacity to ensure standards among those described as police officers and sworn in as constables, and to ensure that there are proper complaints procedures to enhance the status of such constables and protection for the public.

The Minister was talking rubbish when he implied that the new clause sought to extend the general powers of police officers in non-Home Office forces. No one is arguing for co-jurisdiction. The clause makes explicit the fact that, where no other police officer is available, a constable in certain designated non-Home Office forces —we have in mind quality forces such as the British Transport, Atomic Energy Authority and MOD police and the Royal Parks constabulary—would have the full powers and competence of a Metropolitan police officer. What is wrong with that? Such a change is urgently needed.

If a Metropolitan police officer required assistance, he would be able to call on a constable in any of those other

forces for assistance, and it would be given by the respondent as a constable and not as a member of the public.

The argument is best illustrated by the poll tax riots in Trafalgar square, when we saw dramatic television coverage of a scaffolding pole being thrown through the window of a British Transport police vehicle. Clearly, the occupants of that car were inextricably involved in a dangerous incident—but under the existing arrangements described by the Minister, they had no more competence than any of us to respond. That is barmy.

If the Minister is fair and generous, and reads the new clause properly, he will know that we are only talking about ensuring that in an emergency, police officers who have been highly trained at significant public expense would have the capacity to respond in the interests of police colleagues and the public—who demand and expect the attendance and attention of a police officer.

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): The hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) made an interesting point. I have a particular interest in the Royal Parks constabulary because I was responsible for bringing it into existence through a private Member's Bill. It is a fine force and does a good job in St. James's park and other royal parks.

The Harbours, Docks and Piers Clauses Act 1847, with which I am sure my hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye (Mrs. Lait) is intimately familiar, provides for the appointment of constables in docks such as those at Harwich. Those constables are responsible for the protection of private property. Their recruitment, training and accountability and their duties in the docks and one mile outside the perimeter are different from those of officers in a regular or recognised force.

The issue of accountability has troubled me since I came across this Victorian statute some five years ago. I am not criticising the port of Harwich or the officers who serve there. I merely draw the matter to the Minister's attention in the hope that he will reflect on it to see whether it might be possible to ensure that all uniformed police officers who carry out their duties in the areas to which they are appointed are properly trained and accountable. To all intents and purposes, they should carry the same responsibilities as regular police officers.

Mr. Maclennan: The hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) has done the House a great service by focusing upon forces with designated status which are highly efficient and much regarded in their areas. I can speak with personal knowledge of the Atomic Energy Authority constabulary, which has operated for years not only in Dounreay but in its vicinity. The hon. Gentleman has alighted upon a sensible suggestion as to how such forces could be more usefully integrated in the areas in which they operate and where there is a chance vacuum that their training and experience equips them to fill better than anyone else. So far, the Government have not shown any support for that, but I hope that they will rethink the matter because the common-sense suggestion has great value.

Question put and negatived.

New clause 4

CONDITIONS FOR SETTING NATIONAL OBJECTIVES

'For section 28 of the 1964 Act there shall be substituted—

"General duties and the setting of objectives for police authorities

28.—(1) The Secretary of State shall exercise his functions under this Act in such manner as is most likely to promote the efficiency of the police.

(2) In exercising his functions under sections 28A to 28D below the Secretary of State shall have regard to the desirability of promoting locally accountable policing.

(3) The power by order to determine objectives for the policing of the areas of police authorities under section 28A(1) below shall not be exercisable before the relevant date.

(4) For the purposes of this section the relevant date shall be a date determined by the Secretary of State which shall be—

(a) not before he has laid before Parliament a study by an independent person appointed by him of the effectiveness of levels of performance ("performance targets") established by police authorities in accordance with section 28B below; and

(b) not less than three years after the issuing under that section of a direction to establish performance targets.

(5) Before appointing any independent person for the purposes of subsection (4)(a) above the Secretary of State shall consult persons representative of police authorities and of chief officers of police.".'. — *[Mr. Michael.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Michael: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments: No. 4, in clause 14, page 9, line 43, leave out from '(1)' to 'the' in line 44.

No. 20, in page 9, line 46, leave out from 'targets")' to end of line 47.

No. 12, in page 9, line 47, at end insert—

'(1A) Before issuing any direction under subsection (1) above the Secretary of State shall consult persons representative of police authorities and of chief officers of police.'.

No. 5, in page 10, line 4, leave out from beginning to end of line 7.

No. 17, in page 10, line 20, at end insert—

'(4) No code of practice or revision of a code of practice laid before Parliament under subsection (3) of this section shall have effect unless it has been approved by resolution of each House of Parliament.'.

Mr. Michael: In an exchange on Second Reading, it became clear that the Home Secretary had not properly understood what he was doing in taking the power to establish national objectives. His mistake in not understanding his own Bill became clearer as our debates in Committee proceeded. I am sure that the Home Secretary meant what he said on Second Reading when he suggested to my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) that national policing objectives would not override or unduly influence local objectives and local policing plans. That being so, I am sure that he will accept new clause 4 with enthusiasm and alacrity.

As it stands, the Government's proposal for national objectives is a centralising measure. Our alternative will improve the performance of police in partnership with the community that they serve, and it will be for the Government to listen and learn from local experience. I hope that the Home Secretary will acknowledge that the

new clause is positive and constructive and should be accepted. It says that, in exercising the powers to set national objectives,

"the Secretary of State shall have regard to the desirability of promoting locally accountable policing."

The trouble with the Government's approach to this issue is that although they pay much lip service to locally accountable policing, the tendency of legislation is away from that important principle. I hope that the Home Secretary will put his money where his mouth is and accept the new clause.

The new clause would delay the implementation of national objectives. The Home Secretary would not set national objectives and lay requirements before Parliament until he had received a study by an independent person whom he had appointed. We have no desire to take the Home Secretary out of the picture. If he wished to do so, he could play a constructive part in developing the future role of the police. Only after the report would he set national objectives and performance targets for police authorities to pursue.

We also require a period of three years before the issuing of a direction to establish performance targets. The reason for that is that we should learn from local experience. Performance indicators and targets should be developed on the basis of local experience, requirements and aspirations. For that reason, we also suggest that the Home Secretary should consult representatives of police authorities and chief officers of police.

How can the Minister not accept such a modest and constructive approach to the establishment of national objectives? National objectives should be based on local experience and on the views of the police and public. If that is done, they may work, but national objectives based on a paper exercise carried out in Whitehall, however able are those who undertake it, will not work because it starts from the wrong end.

The White Paper on police reform said that each authority

"will be required to secure implementation of the Home Secretary's key objectives and to publish its own local objectives".

I emphasise the word "required".

We have four worries about the national objectives. First, local priorities could be unduly distorted because of failure to tailor policing to local circumstances. That is a real danger, because the Home Secretary will not know the local circumstances; nor will he be able to design general, national objectives to suit the local circumstances of each force.

Secondly, the process will threaten police integrity by distorting recording patterns and skewing priorities. That is a disturbing development which the Home Secretary will bring about.

Thirdly, the objectives will not be owned by the police authorities or the police service and they should be owned, understood and possessed by both.

Fourthly, the police service should not be measured against objectives that are largely outside police control. That fourth point is important. I have experience of the successful implementation of management by objectives in local government. Those objectives were used to improve the quality of service to the local community by the local authority and a variety of departments. We were successful in pursuing that course because we involved those who had to try to meet the objectives—local authority officers at every level—as well as the public, who had a right to expect a decent standard of service from the way that the objectives developed and were pursued.

We already have difficulties with the key objectives for 1994-95, which have been established at the Home Secretary's behest. As often happens, Parliament is discussing legislation for matters that are already being pursued with some vigour in the machine. There are five key objectives for 1995: detections for violent crimes; detections for burglaries; to target and prevent crimes which are a particular local problem; high-visibility policing; and emergency calls.

All those objectives are important. Four of them will be measured by numbers and percentages, but the third key objective—to target and prevent crimes which are a particular local problem—is different. The Home Office has said that no high-level indicator is currently available, although there is work on developing an indicator for 1995-96.

On the key issue of crime prevention—local partnerships and the police are about crime prevention as well as investigating crimes that have taken place—there is difficulty in finding key indicators. I have had experience of that as well, although perhaps it was not intentional. A project in which I was involved included probation and social services and had the police and voluntary organisations on the management committee which was chaired by the local vicar. We involved education, and so on.

The chief constable referred to the project in his annual report in three successive years, and it was also mentioned by the chief probation officer, because it was reducing the incidence of crime among young people in the community.

6 pm

Such recognition might have been expected to lead to the continuation of the project, but we received a telephone call from the probation service saying that the two people who were primarily involved would have to be withdrawn. The reason? "We receive our money from the Home Office chiefly for the supervision of young offenders, and offenders in general. Because not enough young offenders are going to court, we cannot justify continuing to devote time to the project."

If certain factors are measured, that will influence the way in which a service is provided. Unless the indicators are right—unless the right factors are being measured—priorities will be distorted. The problem is that we cannot easily measure what we have prevented. Crime prevention is crucial; yet the development and use of performance indicators to affect the performance of the police is likely to remove them from some of the crucial elements that should be a priority for them.

The Bill's suggestion of a power for the Home Secretary to give and enforce directions is worrying, because it appears to run counter to a focus on specific and detailed local issues and factors that affect crime. It runs counter to the theme of the White Paper on police reform, whose aim was supposedly to empower chief constables to deliver a service that responded better to local needs and strengthened police authorities.

It seems that the Government's theme is to devolve responsibility to chief constables, but to keep carefully in the hands of the Home Secretary and civil servants a great deal of the influence on what must be chief constables' priorities. We consider that a mistake.

As drafted, the Bill involves the potential entry of the Home Secretary into local operational issues. We touched on that point in an earlier debate. The operational independence of the chief constable should not be interfered with, but the way in which national objectives are being set—not in the way that we suggest, but in the way that the Home Secretary suggests—would affect that independence.

The Bill will not serve to clarify the respective roles of chief constables, police authorities and the Home Secretary in improving accountability for the performance of the police, which was supposed to be one of the White Paper's objectives. It will enable the Home Secretary to override the police authorities' views on resources: he will be deciding the national objectives. It is likely to result in increased staffing demands on the Home Office for planning, directing, monitoring and action at local level and in specific detail. It is important for the setting of objectives, and the measuring of those objectives at local level, to be done in a way that does not increase the amount of bureaucracy in a local police force, rather than helping it to carry out its duties.

The powers in the Bill are likely to interfere and be inconsistent with the Home Secretary's responsibility for national policing efficiency, rather than for becoming involved in the detail of priorities that should be set by a chief constable and the police. They run contrary to the arrangements for performance targets that local authorities set themselves under the Local Government Act 1992.

The new clause and amendments would do three things. They represent a measured approach to the setting of national objectives, which would best aid the Government's objectives if they really want to improve policing standards. They would give police authorities an opportunity to demonstrate the responsible exercise of their functions in the interests of a locality, without depriving the centre of a locus: in other words, local police forces would be able to set objectives that recognised the nature of crime in their communities, the aspirations of the public and the experience of the police, and the centre could then learn what happens at local level. Finally, the new clause and amendments would continue to promote partnership in the best traditions of the tripartite system.

The Home Secretary should accept our new clause with enthusiasm if he meant what he said on Second Reading about not wishing to interfere with the priorities of the local police, in conjunction with local authorities that represent local people and local interests. That is where the important objectives are set, so that patterns of policing for the future can be decided.

Mr. Maclennan: I am sorry to have to disagree with the new clause. I do so not because I believe that some of its objectives are not laudable: it recognises the need to ensure that police objectives are set locally, with local considerations and priorities in mind. Nor do I fail to recognise that the new clause would, to some extent, water down the power of the Secretary of State to set the general, national objectives contained in clause 14.

I feel, however, that the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) risks supping with the devil, and using too short a spoon. It is extraordinarily unlikely that the present Home Secretary—or, indeed, any foreseeable Home Secretary in the current Government—would appoint an independent person, under the terms of the new clause, to conduct a study of

"the effectiveness of levels of performance"

which might conceivably be acceptable to police authorities or to the police. One wonders whether the Home Secretary might have in mind for the task someone comparable to Sir Patrick Sheehy, who may be deemed the originator of much disquiet in the bosoms of the police, and who may have prevented the Home Secretary—equanimous gentleman though he is—from sleeping every now and again.

I do not believe that that task is either appropriate or capable of being performed to anyone's satisfaction. The whole concept of imposing performance targets externally on a service such as the police strikes me as misconceived. Performance targets are fairly contentious even in the areas of commerce and industry where they have been deployed, and I feel that in the police service—where so much depends on the inhibition of unlawful or disorderly behaviour, and where performance is almost impossible to measure—the exercise would be in vain.

The new clause requires the Secretary of State to

"consult persons representative of police authorities"

before appointing the Sir Patrick Sheehy equivalent. I am rather dubious about whether anyone would regard consultation as offering much of a safeguard. I recall that, at an earlier stage of the Bill's progress, the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth took exception to the use of the word "consultation", suggesting that "agreement" with police authority representatives and chief officers might be more appropriate when a Conservative Home Secretary was involved.

Mr. Michael: The hon. Gentleman is referring to a comment that I made about agreement between chief constables and police authorities on local objectives and plans in their areas. I am rather surprised by what he has said. Is he suggesting that he would prefer the Home Secretary to introduce national objectives without benefiting from local experience? That is what will happen unless the new clause becomes part of the Bill.

Mr. Maclennan: No, I am not suggesting that. I am suggesting that the proper way in which to deal with the issue of national objectives is to strike it out of the Bill. I do not think that we should countenance the suggestion that national objectives issued by any Home Secretary are tolerable. I dare say that parliamentary procedures may limit the way in which the matter can be discussed, but it seems to me that—inadvertently, perhaps—the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth is giving some support to the idea that national objectives might reasonably be introduced at some time if certain conditions were met.

Mr. Michael: In Committee, we said that we preferred to deal with objectives entirely as a local issue. However, as the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) rightly implies, we cannot have exactly the same debate on the Floor of the House as we had in Committee. We have therefore responded to Ministers' rejection of our case by coming up with a positive constructive solution. Has the hon. Gentleman tried to delete national objectives from the Bill? If so, I must have overlooked his amendment.

Mr. Maclennan: At this stage in the debate, the exercise would be in vain. But by suggesting that national objectives might be made more tolerable, the hon. Gentleman is compromising his position and that of the

Labour party. If the Bill becomes the law of the land, a future Labour Home Secretary may avail himself of the power to establish national objectives. I should take equally strong exception to a Labour Home Secretary seeking to use such a power as to its use by a Conservative Home Secretary.

However, as the hon. Gentleman knows, when a matter has been exhaustively debated in Committee, as this has been, it is probable, indeed almost certain, that the subject will not be reopened on Report. Therefore, to go through the charade—under provocation, I am using slightly stronger language—of implying that there is some merit in seeking, as the hon. Gentleman has done, to qualify the introduction of national objectives is dangerous; it is playing with fire. It is an ingenious debating device, but unfortunately it gives entirely the wrong signals to the police, the police authorities and the general public.

National objectives have no part in British policing. They should be struck out at the earliest opportunity, and we should make it clear now that it would be our intention to do so at the next legislative opportunity.

Mr. Howard: I shall begin by explaining what the new clause would actually achieve. It would have three main effects. First, it would require the Home Secretary to have regard to the desirability of promoting locally accountable policing. Secondly, it would require the Home Secretary to appoint an independent person to consider the effectiveness of performance targets established by police authorities. Thirdly, it would prevent the Home Secretary from setting key objectives before that independent report had been laid before Parliament, and also prevent him from doing so before three years had elapsed since police authorities had been directed to set performance targets.

That seems a curious mixture of ideas, and it would be best if I dealt with them one by one. First, the Home Secretary is already required to promote the efficiency of the police. As to promoting locally accountable policing, that is the central purpose of the Bill. That is why we are setting up strong independent police authorities with clear responsibilities for providing efficient and effective local policing. That is why we are requiring police authorities to consult their communities about policing objectives and priorities in their areas. That is why we are requiring police authorities to publish annual policing plans and annual reports setting out the outcomes of those plans. So the first declared objective of the new clause is already achieved by the Bill.

The new clause would also prevent the Home Secretary from determining key objectives for policing before he had laid before Parliament an independent study of the effectiveness of local performance targets. The connection between the two elements is not at all clear. The Home Secretary's power to set key objectives is designed to enable him to focus police attention on the major areas of concern expressed by the public. The objectives set for the current year involve increasing the number of detections of violent crimes and of burglary, targeting and preventing local crimes, in partnership with the public, providing high-visibility policing and responding promptly to emergency calls. We do not require an independent study to recognise that those are common concerns of people throughout the nation.

6.15 pm

In fact, there is already an independent person, appointed on my recommendation, whose task it is to report annually on the efficiency and effectiveness of police forces and their performance. Let me reassure the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) that that person is not Sir Patrick Sheehy, but Her Majesty's chief inspector of constabulary. He is entirely independent—I am sure that, on reflection, the hon. Gentleman would not want any of his remarks to be taken as implying otherwise—and has under his control a number of inspectors responsible for inspecting police forces.

Inspectors of constabulary are independent of the police service, and are accountable to the Home Secretary for carrying out their responsibility. Part of their job will be to consider the effectiveness of the performance targets established by police authorities under the Bill, and to report accordingly. Inspection reports are published, as is the annual report of the chief inspector to the Home Secretary. I therefore see no purpose whatever in establishing yet another independent person to cover the same ground as the existing independent inspectorate.

The fact is that the Labour amendments on national objectives are a red herring. The simple truth is that Labour Members do not want national objectives at all. Judging by the other amendments that they have tabled, Labour Members do not want local police authorities to set out local policing plans with local objectives, either.

The Labour party simply does not understand the first thing about measuring and improving the performance of public services. They always take the side of the producer, never the side of the consumer or of the public. In that respect the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) is just as prehistoric as his Front-Bench colleagues. He is interested only in rehearsing tired arguments about giving new duties to local authorities. That would be the effect of the new clause on which he chose to speak, and that speaks volumes for his priorities. The hon. Gentleman does not seem to understand that we need a body separate from the police—in this case, the police authority—to set objectives and to measure performance.

The hon. Member for Sedgefield should listen to the words of the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher). I know that he will find this hard to take, but the hon. Member for Oldham, West is not only a closet moderniser, but more of a moderniser than the hon. Member for Sedgefield. When asked how to reform public services the hon. Member for Oldham, West explained:

"If you are going to make it work seriously you have to set targets independently."

I do not always agree with the hon. Gentleman—in fact, I do not often agree with him. But I entirely agree with him on that, and that is precisely the point that we are making in the Bill. Regrettably, that is entirely lost on the hon. Member for Sedgefield. He talks about modernising public services, but votes against the very measures that will make that happen.

In his recent Police Foundation lecture, the hon. Member for Sedgefield called for a

"proper national strategy and framework"

to deal with crime, yet today he rejects that. As usual, he is all sound bite and no substance.

The hon. Gentleman talks as though he has just bought his first modern textbook on management, but has read only the index. Some of the words are there—

"performance", "efficiency", even "accountability" but he does not understand what they mean. The hon. Gentleman would not reform public services to make them better. He would simply say to those responsible for delivering services, "Set your own targets, measure your own performance, and don't bother to publish the results." Indeed, that was the philosophy that lay behind the speech by the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael). It is entirely inconsistent with a proper approach to accountability.

The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) does not want targets of any kind. That is the approach taken by the modern purposive Liberal Democratic party.

To sum up, the new clause—

Mr. Maclennan: The Home Secretary does me a disservice in misrepresenting what I said. I am much in favour of local police authorities having targets and local policing plans, but I object to the Home Secretary's taking that authority into his hands, and to his dictating what the national targets should be. I do not believe that he is sensitive to local needs.

Mr. Howard: Of course, it is always possible that the words which the hon. Gentleman used in his speech earlier did not adequately convey the meaning which he intended to convey. However, if he reads those words in *Hansard*, he will find that the representation which I made of them a few moments ago is entirely justified and accurate.

To sum up, the new clause is misguided and unnecessary. It is misguided because it suggests that the Home Secretary cannot set key objectives to reflect major concerns of the people of the country without first having some sort of investigation into the way in which police authorities have set local targets. It is unnecessary because it seeks to duplicate the independent review and assessment function that is already provided by Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary.

Amendments Nos. 4 and 20 would detach performance targets, which police authorities may be required to set, from the key objectives, but there is an inescapable connection between the Home Secretary's key objectives and the police authorities' performance targets. Otherwise, there would be no common point of reference, no way in which people could establish how their police force had performed against the objectives and no possibility of making any comparisons. Clearly, the performance targets to be set by the police authorities should relate to the key objectives. Equally, it is right that the Home Secretary's powers and responsibilities in that area should clearly link the two issues.

Amendment No. 12 arises from a misunderstanding about the Home Secretary's powers in relation to performance targets. The Home Secretary has no power at all under the Bill to set performance targets. The power to set the targets quite deliberately rests with the police authority. Since the Home Secretary has no power to set targets, but merely to direct the police authorities to do so, it follows that he does not need to consult anyone before he decides to issue a direction. It is a matter for him and him alone to decide how, when or if to instruct police authorities to set performance targets, but when he has instructed them to do so, the targets will be determined locally with local consultation. The hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth did not speak to amendment No. 17, which is included in the group, so there is no need for me to deal with it.

The new clause and the amendments epitomise the muddle which has characterised the approach of the Labour party to the Bill. They are misconceived, misguided and unnecessary. They illustrate how remote the Labour party is from any true appreciation of how accountability of public involvement in policing can best be achieved, and I urge the House to reject them.

Mr. Michael: That was a nice try by the Home Secretary to sound as if he was being reasonable in rejecting the new clause. He is not. However, I shall first refer to the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan). His speech was disappointing. He sometimes disappoints and, sometimes, one finds him supporting rational argument on such issues. He seemed to be suggesting an agenda for misrepresentation on a fresh issue of focus in the near future, which rather misrepresents the nature of the debate.

The Home Secretary paid my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) the compliment of concentrating on my hon. Friend's speech in an earlier debate, during which the Home Secretary chose not take part, before leading his troops into the Lobby to vote against local partnerships for crime prevention. The Home Secretary missed his chance on that occasion. That is his mistake and he cannot recover with a second bite in this debate.

If the new clause were incorporated in the Bill, it would be a victory for common sense over dogma—such as the victory that we have heard has taken place this evening in another place. The Home Secretary has been given another bloody nose because of his pursuit of dogmatic attitudes towards the problems of crime and crime prevention, rather than listening and learning from those who have been involved in and have been trying to tackle those issues over the years.

I am glad that the Home Secretary thinks that he understands the new clause, but he has not explained to us why he will vote against having regard to the desirability of promoting local, accountable policing. That is what the new clause requires.

Mr. Howard: That is what the whole Bill is about.

Mr. Michael: It is not what the whole Bill is about. The whole Bill, I tell the Home Secretary, is about centralising power in his hands. He has had that exchange before. He will not get away with it. People will—belatedly, perhaps—recognise how centralising and damaging and constitutionally bad the Bill is. He has an opportunity today to accept the new clause, which would move us a little in the right direction.

The Home Secretary has talked about a study by an independent person. Why is he so against learning from experience? Why is he so against learning from what happens when local police authorities and chief constables set objectives and seek to meet them? Why will not he learn from the combined experience of all local police authorities and forces in every part of the United Kingdom? He says that he already has an independent person to look at such issues, so why not accept the new clause?

Labour Members understand the setting of priorities and the use of objectives. I told the Home Secretary that I have had positive experience of that myself. It should be

done locally, on the basis of partnership, with the experience of the police and on the aspirations of the public. The police authorities will set targets, but those targets will be distorted by the imposition of national objectives, which the Government seek to set, unless the Home Secretary accepts the new clause, as he should if he is really interested in local, effective and accountable policing.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 238, Noes 303.

Division No. 283] **6.25 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Church, Judith
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Harvey, Nick
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hodge, Margaret
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Liddell, Helen
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McMaster, Gordon
MacShane, Denis
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
Olner, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Straw, Jack
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Timms, Stephen
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John Cummings and
Mr. Eric Illsley.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Budgen, Nicholas

Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, Sir John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Merchant, Piers
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Rt Hon Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Rendel, David
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Riffkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trimble, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope and Mr. Andrew Mitchell.

Question accordingly negatived.

ROYAL ASSENT

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): I have to notify the House, in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967, that the Queen has signified Her Royal Assent to the following Acts:

Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1994
Antarctic Act 1994
State Hospitals (Scotland) Act 1994
Chiropractors Act 1994
Social Security (Incapacity for Work) Act 1994
Local Government (Wales) Act 1994
Sunday Trading Act 1994
Coal Industry Act 1994
Vehicle Excise and Registration Act 1994
Value Added Tax Act 1994
Commons Registration (East Sussex) Act 1994
Dunham Bridge (Amendment) Act 1994
London Underground (Green Park) Act 1994

Police and Magistrates' Courts Bill

[Lords]

As amended (in the Standing Committee), again considered

New clause 6

SCHEMES FOR COMPULSORY OR VOLUNTARY SEVERANCE ON STRUCTURAL GROUNDS: SCOTLAND

'After section 31 of the 1967 Act there shall be inserted—

"Schemes for compulsory or voluntary severance

31A. No scheme for the introduction of compulsory or voluntary severance on structural grounds shall be introduced in any police force without prior consultation with the staff associations representing the interests of those officers affected.".'. — *[Sir Anthony Durant.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Sir Anthony Durant (Reading, West): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss also the following: New clause 7—*Schemes for compulsory or voluntary severance on structural grounds: England and Wales*—

'After section 58 of the 1964 Act there shall be inserted—

"Schemes for compulsory or voluntary severance

59. No scheme for the introduction of compulsory or voluntary severance on structural grounds shall be introduced in any police area without prior consultation with the staff associations representing the interests of these officers affected.".'.

New clause 9—*Amendment of Police Negotiating Board Act 1980*—

'Section 1(1) of the Police Negotiating Board Act 1980 shall be amended by inserting after the words "pay and allowances," the words "structural severance terms and criteria,".'.

Amendment No. 21, in clause 6, page 5, line 14, at end insert—

'(3A) A chief constable shall, after consulting his police authority, designate a person holding the rank of assistant chief constable to have responsibility for complaints and for discipline within the force'.

Amendment No. 23, in page 5, line 28, at end insert—

'(5A) A chief constable may, after consulting his police authority and the Secretary of State, designate a person holding the rank of assistant chief constable to deputise for him in the exercise of any of the powers and duties of the chief constable.'.

Amendment No. 14, in clause 7, page 5, line 38, leave out from beginning to end of line 39 and insert—

'(c) for the words "ranks of superintendent," there shall be substituted the words "the rank of superintendent (and an officer with the rank and salary of superintendent may, subject to the approval of the police authority and the Secretary of State, be designated as a chief superintendent by the chief constable or chief officer of police where special circumstances of command or organisation make such designation desirable), the ranks of chief inspector,".'.

Amendment No. 13, in page 5, line 38, after first 'the', insert

'words "ranks of" the words "chief superintendent," shall be inserted, and after the'.

Amendment No. 18, in clause 17, page 13, line 22, at end add—

'(6) In subsection (6), after the word "section", there shall be inserted the words "(except regulations falling within the provisions of subsection (7) below)".'.

Amendment No. 19, in page 13, line 22, at end add—

'(7) After subsection (6) there shall be inserted—

"(7) No regulations shall be made under this section which contain references to performance related pay for assistant chief constables or chief constables unless a draft of the regulations has been laid before and approved by resolution of each House of Parliament.

(8) Draft regulations laid under subsection (7) shall relate only to one police authority.

(9) Before laying any regulations before Parliament under subsection (7) the Secretary of State shall consult the police authority concerned and the chief officer of the police force concerned and lay copies of their representations before Parliament.".'.

Amendment No. 66, in clause 44, page 22, line 26, leave out from 'ranks)' to 'subsection' in line 34.

Sir Anthony Durant: This discussion is principally about voluntary and compulsory severance from the police service. I speak as parliamentary adviser to the Police Superintendents' Association of England and Wales.

On 28 October 1993, the Secretary of State for the Home Department announced that severance schemes were to be introduced into the police service. Those schemes will involve both voluntary and compulsory severance. He gave an assurance that such schemes would be used only as a last resort and only with his authority. However, as more and more forces reorganise to cut their management layers to the absolute minimum, there is every likelihood that such schemes will need to be used. The ad hoc voluntary scheme currently available in the Metropolitan police is a clear example.

There is currently no national mechanism for the determination of appropriate severance arrangements for police officers, or any coherent national policy on the criteria to be adopted by forces. Police officers are "officers of the Crown". Their peculiar legal status means that they are not covered by normal employment legislation that applies to most people. Instead, their conditions of service are set out in Acts of Parliament and regulations made thereunder.

Severance is an entirely new concept that will be introduced into the police service for the first time and there is currently no legal framework governing the negotiation and determination of severance schemes. That could leave the way open for individual police forces to design their own packages, with only the Secretary of State having to approve them. That is likely to result in unfairness to police officers, and long and costly legal arguments over such schemes. A clear example of the diversity that is likely to occur can be found by comparing the current Metropolitan police scheme with that offered by the British Transport police.

A 53-year-old superintendent, with 30 years' service, in the Metropolitan police scheme would receive £10,119. A similar officer in the British Transport police scheme would receive £40,479. The scheme proposed in the much-lamented Sheehy report, which hon. Members keep coming back to, would have given the officer £101,197.

Currently, both the Metropolitan police and the British Transport police schemes are voluntary. Officers can elect to apply for them as they individually choose. The Secretary of State intends, however, to include compulsory severance in his schemes, which adds a new dimension. Police officers have almost common conditions of service throughout the United Kingdom and they are able to negotiate matters affecting their pay and conditions of service through the police negotiating board.

Two clear issues are at stake. First, local negotiations should take place in any force that is contemplating the

[Sir Anthony Durant]

introduction of severance, whether voluntary or compulsory. Those negotiations should involve staff representatives of those officers likely to be affected. Secondly, national negotiations should agree the criteria and terms of any severance schemes so that all are aware exactly what is involved when making an application to the Secretary of State for such schemes.

My amendments to the Police Act 1964 and the Police (Scotland) Act 1967 are intended to cover the point about local negotiation and will ensure that staff representatives are consulted before any application is made for a severance scheme. They are worded in exactly the same way, but two amendments are necessary because of the differing legislation governing policing in different parts of the country.

My other amendment seeks to clarify the Police Negotiating Board Act 1980. At present, the Police Pensions Act 1976 enables the Secretary of State to make regulations as to the times at which and the circumstances in which members of police forces are, or may be, required to retire other than on grounds of misconduct. The Act requires that such decisions should follow consultation with the police negotiating board.

The Police Negotiating Board Act 1980, however, clearly sets out in its first section those matters covered by the Act and severance is not included. That causes a lack of clarity and my amendment intends to rectify matters by clearly including structural severance terms and criteria in matters falling within the scope of that Act.

I should like to discuss amendment No. 13, which deals with the question of the rank of chief superintendent. Through the Bill, the Government have sought to reduce the number of ranks in the British police service. The service generally has nine ranks, with some exceptions in the Metropolitan and City of London forces. The Government argue that reducing the number of ranks will streamline the management of the service—simplify the structure—improve communication and enable officers of high ability to move quickly though the ranks. The Sheehy report suggested doing away with two ranks, but the Home Secretary has decided to reinstate chief inspectors into the service.

6.45 pm

I shall deal with each point in turn: first, streamlining the management of the police service. The most effective way to streamline management, while maintaining quality and effectiveness, is to consider carefully all management posts, keeping only those that are necessary and ensuring that the grade of the post is appropriate to the task. There is no need to have a full hierarchical structure under each post. Only those posts necessary to do the job at the right grade should be in place.

That process is already under way in the police service, with the full and active co-operation of police officers of all ranks. Forces are reorganising using the basic command unit model. As part of the process, the number of posts and the rank that officers should have are critically examined. Police forces no longer have a full hierarchical structure under every rank—they consider carefully what is required and put in place the right number of officers at the right rank.

The large reductions in the number of chief superintendents and superintendents in post in England and Wales is evidence of what has already been achieved. By December 1990, the total number of chief superintendents plus superintendents in post was 2,055. By May of this year, the number had been reduced to 1,612—a reduction of 443, or 21.5 per cent.

When considering simplifying the structure, it should be borne in mind that the current structure has developed over a long period. That is well understood, both inside and outside the police service. It provides a clear distinction of ranks, a good operational command structure and the ability to reward at clear levels. Any reductions in existing command levels will result in unnecessary operational management difficulties and the likelihood of the creation of artificial grades to fill in the gaps. In the professional view of the police service, through associations of chief police officers and superintendents associations, the number of ranks available at present is right.

The improving communication argument presupposes that a problem exists with current lines of communication. Although I accept that communications can always be improved, there is a point beyond which too few levels can cause a breakdown rather than an improvement in communications. We should remember that removing bridges can leave gaps. That was clearly shown in the ill-fated reorganisation of the London ambulance service, when an overly drastic reduction in management grades caused a lack of communication of such proportions that the subsequent failure of the ambulance command and control system resulted in a breakdown.

Enabling officers of high ability to move quickly through the ranks is already something that has been notably achieved by the police service over the years. There is great scope for officers with such ability to progress quickly. The police graduate entry scheme and the special course ensure that officers of high potential are recognised and that their careers are carefully planned. Current conditions of service allow for rank skipping and fast progression—removal of some ranks would do nothing to improve the position. One has to consider only the top echelons of the police service today to recognise that those officers with ability are already able to progress effectively to the top positions.

Ranks exist primarily for operational purposes. We currently have only nine ranks from constable to chief constable, far fewer than any of the armed services and far fewer than the number of grades in the civil service. The Government's proposals will leave only seven ranks operationally to deploy and command a police service in the United Kingdom that approaches 150,000 officers in total—bigger than any of the armed services on their own.

Recent experience of similar measures taken in New Zealand, where a similar police service exists, showed that removal of ranks resulted in the creation of "grades within grades" to replace the removed ranks—an outcome that has proved far less beneficial in terms of operational and career structure. That police service has recently reduced the number of grades to only two. It has gone back to what was there before, but it has not gone back to the post of chief superintendent.

When large-scale public order events have to be commanded, or major criminal investigations have to be carried out, the chief superintendent has a clearly defined role to command and control such operations. The 'blanket' abolition of chief superintendents is likely seriously to reduce that operational command flexibility, with no consequent benefit to the organisation. Retaining

chief superintendents will assist in devolving responsibility from chief officer level while at the same time providing management and command resilience in supporting assistant chief constables and chief superintendents, particularly in their absence.

The advent of single-line budgets and national criteria for posts, coupled with police authority involvement and the overview of Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary, will result in posts being available only where there is a clear need for them, thus giving better value for money and commonality of structure throughout the force.

The Government are committed to providing the best quality of policing to the public, with the right balance between national standards and local delivery to meet local needs. By supporting amendment No. 13, the House will ensure that forces have the flexibility to structure themselves to meet those commitments. The retention of the rank of chief superintendent will enhance that flexibility; the loss of it will reduce that flexibility. I urge the Government to look at this matter yet again.

Mr. Michael: Despite the ominous sound of the title of new clause 6, I shall speak to a number of simpler issues, some of which were dealt with by the hon. Member for Reading, West (Sir A. Durant).

It is fair to say that, again, I am proposing simple, common-sense amendments. I accept that my saying so is likely to result in a rebuff from the Minister and probably a savaging from the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan). The Opposition have attempted to table reasonable and acceptable proposals. We acknowledge that our debates in Committee showed that the Government have made up their mind on certain issues. Our amendments seek merely to make reasonable changes to the Bill.

In recent years, I have followed with interest what has happened to ranks of the police force. In south Wales, the loss of a number of occupiers of the rank of chief superintendent has slimmed the upper structure, and the passing of responsibility to the local superintendent has resulted in a good deal of local targeting of activity. Our experience has been mirrored in a number of police forces, and I do not understand why the Home Secretary has found it necessary to delete ranks rather than relying on common sense and the natural constraints on chief constables and police authorities to slim ranks and flatten the structures of responsibility. When something is already being achieved, why give it a push in statute, especially when that push takes things slightly too far?

I should like to refer specifically to the ranks of deputy chief constable and chief superintendent. Our amendment seeks not to reinstitute the rank of deputy chief constable but to deal with the consequences of its removal, which the Government have not yet faced up to. It seeks to allow for the possibility that the Home Secretary will, in certain circumstances, be persuaded that the rank of chief superintendent is necessary. It leaves the final decision to the Home Secretary. He and the police authority must be persuaded that a chief constable is right to want a post of chief constable. The Home Secretary would give up very little by accepting the amendment.

The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland might accuse me of selling the pass, so I should I make it clear that we are not doing so. We say simply that it is sensible to have provision in legislation, rather than legislation absolutely ruling out the possibility of someone being designated as a chief superintendent.

The Bill does not deal with a number of elements of the rank of chief constable. Amendment No. 21 says:

> "A chief constable shall, after consulting his police authority, designate a person holding the rank of assistant chief constable to have responsibility for complaints and for discipline within the force'".

Such matters are normally dealt with by a deputy chief constable, but without someone of that rank, who will fulfil those functions? It is clear that the chief constable, who has ultimate responsibility for appeals within his force, should not do so. This amendment would simply deal with the problem by providing a sensible way of ensuring justice for complaints and disciplinary matters.

Amendment No. 23 provides:

> "A chief constable may, after consulting his police authority and the Secretary of State, designate a person holding the rank of assistant chief constable to deputise for him in the exercise of any of the powers and duties of the chief constable."

Many chief constables and other senior members of the police force have said that deputising is occasionally necessary, and a large force must have a second person to exercise functions to prevent the chief constable from being overwhelmed by the burdens of his important and onerous office.

The amendment does not reintroduce a deputy but proposes a mechanism under which deputising can take place. The requirement that the Home Secretary should agree to it surely should commend the amendment even to Ministers who wish to set their faces against allowing such delegation under the Bill.

The Association of Chief Police Officers says that an ACC appointed to the office of deputy chief constable will have had experience in a chief-headquarters rank, which will be all the more important following police reform because there will be fewer holders of the rank of chief superintendent. Indeed, there will not be any if the Bill is passed as it stands, and that flattening of the rank structure surely requires that functions be identified.

I agree with the Association of Chief Police Officers that the case for abolishing this important post of more than 30 years' standing has not been made, which is why it does not wish to dispense with it. I suggest, more modestly, that we should simply deal in a sensible and reasonable way with the functions carried out by the deputy.

I have suggested—it requires no change to negotiating patterns or national agreements—that an officer with the rank and salary of superintendent might be designated as a chief superintendent by the chief constable or chief officer of police where special circumstances of command or organisation require it. A chief constable would have to say to the police authority, which would then have to say to the Home Secretary, "Because of the size of our force," or, "Because our town must be policed in a certain way, we believe that it would be best to have a senior officer designated as chief superintendent. He might have a superintendent working with him, but for reasons of command and organisation we would prefer that designation." Such a request would be perfectly reasonable, and I commend the amendment to the Minister.

We suggest that the introduction of performance-related pay for assistant chief constables or chief constables should not be made until draft regulations have been laid before and approved by a resolution of each House. That would

[Mr. Michael]

deal with the problem of accountability. Performance-related pay should be targeted and should relate to only one police authority. The Home Secretary should first consult the authority and chief officer concerned and lay copies of their representations before Parliament.

The jury is still out on performance-related pay. The Minister has been as trappist as he can be in his responses to requests for evidence about the effectiveness of performance-related pay. In a written answer on 27 June, requesting a list of the possible incentives that he is considering as rewards, he referred me to a previous reply in which he had not answered the question. On 27 June, I asked him to list the police functions that he intends to be subject to measurement to provide a basis for performance-related pay for chief constables. He replied:

"This matter is under discussion with the relevant interests."

—[*Official Report*, 27 June 1994; Vol.245, *c. 423.]*

He cannot have assured himself that the system will work, because he does not have a system that he can tell the House about.

In answer to a request for

"the studies and research findings on which he based his decision to introduce a system of performance-related pay for senior police officers",

he said:

"My right hon. and learned Friend"—

he is passing the buck already—

"took account of the argument in support of relating pay to overall performance contained in the report of the inquiry into police responsibilities and rewards."

That was the Sheehy report, and we know what happened to that. That is not an effective basis on which to decide the future rewards of the police. The Minister continued:

"But the most influential factor in the Government's decision to introduce-performance related pay for all ranks in the police service was the benefit it will bring to the police service itself."

The Government were asked for evidence and their response was a statement of dogma. They have produced no evidence.

The Minister then said:

"Distinguishing especially good performance from the average performance provides an incentive to people to improve the effectiveness of their contribution, bringing added benefit to both the organisation and the individual, and is a perfectly reasonable thing to do."-[*Official Report*, 28 June 1994; Vol. 245, c. *458.*]

The Government have not produced a shred of evidence to show that PRP would benefit the performance of the police or be to the benefit of the public.

7 pm

I can produce evidence from a report of the Institute of Manpower Studies. It is one of many reports from which I could quote. It is entitled "Pay and Performance: The Employer Experience" and it was produced in June 1992. Having referred to previous research, it states:

"few, if any, studies have demonstrated a causal link between individual performance related pay and increases in productivity."

That is the finding for industry and commerce as a whole; it is not confined to the police. Even in terms of the production of widgets, there is little evidence of the benefit of IPRP.

The report then questions whether performance-related pay delivers. It found that rarely was there an effective monitoring and evaluation process built into an IPRP scheme. The report states:

"This was because most employers did not have clearly articulated objectives for introducing such schemes against which they could measure subsequent success or failure. Furthermore, little thought appeared to be given to the indicators that could be used to measure the effectiveness of the scheme and the type of information that should be collected."

There is a direct parallel between that management experience and the fact that the Minister could not answer my question about what he intended to measure to determine the nature of PRP within the police force.

The institute's report refers also to costs and benefits. It suggests that many additional costs are incurred in adopting PRP

"(such as, preparation of supporting documentation, training, communication strategy etc) but not the level of these costs. When pushed, 'guesstimates' in the region of one to two per cent . . . were typical."

The institute concluded that the lack of monitoring and evaluation and the lack of evidence of the benefits of PRP meant that such schemes should be examined extremely carefully.

When it came to Government policy, the institute reported:

"Performance related pay has become an important building block in overall Government policy and is perceived"—

I stress "perceived"—

"to be a means of raising public sector efficiency through linking pay to performance levels.

Our research would cast doubt on this argument. There is little support, in practice, for the claims that PRP motivates, changes organisational culture for the better or serves to retain high performers. In short, many of the objectives of introducing PRP do not appear to have been realised."

As I have said, I have produced one piece of evidence in response to the Government's failure to produce any figures. The Minister should accept the amendment, which would force him at least to make the preparation that is recommended by the institute. He should produce arguments and evidence before he brings forward an untried system for an important public sector service—the police.

Mr. Maclennan: I nearly always agree with the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael). That being so, I feel some pain when I disagree with him. It is plain from the hon. Gentleman's response to an earlier debate that that feeling is reciprocated; the same can be said of his opening remarks in this debate. I am happy that the hon. Gentleman deployed his arguments so forcefully and effectively, because there is now no need for me to speak at great length in support of the amendments that he has tabled.

Exceptionally, I have appended my name to the amendment tabled by the hon. Member for Reading, West (Sir A. Durant), which is a response to the Government's proposal to abolish the rank of chief superintendent. If the Government did that, they would be making a serious error of judgment based on a hangover from an earlier phase of consideration of the rank structure. That consideration should have been swept aside when it was evidently not necessary to achieve the objective of streamlining or thinning the top ranks of police forces. That process was effectively already under way in another guise, and there was a danger that the Government would seriously interfere with the flexibility of police forces throughout the country and their ability to deploy their manpower in the most effective way that chief constables, in particular, had identified.

The position of chief superintendent is a special one. It is not required in every police force but it is useful in larger city forces. There is a 24-hour responsibility or duty to give

effect operationally to the policing objectives or duties that have been set by chief constables. It is recognised that that position or role, where it has been established and exercised, is an important one.

The Government appear to be trying to foist upon the 43 police forces a pattern that is not apt in each police force area. I do not take a dogmatic view. I am not arguing that an exactly similar structure is required throughout the country. I do not say dogmatically that the rank of chief superintendent should be used in all 43 forces. I merely say that the usefulness or otherwise of the rank should not have been determined in the way that the Government deemed appropriate.

The nine police ranks are rather few when a comparison is made with numbers of ranks in the armed services. Evidence has been drawn most effectively from the New Zealand experience to suggest that a contraction of the numbers of ranks leads to serious problems of inflexibility, resulting in a need to create ranks within ranks. That is to be avoided.

The arguments that have been deployed by the Association of Chief Superintendents are manifold, careful and serious, and they deserve consideration. I shall not repeat them all, because I deployed some of them at an earlier stage in our consideration of the Bill. I know that they have been put directly to Ministers and I think that Ministers should respond to them. They have been deployed without rancour. They have been advanced fairly and considerately. Recognition would not amount to a significant backdown by the Government. No one would claim it to be a backdown. That view would not be taken if the Minister conducted a review, recognised the force of the argument and said to the chief superintendents, and the chief constables for that matter, "Yes, you are talking sense."

I hope that the Minister will not argue that when given the choice between chief inspectors or chief superintendents, the Association of Chief Police Officers said, "Well, if we had to choose, we would call for the retention of the rank of chief inspector." It would be unfortunate if he adopted that argument, because the association was given an unacceptable choice. The reality is that ACPO wanted both ranks, and the Minister knows that. I hope that he will not regard a change of mind as a loss of face.

Ministers gain a reputation for strength when they listen to good arguments and respond positively to them. That is what the debate is all about. If the Minister is able to accept that, he will have made the entire exercise worth while.

The arguments advanced by the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth about performance-related pay were sound, and were adduced in Committee. The Government have produced no evidence in support of the importation of their proposals into policing. I do not propose to rehearse the arguments. I simply use this opportunity to say that my party and I entirely endorse the comments made from the Opposition Front Bench on that issue and will support whatever steps the Labour party may take to press the matter.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I want first to consider the new clauses tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Reading, West (Sir A. Durant). As he has explained, the effect of the new clauses would be to require consultation at both national and local level on any severance provisions that might be introduced for the police service and to make such provisions subject to arbitration.

I have some sympathy with the thinking behind the new clauses. Although I cannot accept them as they stand, I should like to explain the way in which the Government propose to involve the police service before making regulations relating to severance schemes for police officers.

When my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary announced last October the Government's decisions on the recommendations made by the inquiry into police responsibilities and rewards, he said that we intended to make provision for voluntary and compulsory severance schemes for police officers. He made it clear that the use of those provisions by individual forces would, none the less, require the approval of the Secretary of State, which would be given for a limited period only.

The regulations providing for severance schemes will be made under legislation that does not attract the statutory requirements for consultation with the Police Negotiating Board that apply to regulations governing other aspects of police pay and conditions of service. However, the Government do not intend to lay any such regulations before Parliament without giving the police staff associations and police authority representatives the opportunity to comment on them in draft. We therefore propose to operate, on a non-statutory basis, precisely the same consultation arrangements that are required by statute to be applied in respect of regulations dealing with police pensions.

Those arrangements, which were in place before the PNB was established in 1980, have worked well in respect of police pensions regulations. They seem to provide the correct balance between consulting the police service interests about pensions arrangements and having regard to the important wider public sector implications. What we propose will provide a structured means of consulting police service interests about draft regulations dealing with severance on precisely the same basis as applies to pension arrangements, with Parliament's having the final say about the form of regulations.

In view of that assurance, I do not think that there is any need to provide for consultation at local as well as national level on severance provisions. Police regulations are made on a national basis and consultation on them takes place properly at the national level. Our undertaking to consult the relevant interests through the PNB machinery provides all the safeguards that are needed. On that basis, I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Reading, West will feel able to withdraw his new clauses.

The arguments in amendment No. 21 are based on the mistaken premise that, in all forces, it is the deputy chief constable who is in effective charge of complaints and discipline issues. That is not the case. In some forces, those matters are not even nominally the responsibility of the deputy chief constable. In others, while the deputy chief constable may have the nominal responsibility, all decision making takes place at a lower level. It is, and should remain, a matter for the chief constable to decide how to organise his force.

Amendment No. 21 would impose a rigidity on police management structures by requiring the chief constable to nominate one of his assistant chief constables to have responsibility for complaints and disciplinary matters and to consult the police authority as to his choice before implementing it. Such an arrangement would damage flexibility and impinge on the chief constable's operational control.

[Mr. Charles Wardle]

No doubt the amendment is related to the proposed abolition of the role of deputy chief constable. In many forces, the deputy chief constable handles complaints and disciplinary matters prior to a hearing because, under the present system, the chief constable must remain separate and aloof from them in order to be unbiased when he hears disciplinary cases. However, there is no statutory provision requiring those matters to be under the oversight of a deputy chief constable and, as I have already said, in many forces that is not what happens.

What of amendment No. 23? The essential quality of a deputy is that he or she carries out the full range of duties in the absence of the chief constable. The Bill currently provides for all the powers and duties of a chief constable to be exercised by a designated assistant chief constable in the absence of the chief constable or while the chief constable post is vacant. While the chief constable is available, there is no need for anyone else to exercise his powers or duties. That point was made time and again in Committee. The chief constable is able to delegate to his assistant chief constable whatever tasks he thinks appropriate, and that is thoroughly sensible. Amendment No. 23 adds nothing to the provision already contained in clause 6.

7.15 pm

With regard to amendments Nos. 13, 14 and 66, my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary explained on Second Reading the reasons for the Government's decision to reduce the number of police ranks. There are obviously benefits to the police service in having a less top-heavy management structure. There would be clearer and more direct communication, more officers available for front-line duties and swifter progression for officers through the management hierarchy. All those points must be important. That is why the ranks of chief superintendent and deputy chief constable are to be abolished.

Her Majesty's chief inspector of constabulary, the Association of Chief Police Officers and the Police Federation accept the need for reform of the police rank structure. The issue has already been discussed at great length and the overwhelming opinion is that all the responsibilities currently discharged by superintendents and chief superintendents can be managed more efficiently and effectively within a restructured single superintendent rank.

Amendments Nos. 18 and 19 relate to performance related pay. Bearing in mind the time and the fullness of debate in Committee, if the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) is short of interesting breakfast reading tomorrow, he can revisit columns 194 to 199 of our Committee proceedings. I suspect that he would find that reading stimulating—at least the part when I was expanding on the very subject on which he now claims that I was somewhat Trappist.

Amendments Nos. 18 and 19 would introduce unnecessary bureaucracy. They would require approval of regulations by each House of Parliament rather than their being subject to the negative resolution procedure, as at present. They would mean that only one police authority could be covered by one set of regulations. Imagine the weight and pressure on parliamentary business! They would require the Secretary of State to lay police authority and chief constable representations before Parliament.

Although I know it will disappoint the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth, and in spite of the alluring nature of the entreaties made by the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan)—

Sir Anthony Durant: With regard to the severance matter, the Metropolitan police have introduced some severance arrangements. Where will those arrangements stand when the statutory instrument is produced?

Mr. Wardle: As I have explained, the undertaking that I have given is that there will be consultation, but there will not be a statutory provision for that consultation. I hope that my hon. Friend will accept the undertaking that I have provided.

In spite of the entreaties of Opposition Members, I urge the House to reject the new clauses and the amendments.

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): I will be brief, and concentrate on the issue as it affects Scotland. I lament the fact that, again, the Government have not rethought this matter. Two ranks have been abolished simply because of the revolt in the other place. There has been no consultation in Scotland with the Association of Chief Police Officers (Scotland) or other police ranks. The decision was dogmatic and has meant the flattening of the police structure for its own sake.

When we consider that the police have nine ranks compared with 12 in the civil service and 11 in the Army, it is clear that efficiency in terms of police ranks exists in Scotland. In addition, the Scottish Office has already admitted to the police that no money will be saved through this flattening of the ranks. The police will still be required to do the job. What will happen is that a superintendent will be appointed; he will be labelled a senior superintendent, and the extra money will go to him.

If no money is saved, what are the advantages that the Government seek? Sadly, there will be no advantages, but there will be many disadvantages. Taken together with performance-related pay and fixed-term contracts, what will happen is that ambitious young officers will be content to stay below the rank of chief superintendent and not proceed to those levels where they will be subject to four or five renewals of fixed-term contracts.

Every police force in Scotland is below the median for the United Kingdom in terms of promoted ranks. If the Government think that too many officers are being promoted, they can introduce the on-cost formula and prohibit all police forces from having more than a certain percentage in promoted posts, in terms of either cost or the number of individuals. That would stop forces promoting more individuals than the formula allowed and it would give chief constables the flexibility which they so desperately require and which the Government say they wish to provide. By abolishing those ranks, the Government will interfere with the command structure and introduce a rigidity into operational duties.

For example, the Strathclyde and Grampian regions in Scotland are different by nature. The Strathclyde region has 15 divisional command structures, and each division is larger than the entire size of Dumfries and Galloway. The Grampian region is very much rural-based. I have spoken to the chief constables of both areas. The chief constable in Strathclyde told me that he would like the post of chief

superintendent retained, whereas the chief constable in Grampian would like the post of chief inspector retained for operational flexibility. The Government are precluding that by abolishing the two ranks. They should consider that we have had two emergencies in Scotland in the past few years. The first was the Lockerbie disaster—

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: We are keeping the role of chief inspector.

Mr. McFall: I am talking about flexibility for the Strathclyde region, which wants the rank of chief superintendent retained, and the Grampian region, which wants its chief inspectors retained. My point is that the chief constables want that operational flexibility, but the Government are denying them that. The emergencies which occurred, sadly, a few years ago with Lockerbie and only about a month ago with the Chinook helicopter in the Mull of Kintyre, have shown that flexibility is necessary. The Government's proposals will not give that flexibility or operational command structure.

In terms of flexibility, efficiency and decentralised management, I ask the Government to consider what the chief constables have said and allow them the flexibility which these forces of disparate nature require.

Sir Anthony Durant: As I have received reassurances from the Minister, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion. I do not know what Labour will do with regard to the rank of superintendent, but I wish to withdraw the new clause relating to severance provisions.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

New clause 8

PRIVATE SECURITY SERVICES: LICENSING

'After section 5 of the 1964 Act there shall be inserted—

"Private security services: licensing

5A.—(1) There shall be established a special police authority for the licensing and regulation of organisations or individuals purporting to offer crime prevention or detection services.

(2) The membership of the authority shall be comprised of such number of persons as the Secretary of State may specify from among members of police authorities established under section 3 of this Act.

(3) In carrying out its functions under this section, the authority shall—

(a) consult and have regard to the views of persons representative of chief officers of police; and

(b) have regard to any guidelines issued by the Secretary of State.

(4) The Secretary of State may by order made by statutory instrument establish arrangements under which the authority may recover the costs of carrying out any duties under this section.

(5) It shall be unlawful for any person to advertise or purport to offer crime prevention or detection services unless they are licensed by the authority established under this section.

(6) It shall be the duty of any person licensed under this section—

(a) to ensure that they have sufficient available funds or are bonded to cover any tort in respect of which they might reasonably become liable; and

(b) to provide evidence of this on request to the authority or to the chief constable or the police authority of any area in which they operate.

(7) A person guilty of an offence under subsection (5) of this section shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale.".'. — *[Mr. Michael.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Michael: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

In Committee, we had quite a debate about the current problems of the private security industry. I hasten to add that the problems relate not to the more established and responsible part of the industry but to the less responsible part—that which is outside the regulation of the voluntary organisations dealing with the industry. In Committee, we sought to have a system which would put some power into the hands of chief constables to enable them to deal with problems when they arise. Our amendments were rejected by the Minister.

In the new clause, we seek to have a national system of licensing and regulating the private security industry, but making it responsible and accountable to local police forces which, of course, deal with issues that arise on a local basis. The system would have a nice symmetry in that it would be local in terms of accountability, using the professionalism of the police service, but would provide the national structure which is necessary if we are to deal with the issue properly. In Committee, several references were made to ways of dealing with those issues on a voluntary basis.

The private security industry recognises the need for proper regulation. I have had comments from the industry which suggest that there is a welcome for the coming together of the two major associations in the United Kingdom, which between them govern some 74 per cent. of private security provision. Obviously, it is beneficial for industry members to belong to a merged association. From the same source, I heard the comment that the ultimate goal must be statutory regulation, and that any such accommodation would leave out the 25 per cent. of the industry which causes the greatest concern not only to the public and to the Labour party but to the security industry itself.

I make it clear that the need for statutory regulation of the private security industry is well recognised in the industry. It is not good enough simply to leave it to voluntary regulation because voluntary regulations regulate only those who volunteer.

In Committee, I warned the Minister that we have seen the rise of vigilantes and people coming into areas to improve the security of people's homes. Some of my constituents have been approached by individuals who say that they operate a security system and will look after homes in an area for a weekly payment. They sometimes hint that homes might not be so secure if money is not paid. I am not suggesting that those people always intend to break the law, but their hints are interpreted by residents as a form of threat. Such behaviour is close to operating a protection system, or at least being perceived to be so. That must be unacceptable to hon. Members on both sides of the House.

I have come across an incident in which those who were proposing a security system on a small estate had told the police of their plans and then told local people that they had the support and approval of the police, which was not the case. Such developments are worrying to the private security industry as well as to the public and ourselves, and underline the need for proper statutory regulation.

The police in my area are concerned that they do not have powers to move in and nip such problems in the bud. That is a general problem which is reflected by many constituents up and down the country. The new clause would provide a tidy way of approaching the problem

[Mr. Michael]

without forming a great new bureaucracy. It would regulate the industry in a way which is now urgent. I commend the new clause to the House.

Mr. Shersby: I support the concept that the private security industry should be properly regulated by statute —and I am on the record as having said that on a number of occasions. Indeed, I have supported proposals put forward by the hon. Member for Walsall, South (Mr. George) for that purpose.

Today, a number of private security organisations of one sort or another provide quasi police and security services, often on private premises. A good example is the sort of shopping mall which is becoming increasingly prevalent, where it is not unusual to find an individual dressed in a fancy uniform who has the role of private security officer.

At a recent election campaign, one of the candidates —this will be of interest to a number of my colleagues in the House—was told: "You cannot come in here to conduct your campaign. I am in charge of what goes on here. I am a private security officer. You cannot come into the shopping precinct."

Other private security services are being offered to my constituents. For example, some individuals offer to keep a special watch on a house for 20p a day. They have a van and a video camera, and they will ensure that people have the extra security that will put their minds at rest. It is unsatisfactory that private individuals who are not screened in any way can offer such a service. They may well be driving round the streets with video cameras recording the goings-on of private citizens because they have been paid to do so by other private citizens in the same street. That raises several issues, some of which have been in the news during the past day or two.

There is therefore a need for private security to be properly regulated and for all of us to know to whom private security forces are accountable. If a Member of Parliament is prevented from entering any premises by a private security officer, or if an individual suffers some personal restraint or even assault at the hands of a private security officer, does that person have the same recourse to the police complaints procedures as if the officer involved was a member of a regular, properly established police force? I think that the answer to that question is no.

7.30 pm

There is a proliferation of private security organisations. Some of them are perfectly reputable and are well known. I have no criticism of any particular force, but more and more of them are coming into existence. The time has come when people should be clearly aware of their rights and of the protection that is available to the individual under the law if an officer of a private security force takes action which would lead to an appeal if it was taken by an officer in a regular police force.

Therefore, I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will be sympathetic to the new clause moved by the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael). Even if my hon. Friend feels unable to accept the new clause this evening, I hope that he will give the House an assurance that the matter is at the forefront of the minds of Home Office Ministers and that the necessary action will be taken to deal with it. The matter deserves the serious consideration of the Home Office at an early date.

Mr. Maclennan: I wholly agree with the hon. Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) that regulation of the security industry merits careful thought by Ministers. The growth of vigilantism and organisations which come pretty close to offering protection rackets rather than security services must be watched. Regulation and licensing may prove to be necessary to protect the public.

Certain problems with new clause 8 lead me to doubt whether the Government are likely to accept it. New clause 8 seems to be widely cast in recommending

"the licensing and regulation of organisations or individuals purporting to offer crime prevention".

That would seem almost to require the regulation and licensing of locksmiths. I do not believe that that was in the mind of the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth. The new clause also implies that, if there is no cash nexus between the member of the public and the organisation, it is questionable whether there is a need for regulation. That is perhaps a slight defect of drafting.

Putting aside matters of drafting, the purpose of new clause 8 is sound. We have to watch the growth of private security organisations. In a society in which there is an alarming breakdown of law and order in some communities which almost stretches police resources beyond their easy limits, the temptation to rely on such organisations is great.

There are undoubtedly some perfectly reputable companies which contract to offer services which, on the face of it, look very much like private policing. Such developments are mushrooming. I should like to hear from the Minister tonight exactly what consideration the Government have given to the problems. I do not want to hear merely a dismissal of the new clause as untimely, ill-thought-out or whatever. What thought are the Government giving to the protection of the public?

Mr. Mike O'Brien (Warwickshire, North): I support new clause 8 and remind the House that I am a parliamentary adviser to the Police Federation of England and Wales. The central concern of new clause 8 is that a burglar can be in prison, come out of prison, buy himself a dog, deliver leaflets through people's letter boxes or to shops saying that he is a security guard, wear a uniform and pass himself off as one. There are no regulations to stop him doing that. Therefore, it is essential that we have a decent and proper regulation of an expanding industry.

Much of the industry is entirely reputable. Several companies adopt the highest standards. However, there is also in the industry a group of organisations and individuals which are less than reputable and regulation is desperately needed. It is a growing industry. In 1987 the private security sector was worth approximately £800 million. By 1992—the latest year for which figures are available—it was worth more than £2 billion. The figure is rising. The industry employs about 250,000 people. They are involved in patrolling housing estates, shopping centres and factories as well as working as store detectives and private investigators. Yet the Government seem not to be prepared to display any interest in proper regulation of the sector to protect the public.

We need to regulate training, ensure that companies are properly insured for civil torts and prevent criminals from operating in private security. It is nonsense to suggest, as

I suspect the Government may, that professional bodies in the industry can regulate the sector effectively. The main reason why they cannot is that many small businesses are not members of the professional bodies. Where the professional bodies have membership, they are struggling valiantly and doing good work to regulate the industry, but so long as people who enter the industry do not need to become members of the professional bodies, those bodies can in no way ensure reasonable and reputable standards. Companies are under no obligation to join.

In my county of Warwickshire and in my constituency, private security companies are knocking on people's doors offering to patrol areas or villages for £2 or £1.50 per week per household. The chief constable of Warwickshire estimates that, if he had that extra income from each household in Warwickshire, he could put an extra 2,000 fully trained, properly regulated and properly vetted police officers on the streets to reduce crime.

Some private security organisations may be reputable, but the public do not know whether they are. They do not know whether the people who knock on their doors are criminals or honest business men. They do not know whether the companies are insured for civil torts or uninsured. They do not know whether they are commercially viable and reputable or not. The industry cries out for regulation and for basic standards to be enforced. If the Government will not accept the detail of new clause 8, let them at least show that they recognise the need for urgent regulation. The police want it and the public want it. Let the Government recognise that and say so.

Mr. Charles Wardle: This has been an interesting debate. No hon. Member on either side of the House would deny that there are some cowboys operating in the private security industry. The question that matters is whether a system of statutory regulation would prevent the cowboys from doing what they do now. I do not believe that that would be the case, as I shall show in a moment.

There is no evidence that there is a greater level of criminality in the private security industry than generally in Britain. That is not to deny that there are cowboys at work, but new clause 8 does not provide the remedy that the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth has recommended. The Government are determined in any case to lift unnecessary controls on business and to avoid adding new ones.

Of course, we would be ready to consider legislation if there was a clear and demonstrable need for statutory control. Such a need simply does not exist. Regulation would add nothing of benefit to the industry. Some disreputable individuals undoubtedly operate on the fringes of the industry and give it a bad name. No one denies that they exist, but it is unworldly to assume that they would just vanish as soon as the House introduced statutory controls.

The supporters of statutory regulation believe that its introduction would somehow raise standards straight away, but the industry is increasingly mature and professional, and it is doing a great deal to improve standards. Self-regulation is the way forward. The industry has accepted the discipline of that and made a great deal of progress. It already provides better training for its staff, and individual employees may study for national vocational qualifications and Scottish vocational qualifications.

These days, the well-established British standards are more relevant to the companies and their products. In the past few years, the industry has increasingly come to believe that it is not enough to say that certain standards are maintained, but that companies' adherence to those standards must be independently demonstrated. For that purpose, the industry has established the inspectorate of the security industry and the National Approval Council for Security Systems. Both those organisations perform independent and reliable inspections of companies and of their products or services.

Mr. Shersby: I was not talking about the companies that my hon. Friend is describing, which belong to an organisation which is quite capable of self-regulation, but about the kind of one-man bands that go around our constituencies. Surely our local chief superintendents should have some discretion to decide whether such people are able to offer their quasi-police services to private individuals. That is what the argument is about.

Mr. Wardle: If the local police have any reason to believe that any such operators are breaking the law, no doubt they will take action.

My hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) also spoke of recourse to the police complaints procedure, but there is no such recourse. As I said earlier, there is recourse under the law, however, because the employees of private security firms have no powers other than those of the private citizen. The police would bear that in mind.

My hon. Friend also spoke about vetting personnel who may be considered for jobs with security firms. That matter is currently being considered in a consultation document entitled "The Access to Criminal Records for Employment Vetting Purposes". It would be inappropriate for me to pre-empt the conclusions of that consultation exercise, but my hon. Friend has made an interesting point.

For the reasons that I have cited, there is no evidence to suggest that such a deep-rooted problem exists in the industry as to require the heavy-handed approach of statutory regulation. I therefore urge the House to reject the new clause.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—
The House divided: Ayes 258, Noes 280.

Division No. 284] **[7.42 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Church, Judith

Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Harvey, Nick
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hodge, Margaret
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Liddell, Helen
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
Olner, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Straw, Jack
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Timms, Stephen
Tipping, Paddy
Trimble, David
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Eric Illsley and
Mr. Jon Owen Jones.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas

Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, Sir John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Rt Hon Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Robert G. Hughes.

Question accordingly negatived.

New clause 18

MEMBERSHIP OF POLICE AUTHORITIES

'After section 3 of the 1964 Act there shall be inserted—

"Membership of police authorities

3A.—(1) The number of members of each police authority established under section 3 of this Act shall be specified by the Secretary of State by order made by statutory instrument.

(2) The number of members of an authority specified by an order under subsection (1) of this section shall be an odd number no fewer than seventeen.

(3) An order made under subsction (1) above may relate to the membership of more than one authority, and any such order may be varied by a subsequent order.

(4) Before making an order under subsection (1) of this section the Secretary of State shall consult any relevant councils.

(5) Where an authority is of the opinion that in order to ensure fair representation on it of—

(a) each relevant council within the authority's area;

(b) the population and geographical density of the area concerned and of each unit of representation within the area; and

(c) the political balance among councils and among members required by paragraph 4(b) of Schedule 1B to this Act

it requires the number of its members to be varied, it shall submit a recommendation to the Secretary of State.

(6) Where the Secretary of State receives a recommendation under subsection (5) of this section he shall—

(a) if he approves it, lay an order under subsection (1) to give it effect; or

(b) where he does not approve it, publish his reasons for not approving it and lay those before both Houses of Parliament.

(7) An order under this section shall not be made unless a draft of the order has been laid before and approved by resolution of each House of Parliament.

(8) Schedules 1B and 1C to this Act shall have effect in relation to police authorities established under section 3 and the appointment of their members.".'. — *[Mr. Michael.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Michael: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): With this it will be convenient to discuss also the following: New clause 20—*Constitution of Northern Ireland Police Authority*—

'For paragraphs 1 and 2 of Schedule 1 (The Police Authority) to the Police Act (Northern Ireland) 1970 there shall be substituted—

"1. The Police Authority shall consist of a Chairman, a Vice Chairman and fifteen persons.

2.—(1) Nine members of the Authority shall be members of District Councils in Northern Ireland, appointed by the Association of Local Authorities of Northern Ireland and it shall be the duty of the Association to secure as far as practicable that the members it appoints are representative of the community in Northern Ireland.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker Mr. Michael Morris]

(2) Five members of the Authority shall be appointed by the Secretary of State and it shall be the duty of the Secretary of State to secure as far as practicable that among the members appointed under this paragraph is a person representative of—

(i) the trade unions.

(ii) agriculture, industry and commerce, and

(iii) voluntary organisations having as their principle object, or one of their principle objects, the welfare of children or young persons.

(3) Three members of the Authority shall be resident magistrates or judges authorised to exercise the jurisdiction of the Crown Court appointed by the Lord Chancellor after consultation with the Lord Chief Justice of Northern Ireland.".'.

Amendment No. 62, in clause 3, page 2, line 20, leave out from beginning to end of line 33.

Government amendment No. 44.

Amendment No. 22, in schedule 2, page 53, line 21, after 'prevailing', insert 'between the councils and'.

Amendment No. 16, in page 54, line 34, leave out from beginning to end of line 35.

Government amendment No. 45.

Amendment No. 15, in page 56, line 22, leave out from 'years' to ', or' in line 23.

Mr. Michael: I appear at the Dispatch Box as the defender of two endangered species—the Conservative voter and the Conservative councillor. They, too, should be protected from the actions of the Government, and they should have a voice within police authorities. That will not happen if the difficulties of achieving a proper balance of political representation within a police authority is limited in the way the Government wish.

New clause 18, in particular, proposes that,

"Where an authority is of the opinion that in order to ensure fair representation . . . of each relevant council within the authority's area; the population and geographical density of the area concerned and of each unit of representation within the area; and the political balance among councils and among members" the authority should say that it needs an increase in numbers. It is surely right that there should be a balance on the authority.

First, it is right that each relevant council within the authority's area should be represented. It is important that there is an understanding of the policing of the area among the leadership of the local authority. We have said on a number of occasions that the joint working of police authorities and local authorities is very important. The Minister pays lip service to that, but it is important that it is contained within the institutions.

Secondly, the population and geographical density of the area make a difference, as can be seen within the existing police authority areas. One can look at the Greater Manchester police authority area, or at the changes within the South Wales police area, where the number of unitary authorities will be as large as the number of members under the minimum composition which is allowed at present.

That does not allow for opposition groups, and we feel that minorities within the overall scope of political involvement in an area should be represented. Therefore, either there is a representative from one of those authorities who is not from the majority group and thus cannot speak for the whole council, which means that the leading voice on that authority is not heard, or there is an increase in the numbers to allow for minority representation from within the area.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): I can illustrate the hon. Gentleman's point with an example from the Northumbria police authority area. If Northumberland council is to have only one member of the police authority, on the present balance of the council it would probably be a Labour councillor. But the Labour party mainly represents the urban south-east of the county, and the rural areas which are represented by Liberal Democrat and Conservative councillors would be unrepresented. That point has been put quite fairly to me by police authority members, and it is a view generally shared among all parties on the authority. More than one representative from the county would be needed to achieve the spread that the hon. Gentleman seeks.

Mr. Michael: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for that illustration. There are a number of examples around the country, although the situation may not arise in some areas—for instance, where there is shire county representation. Where a county is to be moved to a unitary authority, as in Gwent, the number of unitary authorities would still be sufficient for the number of representatives allowed for by the Government to be met while including some opposition representation. That is fine, but it does not apply in all circumstances.

In my view, it would be dangerous to require a composition which does not allow for those minorities. Apart from anything else, the vagaries of political life are such that there can be switches, and it is always best if a minority which becomes the majority has had some experience of the workings of an authority. In view of the need for continuity and in pursuit of conservatism with a small "c", I should have thought that that would commend itself to the Minister, and lead him to accept the new clause.

The Minister stated in Committee that the Secretary of State would not use the powers in the Bill which allow him to vary upwards the numbers on a police authority—an amendment won following a debate in the House of Lords —very often at all. He said that the powers would be used responsibly, but very sparingly—indeed, exceptionally. All that we seek is that the number of occasions on which it is used—whether they be few or many—should be determined by the need for proper representation on a police authority. We therefore seek to persuade the Government that the powers contained in the Bill allow for greater flexibility as to size than the Government seem to envisage.

There are advantages to be gained where it is possible to achieve proper representation within a small size of police authority, but that aim should not be pursued inflexibly or as a matter of dogma. For instance, there are instances in which nine elected members are insufficient to represent a police authority's area and the balance of political interest, so the people there will not enjoy proper representation.

8 pm

One amendment in the group seeks to remove the age limit of 70 on police authority members. In the light of debate in Committee, I hope that that will commend itself to the Minister. Magistrates who hold an appointed office, often for many years, are required to retire from front-line judicial service at 70. Their duties beyond that age are

judicial service at 70. Their duties beyond that age are fairly nominal, such as signing passport applications. With the loss of active office there follows a requirement to resign from the police authority, if the individual is a magistrate appointed by the local magistrates courts committee. Councillors, however, can hold elected office as long as they are elected to stand for public office and are returned at local council elections, and they are eligible to

A limited number of existing police authority members ably serve their communities on a police authority, and it would be wrong in principle to exclude them on age alone —the popular term is agism. I warn the Minister of the consequences of grey power. He may care to reflect that, as he grows older, he too may still want to make a contribution to public life. There should not be a blanket reason for excluding people.

If individuals under 75, 70 or 60 are not capable and responsible representatives, they should be removed by the judgment of those who appointed them—not by a cast-iron limit in the Bill. In debate on an earlier amendment, reference was made to the administrative predicament for the Bill's draftsmen, who chose a common retirement age for all new police authority members. We argue that is wrong in principle, discriminatory and misconceived.

There are many examples of individuals who assumed high public office beyond their 70th birthday. They include Lord Gladstone, Prime Minister at 82; Lord Hailsham, Lord Chancellor at 70; Winston Churchill, Prime Minister at 70 and again at 76; Lord Home, Foreign Secretary at 71; Lord Whitelaw, Lord President of the Council at 70; and above all, one example that should make us all pause for thought—Nelson Mandela, President of South Africa at 75. That list demonstrates that persons holding elected office, whether nationally or locally, should not be excluded on the ground of their age alone. The restriction should therefore be removed. I commend the new clause to the House.

Mr. Trimble: I shall speak to new clause 20, in my name. I regret that, due to the selection of amendments, I have not had the opportunity to speak to new clause 21, which was tabled at the request of the Police Federation of Northern Ireland to remedy an injustice to 4,614 members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary—but no doubt there will be another opportunity to address that issue.

New clause 20 provides for the constitution of the Police Authority for Northern Ireland. At present, that authority is appointed by the Secretary of State—period. There has been much debate about the extent to which it is proper for the Home Secretary to have some influence on the appointment of police authorities in England and Wales, and a provision has emerged which gives the Home Secretary a limited capacity to appoint one or two independent members to English police authorities.

In Northern Ireland, the police authority is appointed entirely by the Secretary of State. It is true that the Secretary of State is obliged by the Police Act (Northern Ireland) 1970 to consult various bodies, and that he is directed to ensure that the body is representative—but representative as the Secretary of State sees it—and consultation is just that. Northern Ireland has purely an appointed body.

I am pleased that the Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office, is in his place on the Treasury Bench, because the right hon. Gentleman knows that the present situation is becoming untenable. New clause 20 provides a new basis for the appointment of the Police Authority for Northern Ireland, based on the provisions in clause 3(1) for the constitution of authorities in England and Wales in future, having 17 members—nine from local authorities, five independent and three magistrates. That is precisely reflected in new clause 20.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) spoke of the difficulty of balancing local authority representation, so he will be delighted to note that new clause 20 states:

"it shall be the duty of the Association"
of Local Authorities of Northern Ireland
"to secure as far as practicable that the members it appoints are representative of the community".

I emphasise that, because in the Northern Ireland context that phrase will mean not just geographically representative but representative in terms of shades of party political opinion. That will ensure that appointed councillors are representative of the whole community.

As to the five independent members, I have not tried to replicate the detail in schedule 1 to the Bill but have carried forward some of the provisions of the 1970 Act.

The provision for three magistrates causes difficulties in Northern Ireland. One cannot equate Northern Ireland justices of the peace with those for England and Wales. Northern Ireland JPs have not exercised any magisterial or judicial function since 1935. They are an entirely different breed and not comparable with JPs in England and Wales. In Northern Ireland, resident magistrates exercise the judicial function, but the problem with drawing representation purely from resident magistrates is that there are so few of them.

Consequently, I originally drafted the new clause to include others who exercise a judicial function, but I am not sure that that is entirely appropriate. I have not had an opportunity to consult the judiciary in that regard, and they may not be entirely happy with that proposal. It has been suggested to me that the field of selection could be broadened by taking account of lay magistrates, who are appointed to juvenile courts. That might be worth thinking about. I would accept criticism of subsection (3), but the principle that it enshrines—which draws on the precedent set for England and Wales—should remain under consideration.

I repeat that the Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office, knows that the present situation is untenable. We are in the process of appointing a new Police Authority for Northern Ireland. The Minister knows that, in previous months, bodies which must be consulted under existing legislation and which have been asked for nominations have declined to make any because they are dissatisfied with the present constitution and the envisaged future role. The right hon. Gentleman must also find a chairman for the authority. Moreover, he must do so urgently because the authority is due to meet tomorrow and if it does not have a chairman, it cannot meet.

According to newspaper reports on Sunday, the Minister has already approached six people, but they have all turned him down. I understand that an announcement was made today. I hesitate to say that it is a matter of scraping the bottom of the barrel, because the individual in question is a constituent of mine—a professional quango man, whose appointment to a health authority I had occasion to comment on negatively in the House on an earlier occasion. I am tempted to say that his only apparent qualification for the police authority chairmanship, never

[Mr. Trimble]

having sat on one before, is that he is most willing to accept direction from the Northern Ireland Office—but enough of that. The important issue is that there needs to be a rethink about the police authority's constitution. The provisions in new clause 20 would make it more representative and effective, and I tabled it to give the Under-Secretary of State the opportunity to carry public debate further.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth, speaking to new clause 5, commented on the absence of a police authority for London. He said that it was outrageous that there was no democratic accountability. I endorse that sentiment, but it is also outrageous that there is no democratic accountability in Northern Ireland. New clause 20 would go some way to remedying that.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The purpose of new clause 18 is to require that the size of each police authority be settled individually before the new authorities are formed, and for the order doing so to be subject to affirmative resolution. It also provides arrangements for changing the size of police authorities subsequently in ways which seem more complex than those available in the Bill.

There are some significant policy and technical problems in the drafting and effect of the new clause. The main difficulty that it presents results from the requirement to subject to affirmative resolution an order to settle the initial size of every police authority. That order could not be made until Parliament returns at the end of October. Appointments to police authorities could not be made until well after that date, and there would be particular delay in the case of independent members. Therefore, it would not be possible to set up the new police authorities in time for them to take the steps necessary for implementation on 1 April 1995, which is the relevant date.

Implementation would have to be delayed for a year, thus prolonging the processes of change and the uncertainty in police forces and police authorities, and that would not be advisable. There are other difficulties. It seems strange that under new clause 18(5) the initiative for subsequent variations in the size of police authorities would rest exclusively with the new police authority. The Bill is deliberately silent on that matter: the initiative for enlargement may come from any interested party, and that must be right.

The new clause provides an exhaustive list of grounds for varying the size of police authorities. The trouble with such a list is that, if an authority wanted to vary the size on some other ground, the new clause as drafted would rule it out and would be unduly inflexible. For those reasons, I urge the House to reject the new clause.

Government amendments Nos. 44 and 45 are technical and deal with the practical consequences of the revocation or variation of an order to enlarge a police authority and are fairly straightforward.

Amendment No. 22 relates to paragraph 4 of schedule 1B of the Police Act 1964, which is inserted by schedule 2 to the Bill. That paragraph sets out certain requirements as to the political balance between the council and members of police authorities. In some police areas, only one relevant council will make appointments to the police authority. In that case, the appointments are made by the council itself and will be required to reflect the balance of parties for the time being prevailing among the members of that council.

In police areas covering more than one relevant council, the appointments are made by a joint committee and must reflect the balance of parties for the time being prevailing among the members of the relevant councils when taken as a whole. Thus, for example, in a police area covering three relevant councils, all of which have the same majority party, the appointments to the police authority would not automatically all come from that party: if there were significant minority parties on each of the councils, their members would have to be considered in assessing political balance. I am sure that the House will agree that that is right.

We should not give the right to representation on police authorities exclusively to those in the majority party on the relevant councils. The amendment aims to do precisely that and seems to want to reflect only the majority party interest. I am sure that the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) goes wider than the South Wales police authority in the three Glamorgan counties, but the principle remains the same. The amendment is wrong and would not deal sensibly with political balance.

I shall now deal with amendments Nos. 16 and 17. Schedule 2 requires all police authority members to step down when they reach the age of 70. We had an interesting debate on that in Committee. The amendments would remove that limit and allow some police authority members to carry on indefinitely, regardless of age. I understand the strong feelings of some hon. Members on this issue, which was discussed at length in another place and in Committee.

As the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth rightly said, there is no hard and fast rule that a 69-year-old is fit and active while a 70-year-old is past it. We could all cite examples, as the hon. Gentleman did, of people who have contributed a great deal, in all walks of life, at advanced ages. Equally, we could cite examples of people who have carried on well beyond the age at which it would have been better to step down.

There should be a clear indication of the age at which police authority members should be expected to step down because that is a fair, consistent and dignified way for people to retire from involvement in a police authority.

Mr. Andrew Miller (Ellesmere Port and Neston): The Minister spoke of a majority party having power under our amendment. The county of Cheshire is controlled by an alliance of the Conservative and Liberal parties, but the power brokers in that situation have chosen to appoint a Labour member as chairman of the authority. Under the clause, he would be disqualified. If the Minister is interested in local agreements, how can he say that such an appointment would be wrong? Should he not reflect further on that?

8.15 pm

Mr. Wardle: I do not think so. As I said earlier, the requirements are that the elected council members of the new police authority should fairly reflect the representation on the constituent councils. It will be up to individual councils to meet and discuss that in the light of the requirement that is placed on them. The requirement is straightforward and understandable. Above all, it is fair.

Returning to the subject of the retirement age, I remind the House that magistrates are already required to step down from the bench when they reach the age of 70. That is why we chose that age for all police authority members.

It seems right that all such members should be on the same footing. The amendments would allow councillors and independent members to carry on indefinitely while their magistrate colleagues would be required to step down. That would be neither logical nor fair, although I understand the feelings that were expressed in Committee, in this House and in another place. The Bill is better as it stands, without the amendments.

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Sir John Wheeler): I am always glad to listen to advice from the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble), and I did so carefully when he spoke to his new clause 20, which seeks to alter the way in which members of the Police Authority for Northern Ireland are appointed. It would allow the majority of the authority's members to be appointed by the Association of Local Authorities of Northern Ireland.

I am aware that there has been considerable discussion about the composition of, and appointments to, police authorities in England and Wales, but the circumstances in which the police and the police authority must operate in Northern Ireland are vastly different. In Northern Ireland, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State appoints all the members of the authority. He is required to exercise his powers to ensure the appointment of individuals who are representative of various interests such as local authorities, commerce and child welfare organisations and also to ensure that the authority's membership is representative of the Northern Ireland community as a whole.

That was the system recommended in the Hunt report, which has provided the model for policing structures in Northern Ireland since the establishment of the police authority in 1970. The system of appointment has served the Province well since then. The authority has shown commitment and fair-mindedness in performing its functions in the most difficult circumstances. It has sought to serve the whole community in Northern Ireland and for that it deserves the highest praise.

Many of those who have served with such dedication have been local councillors and members of the political parties in the Province. The majority of the members of the authority that was appointed recently—on 29 June—were nominated by local authorities and other bodies; that fine tradition continues.

The hon. Member for Upper Bann referred to the chairmanship. I am glad to confirm that the appointment of Mr. Cook—a distinguished solicitor—was announced today.

I fear that the hon. Gentleman's proposals would endanger the tradition to which I have referred, while adding little in the way of electoral accountability. The Association of Local Authorities for Northern Ireland is a voluntary association with no statutory role in policing matters; nor does it represent all Northern Ireland's local authorities.

I note that the new clause does not explain how the chairman and vice-chairman of the authority are to be chosen. The last thing that I would wish to see is an authority riven by party political considerations, or open to accusations of domination by one group or another. Policing in Northern Ireland must be for all the community, and I consider the hon. Gentleman's proposal a retrograde move away from that principle.

I am far from certain—the hon. Gentleman himself recognised this difficulty—that it would be appropriate for registered magistrates in Northern Ireland who are full-time, legally qualified members of the judiciary to be members of a body whose remit will inevitably involve it in questions with political and security overtones. Their position is different from that of local justices of the peace who serve on authorities in England and Wales.

Finally, as the hon. Gentleman knows, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland recently published a document making proposals and inviting comments on the future of policing structures in Northern Ireland. My right hon. and learned Friend is considering the responses, including that of the hon. Gentleman's party—members of which I had the pleasure of meeting recently. Those responses will be considered very carefully.

I suggest that this is not the proper time to make changes to the arrangements for appointing the Police Authority for Northern Ireland, and that the measures proposed by the hon. Gentleman are neither appropriate nor desirable—although I shall of course reflect on them very carefully.

Question put and negatived.

New clause 19

COMMON RULES FOR GRANT-MAKING

"After section 30 of the 1964 Act there shall be inserted—

"Common rules for determination of police grant

30A.—(1) Any determination of the amount of grant to be made by the Secretary of State to each authority under the provisions of section 31(2)(b) below shall be governed by common rules which the Secretary of State shall issue no later than six months before the financial year to which the determinations relate.

(2) Before issuing the common rules, or any revision of existing common rules, under subsection (1) of this section, the Secretary of State shall consult persons representative of police authorities and of chief constables of forces maintained by those authorities".'. — *[Mr. Michael.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Michael: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to discuss the following: amendment No. 63, in clause 16, page 11, line 23, leave out from beginning to end of line 32.

Government amendment No. 43.

Mr. Michael: We seek to ensure that the legislation allows for fairness in the determination of grant for police authorities. This is a difficult issue and at various times it has been felt that there is some unfairness in the way in which the grant is allocated—not least in areas of south Wales such as Aberdare, Merthyr, Penarth and Barry, which are currently treated as rural areas. I am sure that improvements could be made, and that the method of distribution could be fairer.

First, the new clause asks for the rules applying to the determination of grant to be common and to be applied fairly across police forces throughout England and Wales. Secondly, it asks that the rules should be understood. We propose that the Secretary of State should issue, no later than six months before the financial year, the common rules on which determinations will be made. Thirdly, we wish the Home Secretary to consult

[Mr. Michael]

"persons representative of police authorities and of chief constables of forces maintained by those authorities"

before the common rules are determined. That seems eminently sensible and fair.

We seek to delete the part of the Bill that states:

"The considerations which the Secretary of State takes into account in making a determination . . . may be different for different authorities or different classes of authority."

Some considerations may not apply to certain authorities —the difference between "urban" and "rural", and the nature of royal residences, large public buildings or venues for major events.

Such considerations affect the policing of an area, however, and should therefore be taken into account in the authorities where they apply—but the rules should be common. The applicability of the rules may vary from authority to authority, but it seems wrong to leave the extensive discretion that seems to imply that the Home Secretary could more or less make it up as he went along, varying the rules applying to the determination of grant levels without real reason and almost at whim.

In Committee, the Minister confirmed that the Home Secretary was being granted complete discretion on the distribution of grant. He said:

"The Bill takes special care to avoid imposing such rules and specifically provides a discretion instead of a duty for the Secretary of State to use formulae or rules to allocate grant . . . The Bill is also designed to provide him with a power to apply any formulae or rules to part of the total grant only, and it allows him to treat different police authorities differently. That is for good reason."

That is a matter of dispute. I have suggested a way in which flexibility could be introduced to allow recognition of the different responsibilities and burdens carried by different police authorities. Surely it is wrong in principle and practice to legislate for unfairness, which is effectively what the Home Secretary is trying to do.

In Committee, the Minister alluded to work that was in hand on the

"means of allocating grant to police authorities."

That work should have been in hand for many years. I have been commenting for five or six years on the method of distributing grant, and I am sure that some hon. Members have done so for much longer. Everyone knows that work needs to be done and proper conclusions need to be reached.

It should also be recognised that the work is effectively being conducted in private by a working group with no formal status. The Home Secretary is certainly not bound by the group's eventual recommendations; nor can there be any guarantee that the new formula for the allocation of police grant will fully accord with the formula used by the Secretary of State for the Environment to allocate police standard spending assessments.

Even at this late stage, there is no clarity about the intended treatment of the Metropolitan police in the grant distribution formula. Do the Government intend them to be subject to the same formula, or will they be treated as a separate class of police authority with a separate formula?

There is a glaring anomaly in regard to police authorities in Wales. When asked to give the SSAs of police authorities in England and Wales, the Home Secretary is able to provide those relating to England, but cannot give those for authorities in Wales; he refers that to the Welsh Office. Why does he not refer the SSAs for English authorities to the Department of the Environment? I know from a conversation with the Minister of State, Lord Ferrers, that in fact the SSAs are available in the Home Office. I do not understand the secrecy about information that is readily to hand and could be given by Ministers without delay. That, however, is an anomaly within an anomaly, rather than the main thrust of the debate.

The Minister rightly recognised that it is

"quite unlikely any formulae could succeed from day one in fairly allocating grant to all police authorities without some modification."

He said:

"We intend to introduce any changes gradually by mitigating to an acceptable level the year-on-year changes."

However, that again calls into question the likelihood of a common formula being applied to both grant and SSAs.

The Minister argued that the application of common rules

"would result in police authorities suffering an abrupt and unacceptable change in funding."

That is not necessarily the case. We would expect common rules to be drawn up covering both the distribution formula and any transitional damping mechanism required to mitigate its immediate effects. It should be within the competence of the Home Office to deliver such rules—in other words, common rules, and the means of moving from the present system to those rules.

On consultation, the Minister argued that the requirement to consult formally on grant distribution would lead duplication and confusion if

"the Government, through two Departments, were seen to be consulting twice on the same matter."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee D,* 26 May 1994; c. 294-95.]

Elsewhere in the discussion, the Minister was keen to draw a clear distinction between the grant and SSA allocations. As I have said, in the case of relations with the Welsh Office and the Department of the Environment the Minister is more than willing to act in completely different ways.

The Minister cannot have it both ways—or, it seems, three or four ways. By putting the consultation on police grant on a similar footing to revenue support grant and SSAs—which is the purpose of amendment No. 116—greater consistency might be achieved. Those are simple, straightforward practical amendments, that seek to bring a degree of dependability and consistency to the way in which the grant to police authorities is calculated. I commend them to the House.

8.30 pm

Mr. Charles Wardle: This is not a case of legislating for unfairness. We had a full debate on the subject in Committee and I made the Government's position absolutely clear. We believe that adopting common rules to allocate police grant would prevent us from funding the Metropolitan police in a suitable, satisfactory and adequate fashion, and from introducing funding changes gradually.

I explained in Committee why we cannot accept an amendment saying that the Home Secretary's determination should be governed by common rules. Reference to common rules implies that the same rules must be applied to each police authority, and that cannot be squared either with the funding of the Metropolitan police, which we all agree requires additional funding for a range of national and capital city functions, or with introducing any funding changes gradually so as to avoid large swings in resource allocation.

The Bill specifically provides discretion rather than a duty on the part of the Secretary of State to use the rules to determine the allocation of grant. It lets him treat different police authorities differently. I appreciate that, as the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) has said, the provisions are wide, but they are essential to achieve the flexibility of funding necessary to accommodate both the funding of the London force and the gradual move to formula funding.

The provision is practical and, for that reason, I cannot accept what the hon. Gentleman said. I appreciate that the motivation behind the amendment is to ensure that the Secretary of State allocates police grant with the maximum possible input from those directly affected by the decision, but, as I have explained, there are real practical difficulties with the new clause. The proposed new section 30A(2) of the Police Act 1964 would require the Home Secretary to consult on the common rules.

However, as the House knows, the Secretary of State for the Environment already consults local government on the amount of revenue support grant to be paid to local authorities. The hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth mentioned that. A similar, although not precisely identical, process is undertaken by the Secretary of State for Wales. Under the new police funding regime to be introduced by the Bill, the consultations will include the allocation of standard spending assessments to the new police authorities.

There is, of course, a parallel between those allocations and the way in which Home Office specific grant will be distributed between authorities. If we were to consult on the distribution of police grant, that would duplicate an element of the consultation already undertaken within the Department of the Environment. Potentially at least, it would be a recipe for confusion if we were to consult twice, and even more so if, in each group, some of those consulted were the same as those in other groups and some were not. I hope that the House will appreciate that this is a difficult area, and we cannot give the commitments that the hon. Gentleman seeks, so I urge the House to reject the new clause.

I shall now deal briefly with amendment No. 43, in the name of the Home Secretary. It would make a small change to clause 30, which provides for the new police authorities to receive initial financing grant before they take over their full responsibilities. Under clause 30, the Secretary of State will be able to make grants to the new police authorities during the current financial year. That will give them, once they are set up, the financing necessary to operate in parallel with the existing police authorities until April next year. It will also enable them to spend money on gearing up the police forces for whose maintenance they will assume full responsibility next April, and to fulfil their full management tasks.

As currently drafted, clause 30 allows the Home Secretary to make the initial financing grants to the new police authorities in respect of expenditure incurred by them, and it means that the grant cannot be made after the expenditure is incurred. We now consider that it would be prudent to ensure that grant can be paid where necessary before the expenditure in respect of which it is made has been incurred. For that reason, I commend the Government amendment to the House.

Question put and negatived.

Clause 1

POLICE AREAS

Mr. Charles Wardle: I beg to move amendment No. 56, in page 1, line 19, after '21' insert 'or 21AA'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): With this it will be convenient to discuss also the following: Government amendment No. 48 and Government amendment No. 57, in page 7, line 47, at end insert—

'Alteration of Welsh police areas on local government reorganisation

21AA.—(1) The Secretary of State shall by order made before 1st April 1996 make such alterations to police areas in Wales as he considers necessary or expedient in connection with the reorganisation of local government in Wales taking place on that date.

(2) The alterations that may be made by an order under subsection (1) of this section include alterations that result in a reduction or an increase in the number of police areas, but not alterations that result in the division of any county or county borough between two or more police areas.

(3) The Secretary of State shall make an order under subsection (1) of this section only after he has consulted every body within the following paragraphs which is in existence when the order is made—

(a) the police authorities established under section 3 of this Act for the police areas altered by the order,

(b) the police authorities which are to be superseded by the police authorities mentioned in paragraph (a) of this subsection;

(c) the county councils which—

(i) are the councils of counties wholly or partly within the police areas altered by the order, and

(ii) are to cease to exist on 1st April 1996 by virtue of the Local Government (Wales) Act 1994;

(d) the councils of the counties and county boroughs established by virtue of that Act which are wholly or partly within the police areas altered by the order;

and such other persons as he considers appropriate.'

Amendment (a) to amendment No. 57, in subsection (2), leave out 'a reduction or'.

Amendment (b) to amendment No. 57, after subsection 3(d), at end insert—

'(e) Members of Parliament representing constituencies which are wholly or partly within the police areas altered by the order;'.

Government amendments Nos. 49, 58 to 60 and 50 to 55.

Mr. Wardle: The amendments are necessary to enable us, after Royal Assent, to settle outstanding questions relating to the police boundaries in Wales. As the House will know, the Bill has been proceeding through Parliament at about the same pace as the Local Government (Wales) Bill. By convention, each Bill is drafted as if the other Bill did not exist, so as not to anticipate Parliament's decision on either Bill. The Welsh Bill is about to receive Royal Assent, so we now need to make an amendment to take account of the new local government boundaries to be created in Wales from 1 April 1996.

As the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) knows, for North Wales and Dyfed-Powys police areas that would be entirely straightforward, with only minor boundary changes. But the shape of the new boundaries in south Wales will require significant changes to the boundaries of the South Wales and Gwent police areas, because the Rhymney valley—the new Caerphilly

[Mr. Wardle]

district—straddles the existing boundary between those two police areas. The boundaries of the new district were not finally settled until a late stage during proceedings on the Local Government (Wales) Bill.

Although we have been discussing with the two police authorities and the two police forces the options available for settling the boundaries, those discussions obviously could not be brought to a conclusion until the boundaries of the new local government areas were settled. The changes affecting the South Wales and Gwent police areas are quite large, and it is obviously right that we should give sufficient time for all concerned to consider the available options. My right hon. and learned Friend would not want to impose a solution now, when there will not have been sufficient time for the police authorities—or, indeed, for my right hon. and learned Friend himself—to consider all the available information, including an assessment of the policing implications of the available options on the basis of the boundaries so recently decided.

The powers provided by the amendments will therefore require the Secretary of State, before 1 April 1996 when the Welsh local government changes take effect, to make an order—or if necessary more than one order, although that seems unlikely—settling the police boundaries in Wales. I can confirm that for North Wales and Dyfed-Powys we expect that the order will merely redefine the existing boundaries, in terms of the new Welsh local government areas, including some small but important changes in the north-east of Dyfed-Powys police area necessitated by the Welsh local government changes.

I cannot, however, say what will need to be done in South Wales and Gwent. The position today is that my right hon. and learned Friend has not reached any decision on how to resolve the boundary problem affecting the South Wales and Gwent police areas. Discussions have been going on with the police authorities, on the basis of the available options.

There are three options, any of which could be put into effect by means of the powers set out in the amendment. The first option is to put the whole of the new district covering the Rhymney valley into the Gwent police area, making the Gwent force somewhat larger than it is at present. The second option is to put the whole of the new district into the South Wales police area, which would make the South Wales force a little larger and the Gwent force somewhat smaller. The third is for the two police areas to be combined.

The discussions already held with those concerned mean that we have committed ourselves to a process of consultation on the basis for those three options. Although we do not want prolonged uncertainty, my right hon. and learned Friend certainly will not rush into a decision; we want the policing needs of the area, and the wishes of those concerned in the area, to be properly explored. The hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth and I have discussed that subject at some length—most constructively, I feel. The amendment includes a requirement for consultation, which in a sense is unnecessary because we have already made it clear that we are committed to that course.

If those concerned in the area could reach agreement on a way forward on a basis that provides a solution that my right hon. and learned Friend regards as satisfactory in policing terms, he would use the new power to give effect to that agreement. We certainly want to proceed on the basis of agreement if we possibly can. That has been the purpose of the discussions that have been going on locally. We have received welcome indications in the past few days, since the amendment was tabled, that agreement seems more likely. The two police authorities have asked for postponement of a meeting with Home Office officials, which was due to take place tomorrow, so that they can have more time to discuss matters between themselves; I welcome that development. The hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth is aware of that and has been having discussions himself.

The other, minor, amendments in the group are consequential and enable the necessary changes to be made to the schedule that defines the boundaries of the police areas, which will need to be amended to define Welsh police areas by reference to the new Welsh local government areas. They will permit transitional provisions in the order and deal with other minor and entirely consequential matters.

Mr. Michael: I welcome both the spirit in which the Minister wrote to me about his intentions with regard to the amendments and the way in which he has introduced them today. I accept that most of the amendments in the group are minor and consequential and are intended to make two pieces of legislation fit together. I do not intend to take time on them. Instead, I shall come straight to one issue that is of major concern and on which, in the light of what the Minister said, I hope we may proceed in a spirit of co-operation. That issue is the impact on police authority boundaries of the Local Government (Wales) Bill.

Will the Minister confirm that it is only in relation to local government reorganisation arising from the Local Government (Wales) Bill that those powers can or will be exercised, and that he will not seek to use the powers except as a consequence of the boundary changes which would make a change necessary?

Mr. Charles Wardle *indicated assent.*

Mr. Michael: I am grateful for the Minister's indication of assent. Will he also confirm that there are only two places where boundary changes are relevant to that extent? The first of those is the Llanrhaiadr-ym-Mochnant and Llanfyllin area. My understanding is that everyone agrees that that can be dealt with as a simple consequence and that there is no question of having to use powers to merge or vary police authorities to any great extent, but that any transfer of resources and responsibilities can be and will be dealt with by agreement in a fairly simple manner.

Mr. Wardle *indicated assent.*

Mr. Michael: I am grateful to the Minister for indicating his assent on that point.

That leaves the Rhymney and Islwyn area. The Rhymney area, currently in the South Wales police authority, and the Islwyn area, currently in the Gwent police authority, would come together to compose the new Caerphilly authority. Am I right in assuming that it is only in resolving the impact of that boundary change on police authority boundaries that any question arises, and that outside that, there would be no intention at all of using the powers? The Minister is indicating that that is where we have a problem, which is extremely helpful, because that

makes it easy for us to have a common purpose—to end up with an agreement on the right form of policing for that area.

As the Minister rightly said, there have been meetings during the past week, and I was delighted when I met representatives of each of the four county councils—the three Glamorgans and Gwent—to find that the members and the leaders of those authorities are, indeed, keen to find common agreement which could lead to a recommendation to the Department.

Obviously, it takes a little more work to reach a specific recommendation. However, I can tell the Minister that, at the meeting that I requested, which was held at very short notice in the past week, agreement was reached that the two clerks of the police authorities would write jointly to all members of both police authorities to call them to a meeting at which it is intended that the two chief constables will speak on the policing issues relating to the Rhymney and Islwyn area. That positive spirit gives us a possibility of reaching agreement.

Any hon. Member—a number of Welsh colleagues have spoken to me—would be concerned about any suggestion that a merger was about to occur. The reassurance given by the Minister of State in another place was referred to earlier. He said:

"My right hon. Friend has no intention at present of amalgamating anything, but it is perfectly possible in the course of the next 10, 20 or 30 years that amalgamations will have to take place."—[*Official Report, House of Lords,* Vol.551, c.324.]

I take it that the Minister would be willing to reassure us that his intention in Wales is not to depart in any way from the spirit and substance of that earlier reassurance.

The Minister will know of the sensitivity in relation to the Gwent police force and the Dyfed-Powys police force. There is also a feeling that we do not want the South Wales police force to become over-large. Indeed, the North Wales police force serves a considerable area. It is the area in which I was born and brought up, so I take a personal interest—as do hon. Members of all the parties represented in Wales.

I have tabled three small amendments to amendment No. 57. The first would leave out the words "a reduction or". That would mean a retention of the same number of police forces in Wales or—I say with tongue in cheek—an increase in the number of police forces in Wales. For instance, the Minister may have it in mind to deal with the situation by splitting the South Wales police force in two, although he has not referred to such a suggestion.

If we are talking of any reorganisation that is not simply consequential, we should look at all the options. If we ruled out the reduction in the number of police forces in Wales and established that there would be no intention of bringing it down from four, it would be extremely helpful. Obviously, I would be greatly reassured if the Minister would accept that amendment. If he cannot, a positive response, in the spirit in which I have moved the amendment, would be helpful.

8.45 pm

Secondly, I would insert as consultees the

"Members of Parliament representing constituencies which are wholly or partly within the police areas altered by the order;".

That would refer only to the South Wales police and Gwent police areas. Thanks to the Minister's courtesy in writing to me last week, I have been able to speak to large numbers of my colleagues in Gwent and in South Wales, and, in doing so, have observed not only party boundaries in doing so. There is a great deal of interest among Members of Parliament in the policing of their areas.

Sir Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare): None of them are here.

Mr. Michael: I speak for them. The hon. Gentleman, who has wandered into the Chamber at a late hour, probably after a heavy dinner, ought to behave himself and listen to the debate, rather than interrupting in an unhelpful way.

Sir Jerry Wiggin: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Gentleman said that there was a great deal of interest in the matter. One Opposition Member has just come in, but when I came in—and I am not especially interested in the matter—there was a complete absence of Opposition Members of any kind. Is it right for the hon. Gentleman to make such assertions when they are clearly untrue?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The occupant of the Chair obviously observes that interest can be measured either by quality or quantity.

Mr. Michael: I am grateful, Mr. Deputy Speaker—although we did not have much quality in that intervention. Throughout the Gwent and South Wales police authorities, my hon. Friends have taken part in constructive discussions on those issues outside the Chamber. I am conveying their composite views to the Minister, who has treated the matter seriously and with courtesy. The hon. Gentleman's contribution to the debate does him no credit.

Perhaps we may return to serious business. The interest of Members of Parliament has been constructive during the past few days and will continue to be so. We have arranged for an opportunity for hon. Members to discuss the issue in the hope that we, as well as the police authorities, may move towards a consensus. That would be helpful to the Minister, helpful to good policing in the area and helpful to the general atmosphere in which policing may continue.

My third amendment asks the Secretary of State to use his best endeavours to proceed by consensus in making orders under subsection (1). The amendment was not selected, but I hope that, when he comes to reply, the Minister will confirm that he will seek the use of these powers only in the context outlined in the amendment—I hope that he can answer in that spirit—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It would not be in order for the Minister to respond to amendment (c). It was not selected. Whatever spirit moves hon. Members outside this Chamber is for them to determine—but not now and not here.

Mr. Michael: I am grateful, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I just want some idea of how the Minister will exercise the powers that this House is about to grant him; I am sure that that will influence the minds of right hon. and hon. Members when they respond to the Minister's request.

I appreciate the spirit in which the Minister has approached this issue. In return, I offer him a spirit of co-operation on behalf of my right hon. and hon. Friends who represent constituencies throughout south Wales and in Gwent. If the matter is carried through in this atmosphere, I hope that we will be able to come up with a single proposal for the Minister which he will be able in turn to recommend to his right hon. and learned Friend.

[Mr. Michael]

I hope that the Minister will be able to respond positively to my points. Any reassurances from him will take us a long way forward.

Mr. Jonathan Evans (Brecon and Radnor): The amendment caused some consternation in the Dyfed-Powys area, both on the part of the chief constable and on the part of the clerk to the police authority.

I have been greatly reassured by the Minister's remarks today. I note that he has communicated with the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth. Had the chief constable and clerk of the Dyfed-Powys police authority been notified, a great deal less activity than has taken place in the past three days would have been necessary. The Dyfed-Powys police authority runs a small force, and it has been anxious about the prospect of amalgamation or of changes to its boundaries.

I note what my hon. Friend has said, and on the basis of his assurance that there is no intention to alter the Dyfed-Powys boundaries—apart from what has been outlined in respect of the changes in the north-east corner following on from the Local Government (Wales) Bill—I am content with his proposal.

Mr. Elfyn Llwyd (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): I served on the Standing Committee that discussed the Local Government (Wales) Bill, and I, too, am relieved to hear that there are no immediate plans for amalgamations. During the passage of that Bill, five fire brigades and five ambulance services disappeared in Wales—their numbers were cut from eight to three—so I came here this evening with some trepidation, as did other hon. Members on both sides of the Chamber.

I am greatly reassured by the Minister's remarks, and greatly relieved that our four excellent police forces in Wales are to be fully retained.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I hope that this debate will have provided the clarification sought by my hon. Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans) and by the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth. I listened with care to what the latter had to say about amendments (a) and (b). Perhaps it will be convenient for the House if I add a few remarks about them. I hope that I can deal with them quickly and in a way that will provide the hon. Gentleman with the further assurance that he wants. Incidentally, I commend him for the constructive way in which he has participated in these affairs.

The second amendment deals with consultation with Members of Parliament. I will always carefully consider any views expressed by hon. Members. In relation to the boundary problems between south Wales and Gwent, local Members, including the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth, are well aware of the issues.

The second amendment, in respect of north Wales and Dyfed-Powys, is equally unnecessary. Those police areas are in effect settled, as I am sure those concerned will confirm, when we begin to use the powers that the Government amendment will give us.

On the first amendment, I have already made it clear that we will proceed on the basis of agreement if we possibly can. I suggest that adding an undertaking to the Bill would be unnecessary. We cannot guarantee to proceed by agreement or rule out the possibility of amalgamation until we know that agreement has been reached between the parties, and that any agreement that they may reach represents a satisfactory solution in policing terms.

As a result of what the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth has had to say, and of what I have learnt recently, I am now more hopeful that these conditions will in due course be satisfied. But the House will acknowledge that they certainly have not been met yet. Until we can be certain that a satisfactory agreement can be reached, it would be wrong not to have powers that just might be needed. Without them, my right hon. and learned Friend risks being put in the impossible position of having no power to resolve an impasse between the authorities, or no alternative but to implement arrangements that he regarded as unsatisfactory in policing terms. That would not be a responsible way to proceed, as I am sure the hon. Gentleman will understand. Given these assurances, I hope he will feel able not to move his amendment.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 3

MEMBERSHIP OF POLICE AUTHORITIES ETC.

Amendment made: No. 44, in page 2, line 33, at end insert—

'Reductions in size of police authorities

3B.—(1) This section applies to any order under subsection (2) of section 3A of this Act which varies or revokes an earlier order so as to reduce the number of a police authority's members.

(2) Before making an order to which this section applies, the Secretary of State shall consult—

(a) the authority,

(b) the councils which are relevant councils in relation to the authority for the purposes of Schedule 1B to this Act, and

(c) any panel (or magistrates' courts committee) which is responsible, or is represented on a joint committee which is responsible, for the appointment of members of the authority.

(3) An order to which this section applies may include provision as to the termination of the appointment of the existing members of the authority and the making of new appointments or re-appointments." ' — *[Mr. Charles Wardle.]*

Clause 13

ALTERATION OF POLICE AREAS

Amendments made: No. 48, in page 7, line 40, after 'county,' insert—

'( ) a county borough in Wales,'.

No. 57, in page 7, line 47, at end insert—

'Alteration of Welsh police areas on local government reorganisation

21AA.—(1) The Secretary of State shall by order made before 1st April 1996 make such alterations to police areas in Wales as he considers necessary or expedient in connection with the reorganisation of local government in Wales taking place on that date.

(2) The alterations that may be made by an order under subsection (1) of this section include alterations that result in a reduction or an increase in the number of police areas, but not alterations that result in the division of any county or county borough between two or more police areas.

(3) The Secretary of State shall make an order under subsection (1) of this section only after he has consulted every body within the following paragraphs which is in existence when the order is made—

(a) the police authorities established under section 3 of this Act for the police areas altered by the order,

(b) the police authorities which are to be superseded by the police authorities mentioned in paragraph (a) of this subsection;

(c) the county councils which—

(i) are the councils of counties wholly or partly within the police areas altered by the order, and

(ii) are to cease to exist on 1st April 1996 by virtue of the Local Government (Wales) Act 1994;

(d) the councils of the counties and county boroughs established by virtue of that Act which are wholly or partly within the police areas altered by the order;

and such other persons as he considers appropriate.'

No. 49, in page 8, line 8, after 'district' insert ', county borough'.

No. 58, in page 8, line 43, after '21' insert 'or 21AA'.

No. 59, in page 9, line 5, after '21' insert 'or 21AA'.

No. 60, in page 9, line 24, after '21' insert 'or 21AA'.

—*[Mr. Charles Wardle.]*

Clause 18

Appeals Against Dismissal Etc.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: I beg to move amendment No. 65, in page 13, line 26, after 'rank', insert

', or made subject to a permanent ban on promotion, or is fined a sum exceeding one week's pay'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss also the following amendments: No. 67, in schedule 3, page 62, line 31, leave out from '(1)' to end of line 33 and insert

'The costs of an appellant shall be defrayed out of the police fund of the relevant police authority unless the tribunal directs otherwise'.

No. 69, in schedule 6, page 80, line 8, at end insert 'nominated by the appropriate staff association.'.

Mr. O'Brien: Here we seek to challenge the Government's view of how the Police Act 1964 should allow appeals. The Government suggest that appeals to the police appeals tribunal would be allowed only when an officer has been dismissed, required to resign or reduced in rank. An appeal to the tribunal would not be allowed when the officer was fined or subjected to a permanent ban on promotion.

In my submission, this creates an anomaly. Let us consider an allegation of improper conduct made against an inspector and against a constable and based on exactly the same facts. Suppose that the allegation is proved in the first hearing, and the inspector is demoted. Suppose that the constable is fined £700. Both appeal to their chief constable, and are refused.

The situation of the two officers then diverges, because the inspector is entitled to appeal to the police appeals tribunal. He wins. His demotion is reversed; but the police constable cannot appeal to the police appeals tribunal, so he has to pay the £700 fine. In effect, he remains convicted of that disciplinary offence. Such an unjust result cannot be sustained in all conscience. The matter should not be left like that. The amendment seeks equity and justice in police disciplinary rules. If he refuses to support the amendment, the Minister will have to justify allowing such an anomaly to exist.

On amendment No. 67, the Bill reverses the current position whereby the appellant is liable to pay the costs, including his own, only if the Secretary of State should so direct and he is required to give a reason for doing so. The effect of the Government's provision would be to discourage officers who have been dismissed, required to resign or reduced in rank—and who have therefore already suffered a severe penalty—from appealing to the police appeals tribunal. Many officers will be concerned that they will not be able to afford an appeal, which would undermine police confidence in the disciplinary system.

Surely, my proposal is the best course of action. Where an officer has made a legitimate and arguable appeal, where there is a real case, his costs should be paid by the police authority; where the case is frivolous, the tribunal may direct that he loses his costs. The amendment would enable the police appeals tribunal to stop frivolous appeals and prevent waste of public money but, at the same time, it would allow officers to exercise their legitimate right to appeal.

9 pm

The Government's proposal creates injustice by deterring an officer from exercising his right of appeal. The clause contains no commitment even to pay an officer's costs when he wins a case.

Amendment No. 69 seeks to place in statute the principle that staff associations will be represented on the police appeals tribunal. In principle, the Government do not demur from that suggestion and appear to accept it. If that is the case, let us include it in the Bill and ensure that staff associations have that safeguard. I therefore ask my hon. Friends and Conservative Members to support the amendment, the police and justice in police disciplinary rules.

Mr. Shersby: I had intended that my name should appear on the amendments with that of the hon. Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. O'Brien), but unfortunately, due to a misunderstanding in the Public Bill Office, that did not happen. I want to make it clear, however, that I associate myself with the hon. Gentleman's remarks on these important amendments.

I want particularly to concentrate my attention on amendment No. 67, the purpose of which is to retain the existing position whereby an appellant's costs are defrayed out of the relevant police authority police fund unless the tribunal decides otherwise. I want that position to continue. The Bill will have the effect of providing that an appellant police officer shall pay the whole of his or her costs unless the police appeals tribunal directs otherwise. As the hon. Member for Warwickshire, North said, that is a reversal of the current position whereby the police fund meets the costs unless the Secretary of State is minded to direct otherwise.

I greatly regret the proposed reversal of the present position and the fact that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has felt it necessary to introduce the proposal. The clear effect of the Bill's provision will be to discourage officers who have been dismissed, required to resign or reduced in rank, and who have already suffered a severe financial penalty, from appealing to the police appeals tribunal. Obviously, they will be deterred because they will not know whether they will receive their costs.

Many officers will plainly be unable to afford the cost of an appeal, and that could have a serious effect on confidence in the police discipline system, which, as all hon. Members know, is vital to the way in which our police service operates. I must ask why my right hon. and learned Friend has made this proposal. To my knowledge, the

[Mr. Shersby]

Government have not produced any evidence to show that the appeal system has been abused. If they had, we might have addressed our minds to the problem. I certainly have not seen any evidence of abuse.

The House knows only too well that police officers face an inordinate number of problems on the street. Individuals are prone to making allegations for malicious purposes. Many villains have nothing to lose by making serious allegations against police officers, and they do so.

By refusing to allow the payment of an appellant's costs, the Bill runs contrary to the spirit that has pervaded the relationship between the Home Office and the police for many years and adds to the pressures facing police officers. I know that my hon. Friend the Minister is a considerate colleague. He is regarded in all parts of the House as a great supporter of the police service. If he is unable to accept amendment No. 65, will he at least assure the House that costs will be awarded to an officer who wins his or her case?

In other such cases, an individual might apply for and receive legal aid. A police officer cannot apply for legal aid and will not know until a case is completed whether his or her costs have been awarded. If an officer wins, it is only fair and reasonable for costs to follow. That would at least offer some assurance to officers who are genuinely worried by this small but significant change by the Bill.

I hope that the Minister will be able to offer the hon. Member for Warwickshire, North and me some assurance that will enable us to tell the Police Federation and other staff associations that the Government are mindful of the changes that the Bill will make if it is enacted.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I listened carefully to my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) and the hon. Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. O'Brien), but I was not convinced by their arguments. I shall first address amendment No. 65 before dealing at greater length with amendment No. 67, on which my hon. Friend and the hon. Gentleman dwelt.

It was originally envisaged that the tribunals would provide police officers with access to external review in situations where employees have access to industrial tribunals.

No one can argue that we have not listened to the arguments of the staff associations or Opposition Members. One example of our readiness to meet possible sources of genuine concern is the fact that we have already introduced a Government amendment adding reduction in rank to the matters that may be appealed to the tribunal — a matter which, in outside employment, might be interpreted by industrial tribunals as constructive dismissal.

Amendment No 65. suggests that the review should cover a number of matters. A permanent ban on promotion is not a matter on which the Home Secretary can make regulations, so there is no need to consider rights of appeal. Fines, at whatever level, are essentially internal matters. If a large fine were to be imposed—I do not comment on whether fines will continue to be part of the pattern of police personnel arrangements—the officer could appeal to his chief constable that the amount concerned was out of all proportion to his offence. If the chief constable did not agree, it would be fair to conclude that the officer's actions were regarded gravely by the management of his or her force and that the amount ordered was not unfair.

I do not therefore see a role for the new police appeal tribunals in internal matters; nor, as a matter of practicality, would I wish to see such an elaborate and expensive system burdened with such relatively trivial issues that would prejudice and could delay the consideration of more substantive cases.

Mr. D.N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): I did not serve on the Committee that considered the Bill and therefore I am not aware of all the intricate matters that were debated in Committee, but I understand that last year 1,916 complaints were made alleging incivility by police officers, many of which were made in London. I understand also that as the acts of incivility committed by police officers were not criminal offences and were not in breach of codes of practice, they will no longer be referrable to the Police Complaints Authority. Instead, they will be dealt with by the police internally. There will be no civilian oversight. Is that in the public interest? Is it true that the Bill will have that effect when enacted?

Mr. Wardle: In short, the answer to the hon. Gentleman, who has just joined us—I am glad that he has —is yes.

I move on to amendment No. 67 and the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge and of the hon. Member for Warwickshire, North. An appeal is justified only if there is some substantial injustice to remedy. When appellants challenge the decisions of those who are appointed to take them, it is not unreasonable to require them to have sufficient confidence in the rights of their cases to be prepared to meet their own costs. No one is suggesting that they should bear the costs of the tribunal as a whole or those of the police force.

The outlay for an appeal does not have to be substantial. The stronger the grounds of appeal, the less special skills are required to present them. Whatever the grounds, an appeal tribunal will be willing to listen to appellants if they appear by themselves or with a friend. If they choose to employ professional advice, that must be a matter for them. If an appellant has a substantial or complex legal point to argue, I think that the appeal tribunal—however that were done—would grant him or her costs. It would almost certainly do so if the case were good enough for the appellant to win.

I cannot value highly the importance of any appeal in which even the appellant has so little confidence in the likelihood of winning that he or she is unprepared to fund the costs. If that is the position, I cannot understand why the appeal should be made. There must be a degree of commitment.

The amendment would result in the appellant's costs being paid in every case where the tribunal did not direct otherwise. That means that anyone who had been dismissed, required to resign, or reduced in rank could appeal at virtually no risk of incurring any cost no matter how clear the evidence against him and irrespective of how heinous the offence for which he had been disciplined. It is obvious without me saying more that such an arrangement would have a tendency to encourage appeals. If someone has nothing to lose, why should he not lodge an appeal? That is what happens now.

In cases in which the appeal has been considered to be without merit, my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has generally regarded the expectation that costs will not be given against the appellant as being so strong that it would be unreasonably harsh to make a direction as to costs. That is not to say that that will always be the position. In one recent instance the appeal tribunal advised that the appellant should be required to pay his own costs as the appeal was entirely without merit. As a result, the appellant's costs were not met by the police fund. That case serves to illustrate the point that is made in the present draft of the Bill. Two of the factors to which the tribunals should give their attention are costs and whether there is sufficient merit in the appeal to justify payment of the appellant's costs.

The present draft of the Bill deliberately reverses the current expectation that an appellant's costs will always be met. In future, the appellant will pay his or her costs unless the tribunal directs otherwise. A tribunal would make a direction in any case where the appellant won his appeal, but it might do so in cases in which it considered that the appellant had had a substantial case to argue which it was valid to bring before the tribunal.

The arrangement that we propose is not an unusual one. It is the normal practice at tribunals that appellants bear their own costs. Industrial tribunal cases are fought on the basis of the appellant's own costs, as are teachers' appeals against a barring order made by the Secretary of State for Education. That is the position in most other actions that are brought before tribunals. For these reasons, I cannot accept the amendment.

I recognise that the purpose behind amendment No. 69 is to put it beyond doubt that the fourth member of the police appeals tribunal, whom we added recently to take account of the concern that we did not have the balance completely right, should be selected from a list provided by the staff associations. The argument has already been put to me on the basis of the English provisions and the amendment refers to the Scottish forces. As I have said, while the detailed provisions have not yet been finalised, we intend to work closely with the police authorities and staff associations in drawing up the appropriate procedures and we are confident that this process will suffice to address the concerns which underlie the amendment. In the light of those assurances, I hope that the hon. Member for Warwickshire, North will withdraw the amendment.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: I am sure that the House will recognise that the Minister failed to deal with the anomaly regarding the inspector and the constable that I put to him. In addition, he was not prepared to give the assurance sought that persons who win their appeals will receive their costs.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 23

GRANTS BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Amendments made: No. 50, in page 15, line 40, after 'district' insert ', county borough'.

No. 51, in page 15, line 43, after 'district' insert ', county borough'.—*[Mr. Charles Wardle.]*

Clause 30

INITIAL FINANCING OF NEW POLICE AUTHORITIES

Amendment made: No. 43, in page 17, line 40, after 'incurred' insert '(or to be incurred)'.—*[Mr. Charles Wardle.]*

Clause 38

POLICE AREAS IN WALES: ALTERATIONS UNDER LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Amendment made: No. 52, in page 21, line 17, leave out from 'that' to 'is' in line 20 and insert 'no county or county borough'.—*[Mr. Charles Wardle.]*

Clause 46

CIVILIAN EMPLOYEES

Amendment made: No. 70, in page 23, line 43, leave out from 'force' to end of line 45.—*[Mr. Charles Wardle.]*

Clause 58

OTHER AMENDMENTS OF 1967 ACT

Amendments made: No. 34, in page 29, line 23, at end insert—

'(3A) In section 24 (effect of amalgamation scheme on constables engaged in service other than with their own force)—

(a) in subsection (1) for the words from "either" to "transferred force" there shall be substituted the words "a person is engaged in relevant service within the meaning of section 38A of this Act";

(b) in subsection (2) for the word "overseas" in each of the three places where it occurs there shall be substituted the word "relevant"; and

(c) in subsection (3), the words from "and the expression" onwards shall be omitted.'.

No. 35, in page 29, line 35, leave out from '(a)' to '; and' in line 38 and insert

'in subsection (3A), for the words "subsection (1) above" there shall be substituted the words "section 38A(3) of this Act".'.—*[Mr. Charles Wardle.]*

Schedule 2

SCHEDULES TO BE INSERTED IN POLICE ACT 1964: POLICE AUTHORITIES

Amendments made: No. 53, in page 56, line 1, after 'district' insert ', county borough'.

No. 45, in page 56, line 18, after 'paragraphs' insert '(and to the provisions of any order under section 3A(2) of this Act)'.

No. 54, in page 57, line 39, after 'district' insert ', county borough'.—*[Mr. Charles Wardle.]*

Schedule 4

APPLICATION TO POLICE AUTHORITIES OF ENACTMENTS RELATING TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Amendments made: No. 81, in page 65, line 26, leave out from beginning to end of line 30 and insert—

'(2) In sub-paragraph (1) of paragraph 6A after the words "joint authority", there shall be inserted the words "or a Police Authority established under section 3 of the Police Act 1964".'.—*[Mr. Michael.]*

No. 46, in page 70, line 41, after 'authority"' insert '(a)'.

No. 47, in page 70, line 43, at end insert ', and

(b) in paragraph (b) at the end there shall be added the words "or a police authority established under section 3 of the Police Act 1964,".'—*[Mr. Charles Wardle.]*

Schedule 5

POLICE: MINOR AND CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS

Amendments made: No. 24, in page 73, leave out lines 28 to 30 and insert—

'(2) In subsection (3A), for the words "subsection (1) above" there shall be substituted the words "section 53C(3) of this Act".'

No. 25, in page 75, leave out lines 3 to 17.

No. 26, in page 75, leave out lines 23 to 36 and insert—

'Pensions (Increase) Act 1971

19A. In Schedule 2 to the Pensions (Increase) Act 1971 (list of official pensions for the purposes of that Act), in paragraph 15, for sub-paragraph (b) there shall be substituted—

"(b) was engaged on service pursuant to an appointment under section 10 of the Overseas Development and Co-operation Act 1980, being service in respect of which section 53C of the Police Act 1964 or, as the case may be, section 38A of the Police (Scotland) Act 1967 had effect; or

(ba) was engaged on temporary service in accordance with section 15A(2) of the Police Act 1964 or section 12A(2) of the Police (Scotland) Act 1967; or".

Overseas Pensions Act 1973

19B. In section 2 of the Overseas Pensions Act 1973 (which makes provisions for superannuation schemes as respects certain overseas service), in subsection (2), for paragraph (d) there shall be substituted—

"(d) a person who is—

(i) a member of a police force engaged on relevant service within the meaning of section 53C(1)(a), (c) or (e) of the Police Act 1964 (service under section 15A of the Police Act 1964, under section 1(1) of the Police (Overseas Service) Act 1945 or pursuant to an appointment under section 10 of the Overseas Development and Co-operation Act 1980), or

(ii) a constable of a police force engaged on relevant service within the meaning of section 38A(1)(a), (c) or (e) of the Police (Scotland) Act 1967 (service under section 12A of that Act, section 1(1) of the Police (Overseas Service) Act 1945 or pursuant to an appointment under section 10 of the Overseas Development and Co-operation Act 1980),

and who is incapacitated or dies as a result of an injury sustained or disease contracted during that service;".

Police Pensions Act 1976

19C. In section 7 of the Police Pensions Act 1976 (payment of pensions and contributions), in subsection (2), for paragraph (b) there shall be substituted—

"(b) an officer engaged on service pursuant to an appointment under section 10 of the Overseas Development and Co-operation Act 1980;

(ba) a person engaged on temporary service in accordance with arrangements made under section 15A(2) of the Police Act 1964 or section 12A(2) of the Police (Scotland) Act 1967;

(bb) a person engaged on service in the Royal Ulster Constabulary, whose service is or was for the time being service in respect of which the provisions of section 53C of the Police Act 1964 or, as the case may be, section 38A of the Police (Scotland) Act 1967 have or had effect;".

19D.—(1) Section 11 of that Act (interpretation) shall be amended as follows.

(2) In subsection (1), for paragraph (a) there shall be substituted—

"(a) service as an officer pursuant to an appointment under section 10 of the Overseas Development and Co-operation Act 1980;

(aa) temporary service in accordance with arrangements made under section 15A(2) of the Police Act 1964 or section 12A(2) of the Police (Scotland) Act 1967;

(ab) service in the Royal Ulster Constabulary in respect of which the provisions of section 53C of the Police Act 1964 or, as the case may be, section 38A of the Police (Scotland) Act 1967 have effect;".

(3) In subsection (2)(b) after the words "subsection (1)" there shall be inserted "(aa), (ab),".

(4) In subsection (3)—

(a) in paragraph (b) after the words after the words "subsection (1)(a)," there shall be inserted "(aa), (ab),', and

(b) after the words "body in" there shall be inserted the words "or with".'—*[Mr. Charles Wardle.]*

New clause 23

PENSION ETC. OF JUSTICES' CHIEF EXECUTIVE, JUSTICES' CLERKS AND STAFF IN INNER LONDON AREA

'—(1) Schedule [*Continuing functions of Receiver for the Metropolitan Police District in relation to pensions etc. of court staff*] (which re-enacts certain provisions relating to the functions of the Receiver for the Metropolitan Police District with respect to pensions etc. of court staff) shall have effect.

(2) The Lord Chancellor may by order make provision with respect to pensions, allowances or gratuities payable to or in respect of inner London court staff, or any class of inner London court staff.

(3) An order under subsection (2) above may—

(a) itself make provision with respect to the pensions, allowances or gratuities which, subject to the fulfilment of such requirements and conditions as may be prescribed by the order, are to be or may be paid to or in respect of inner London court staff, or any class of inner London court staff, or

(b) provide that the civil service provisions are to have effect, with such modifications as may be prescribed by the order, in relation to the payment by such persons as may be so prescribed, out of such funds as may be so prescribed, of pensions, allowances and gratuities to or in respect of inner London court staff, or any class of inner London court staff.

(4) Without prejudice to the generality of subsections (2) and (3) above, an order under subsection (2)—

(a) may include all or any of the provisions referred to in paragraphs 1 to 11 of Schedule 3 to the Superannuation Act 1972, and

(b) may make different provision as respects different classes of persons and different circumstances.

(5) Paragraphs 1 to 11 of Schedule 3 to the Superannuation Act 1972 shall have effect, in their application for the purposes of this section, as if references to regulations were references to an order under this section and references to the Secretary of State were references to the Lord Chancellor.

(6) Subsections (3) and (4) of section 7 of the Superannuation Act 1972 (which relate to increases under the Pensions (Increase) Act 1971) shall have effect in relation to an order under subsection (2) above as they have effect in relation to regulations under that section.

(7) The Lord Chancellor may by order repeal or amend any of the relevant enactments, whether or not he makes provision under subsection (2) above.

(8) An order under subsection (2) or (7) above may make such consequential, transitional, incidental or supplemental provision (including provision amending or repealing any provision of this Act, the 1979 Act or any other enactment) as the Lord Chancellor thinks necessary or expedient.

(9) Before making an order under subsection (2) or (7) above the Lord Chancellor shall consult—

(a) the inner London magistrates' courts committee,

(b) such local authorities as appear to him to be concerned,

(c) the Receiver for the Metropolitan Police District, and

(d) such representatives of other persons likely to be affected by the proposed order as appear to him to be appropriate.

(10) An order under subsection (2) or (7) above shall be made by statutory instrument which shall be subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament.

(11) In this section—

"the civil service provisions" has the meaning given by section 15(1) of the Superannuation (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1967,

"inner London court staff" means the justices' chief executive employed by the inner London magistrates' courts committee, any justices' clerk for the inner London area and staff of the inner London magistrates' courts committee,

"the inner London magistrates' courts committee" means the magistrates' courts committee for an area consisting of or including the inner London area or, if there is no such committee, every magistrates' courts committee for any area which consists of or includes any part of the inner London area, and

"the relevant enactments" means—

(a) Schedule [*Continuing functions of Receiver for the Metropolitan Police District in relation to pensions etc. of court staff*] to this Act, and

(b) section 15 of the Superannuation (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1967 (superannuation of metropolitan civil staffs) so far as it relates to the persons mentioned in subsection (1)(a)(ii) of that section.'—*[Mr. John M. Taylor.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

The Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department (Mr. John M. Taylor): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss Government amendments Nos. 72 to 74.

Mr. Taylor: The inner London service of the magistrates is to be disengaged from the receiver of the Metropolitan police from April 1996. That move has the full support of the inner London service. These provisions are consequential upon that.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New clause 10

OUTER LONDON AREA

'After section 43 of the 1979 Act there shall be inserted—

"Part IV Outer London area

Strategic management of outer London area

43A.—(1) There shall be established for the purposes of this section a strategic management board consisting of the following members—

(a) one member chosen from amongst themselves by the elected members from the magistrates' courts committees for the outer London Boroughs,

(b) one representative chosen by itself of the London Boroughs Association, and

(c) one representative chosen by itself of the Association of London Authorities.

(2) The chairman of the board shall be chosen from amongst themselves by its members.

(3) The board may discharge its duties through such agents and sub-committees as it may see fit to appoint, whether or not those agents or the members of those sub-committees are members of the board.

(4) It shall be the duty of the board—

(a) to keep under consideration the strategic management of the outer London area as a whole by overseeing the management of the magistrates' courts by the magistrates' courts committees within the outer London area,

(b) to give advice and submit recommendations to any magistrates' courts committee within the outer London area concerning its use of resources and funds,

(c) to give advice and submit regular reports to the Lord Chancellor concerning the use of resources and funds by each of the magistrates' courts committees within the outer London area,

(d) to give advice and submit regular reports to the Lord Chancellor concerning the allocation of grants by him to the magistrates' courts committees within the outer London area, and

(e) to submit reports to the Lord Chancellor concerning the discharge of his duty under section 63(4) of the Police and Magistrates' Courts Act 1994 in so far as the discharge of that duty is relevant to the outer London area.".'. —*[Mr. Boateng.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss also amendment No. 6, in clause 63, page 32, line 30, at end insert

'about the making of an order under subsection (3) above and for the purposes of receiving from such magistrates, magistrates' courts committees and interested authorities proposals for the establishment of a strategic management board for the area to which the order relates comprising one representative from each existing magistrates' courts committee within the area to which the order relates.

(5A) Where the Lord Chancellor receives proposals under subsection (5) above an order shall not be made under subsection (3) above for the area for which proposals have been received until three years has elapsed since the establishment of such a board and the Lord Chancellor is satisfied that—

(a) the criterion specified in subsection (4) above has been fulfilled, and

(b) that the making of such an order would be more likely to fulfil the criterion specified in subsection (4) above than the continued operation of the strategic management board for the area to which the order relates.

(5B) For the purposes of subsection (5A) above it shall be the duty of a strategic management board—

(a) to keep under consideration the strategic management of the area to which the proposals relate by overseeing the management of the magistrates' courts by the magistrates' courts committees within that area;

(b) to give advice and to submit recommendations to any magistrates' courts committee within that area concerning its use of resources and funds;

(c) to give advice and to submit regular reports to the Lord Chancellor concerning the use of resources and funds by the magistrates' courts committees within that area;

(d) to give advice and submit regular reports to the Lord Chancellor concerning the allocation of grants by him to the magistrates' courts committees within that area; and

(e) to submit reports to the Lord Chancellor concerning the discharge of his duty under subsection (4) above.

(5C) A strategic management board may discharge its duties through such agents and sub-committees as it may see fit to appoint, whether or not those agents or the members of those sub-committees are members of that strategic management board.'.

Mr. Boateng: In Committee, the Minister chose to describe the magistrates and their courts, in a phrase which was as disingenuous from his lips as it was hackneyed, as the jewel in the crown of our criminal justice system. If that is the case—and we would not demur from that assessment—why do the Minister and the Government seek to replace the context of that jewel with a base metal? Why do they want, where they do not seek to cast away the jewel altogether, to replace it with a paste imitation?

When one examines the context in which we tabled the amendments and the new clause, one sees that it is designed to give the Lord Chancellor the power to ride roughshod over the needs and concerns of local justices and local communities affected by his decisions—

[Mr. Boateng]

decisions made in Whitehall, not on the ground where justice matters and where there is a wide cross-section of society which is the consumer of legal services. People care desperately about the independence of their local magistrates courts and their clerks, and the need to present local and accountable services to local communities.

Why do the Government persist in refusing to accept the obvious fact that they have not satisfied the House and the wider community which is concerned about our deliberations that there is a need for clause 63, which our amendments and new clause would address and improve? In Committee, we asked the Minister time and time again about the rationale for the amalgamations that he and his Government propose with regard to magistrates courts committees: how had they arrived at the figure of between 50 and 60, and on what basis had it been determined that it was necessary to amalgamate the magistrates courts committees? The answer that we received was none. We were not told where the waste was; there was no quantification of the waste.

We were not given any indication at all—let alone specific examples—of where the magistrates courts committees and their justices and clerks, and the administration of them, were falling down on the job. No explanation was forthcoming as to why clause 63 was necessary, save that—this is what was said—to date, no magistrates courts had come forward of their own volition with any proposals for the amalgamation of magistrates courts committees, and that that must mean that there is a need for reform and a change in the law. That does not follow.

The Minister has not satisfied the Committee, the House, the profession and local communities about the rationale for Government policy in this area, save one matter that is clear to all: the propelling influence behind all that the Minister does which subordinates the interests of justice and the interests of local communities. The one propelling concern is not that of the Lord Chancellor's Department, the Lord Chief Justice, the justices themselves, their clerks and the local communities but that of the Treasury.

The Minister can search among his notes for an example, as he will tonight. We wait to see whether any missive is passed down to someone who might do the Minister a service in order to establish an example—all we want is one example—of some waste, some inefficiency, or something which needs to be addressed by this draconian power. I cannot say that we will be satisfied, but at least we will have a response.

Mr. Michael Stephen (Shoreham): The hon. Gentleman will recall that a contrast was drawn in Committee between the small number of police authorities, through which efficient and effective police service is delivered, and the relatively extremely large number of magistrates courts areas. The implied question was why we needed so many magistrates courts areas. Would the hon. Gentleman care to explain why we need so many?

Mr. Boateng: It should not have escaped the attention of the hon. Member for Shoreham (Mr. Stephen) that there is a distinction to be made between police officers and justices of the peace. They have complementary but different roles. The onus is not on the Opposition to explain why there should be the same number of magistrates courts committees now as has been the case: it is on the Government to justify the measure that they have introduced. The hon. Gentleman should be more diligent in asking the Minister to explain the basis on which the decision to bring about the amalgamations has been made. The Minister has been asked time and time again. Apart from saying, "Well, they have not brought forward any proposals themselves," he has given us no response.

We had the argument in Committee and there is no point in rehearsing it here. By force of numbers, we lost. So we went away and reflected and we have come up with another proposal on Report. It is a modest proposal. It is far too modest for the taste of many of us, but we hope that if we make modest proposals there will be more chance of their being accepted by an all-too-modest Minister. That was our hope. We shall see what his response is.

We propose in new clause 10 and amendment No. 6 that the Lord Chancellor should be required, before he imposes an amalgamation, to allow the magistrates courts committees and the justices of the peace to make their own proposals. I cannot believe that there are many supporters among Conservative Members for imposed amalgamations of magistrates courts committees, because Conservative Members recognise—the hon. Member for Shoreham may be an exception—that there is strong local feeling about the committees. People feel that justices of the peace do rather a good job and have strong local ties. We are saying that the Government should give those justices of the peace, magistrates courts committees and the justices' clerks for whom they are responsible a chance to make their own proposals.

The Government should provide an opportunity to see whether the strategic management boards that we propose in the new clause and amendment, work and deliver the goods. Give them a chance. Give them three years. If they do not bring about the necessary changes where changes are necessary in terms of practice or economies of scale that might be possible through amalgamation of specific magistrates courts committees, other proposals could be considered. It is possible to see how the sharing of computer and other facilities might bring positive advantages to the consumer, and we are all for that. If the strategic management boards are capable of delivering the goods, there will be no need to enforce the amalgamation.

Mr. Stephen: May I renew the challenge that I made to the hon. Gentleman in Committee? Will he commit any future Labour Lord Chancellor, in the unlikely event that he and his hon. Friends ever again formed the Government and if the clause had been accepted without amendment, to repeal the clause and leave a Labour Lord Chancellor powerless to order any amalgamations if no voluntary proposals had been made by magistrates?

Mr. Boateng: My response to that challenge is that no one should be under any illusion about the fact that an incoming Labour Government will carry out a root-and-branch reform of the Lord Chancellor's Department with a view to replacing it with a Minister of Justice and altering fundamentally the role of the Lord Chancellor. Let me make that absolutely clear. That is my response to the hon. Member for Shoreham and I do not intend to give way to him again. Let our policy be understood once and for all. He must understand—

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): The rabbit is out of the hat.

9.30 pm

Mr. Boateng: The rabbit was let out of the hat in Committee. In fact, it was not even confined to a hat. The rabbit has been running amok for many years. That reform is part and parcel of our policy and, make no bones about it, we intend to implement it. When we do, we will have debates in the House in which the person responsible for legislation will answer questions from the few Conservative Members who will be left on the Opposition Benches. We will be only too happy to do something that the Lord Chancellor currently does not do—answer to this House, under your chairmanship, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Although we do not have the Lord Chancellor, we have got his valet and I will deal with him tonight.

We want to know from the Minister the basis upon which these propositions are brought forward. We want to know the basis upon which he opposes our modest proposal, which does no more than provide a statutory basis for what already exists in outer London. It proposes that the draconian powers that the Lord Chancellor seeks to draw unto himself in relation to the amalgamation of magistrates courts committees should be frozen until such time as it has been established that that which works in outer London, is seen to work and is seen to have the support of the Lord Chancellor's Department, is given an equal opportunity to work elsewhere in the jurisdiction.

Why should those magistrates courts committees in the constituencies of Conservative Members and of my hon. Friends face forced amalgamation without the opportunity to come forward with the same proposals as their outer London colleagues enjoy?

The Government have done that for outer London, so they can do it for the rest of the country and put it on a statutory basis. It is on that basis that we press our modest proposals. We wait, if not with bated breath, for a response from the Minister.

Mr. John M. Taylor: On behalf of the Lord Chancellor, my hon. Friends and valets everywhere, I should like to respond to the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng).

First, I must sound a salutary note to the House, one which we cannot escape or deny. When the now famous Le Vay scrutiny of the magistrates service reported in 1989, I am afraid that it said this of the service:

> "There is no coherent management structure for the service. It is impossible to locate clear management responsibility or accountability anywhere in the structure."

I am talking about the administrative side of the service, not about the judicial side—the extremely valuable role that magistrates play in our judicial system.

That lack of management, accountability and control is not a matter of no consequence; it is a matter of £350 million of taxpayers' money per annum. If anything goes wrong with that expenditure, or if it is thought not to be used wisely, there is no point in my getting up in this House or the Lord Chancellor getting up in another place to say, "I am sorry, but we have got no powers over this money. All we do is write out a cheque. We cannot cope with it if anything goes wrong." That is patently entirely unsatisfactory.

Mr. Boateng: Will the Minister give one example of something that has gone wrong? Will he identify one instance—

Mr. Taylor: Yes.

Mr. Boateng: Good. Will he identify one instance of the misappropriation or the misplacing of funds by a magistrates courts committee or its justices' clerk?

Mr. Taylor: I am very careful of the sub judice rules, and I have duties of care when matters are not concluded. I had better write to the hon. Gentleman, when I will tell him the jurisdiction and what we think.

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): Put it on the record.

Mr. Taylor: No, I shall not put it on the record now. There are times when it is imprudent to do so. I am describing the example, but I will not specify it. I give my word as a Member of this honourable House that I am aware of such a case, and I ask the House to take my word for it.

Sir Roger Moate (Faversham): My hon. Friend is suggesting that, because £350 million of taxpayers' money is at stake, we must have something called a coherent management structure. Some of us might be a bit sceptical about the benefits of introducing coherent management structures. Is it not the case that, through the cash limits exercised through his Department, my hon. Friend has absolute control over that expenditure? He does not need to amalgamate committees or have major reforms to impose strict financial discipline over the whole structure at present.

Mr. Taylor: My hon. Friend rightly refers to the formula—which, incidentally, is under review. But we are talking about accountability in the service for the administrative functions, as distinct from the judicial functions. At the moment, there is none. We need line management from the magistrates courts committees, which are the ultimate authority in the matter, through the justices' chief executive to the rest of staff on administrative matters. I shall not yield on that. It is clearly necessary, and my noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor and I are impotent to answer to the House on any criticisms of those areas.

Mr. Maclennan: The difficulty which some of us have had in accepting what the hon. Gentleman and the Lord Chancellor say is that they are drawing a distinction between the administrative function of the Lord Chancellor and the judicial function as though that were quite simply and easily done, and saying that by making changes in the administrative structure, one does not impinge upon the judicial function. That is plainly not true, and it is not a defensible distinction in those terms.

Mr. Taylor: I invite the hon. Gentleman to revisit clause 72, where the areas which are legally protected as independent are clearly set out. We shall come to those on a later amendment. The £350 million will not go away, and there is an accountability to Parliament and to the Public Accounts Committee. *[Interruption.]* The silent ones have asked me to move on, and it may be for the convenience of House if I do. *[Laughter.]* I know who is in charge around here.

[Mr. Taylor]

In the context of outer London, I want to tell the House about a letter which was received from Mr. Graham Chamberlain, the chairman of the outer London magistrates courts action group. A consultation was set up between the Department and the outer London group to achieve an outer London solution. The letter, sent in the middle of May, said:

"Dear Lord Chancellor, I am delighted to confirm to you personally that the Outer London Magistrates Courts Service has been unanimous in our acceptance of the proposals you sent to us at the beginning of May. Not only did the 20 MCCs accept, but also the 20 Justices' Clerks, the Greater London Association of Magisterial Officers, supported by AMO, nationally"—

and he might have included the local authority associations as well. The letter continued:

"Finally, may I thank you my Lord Chancellor for your patience and understanding during the past eight months. Your faith, which we shared, that we could achieve a mutual agreed solution, has been rewarded."

That is the position in outer London. The system is non-statutory, and that is its virtue. It is flexible and capable of review, and all sides wish to look at it in the context of review.

To try to transmit the system to the provinces beyond outer London is frankly barmy. If there was to be a strategic management body, there would have to be one representative from each magistrates courts committee on it. If two provincial magistrates courts committee areas wished to come together, the amendment would force them to have a strategic management board with two members —one from each area. It is mad, and I do not know who drew the plan up.

Mr. Maclennan: The House is impatient to conclude the debate, but I am conscious that when amalgamations start to roll individual hon. Members will be the first to cry out—and as many Members on the Government Benches as on the Opposition Benches will be raising objections about the use of the powers that the Lord Chancellor is taking.

The Minister places great reliance on what happened in outer London. That is how he should proceed if he wishes to bring about change—using existing powers. If changes are self-evidently needed, the Minister does not need draconian powers to force them through against the wishes of magistrates' authorities. He said that there had been no amalgamations during the present Lord Chancellor's tenure or even some time before that.

Mr. John M. Taylor: There have been no voluntary amalgamations in the 45 years since the powers were brought in.

Mr. Maclennan: I am not aware either that there has been any great pressure from the present Lord Chancellor or his Conservative predecessors to bring about amalgamations. That certainly has not been ventilated in this Chamber as a matter of high importance in the past. Had there been such a debate, we might have listened with much greater sympathy to arguments in favour of the draconian and unaccountable powers that the Lord Chancellor seeks to take upon himself.

The truth is that the noble and learned Lord and his office are a singular anomaly. He presides over a judicial system as the senior judge of the realm, and sits in the Cabinet as a political figure whose shots are called in many cases by the Treasury. We all know that the driving force behind the provision that the amendment seeks to alter is economy—it has nothing to do with the fair discharge of justice by magistrates. I am fond of the Lord Chancellor —he is a splendid man, but he came to politics having cut his teeth on other jobs, and he is finding it exceedingly difficult to deal with pressure from his Treasury colleagues. That is why we are faced with this abusive measure.

I hope that the amendment will be accepted. The Government would have done well to withdraw their proposals, so as not to need to bother with compromises of the kind ingeniously invented by the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng). In the absence of Government willingness to think again, the amendment should certainly have our support.

Sir Roger Moate: I speak more to expose the dilemma in which I and, I suspect, other hon. Members find ourselves than to offer a solution. My hon. Friend the Minister will not be surprised that I am totally sceptical about the Government's proposals, but I do not believe that the Opposition's solution of more strategic boards is attractive.

Perhaps some of us are to blame for the fact that we do not have before us proposals which would allow us to secure greater control for the House over undesirable streamlining of the voluntary system of local justice. I am sceptical about enforced amalgamations because they progressively undermine the precious concept of local justice. The smaller the courts and court committees, and the more local the magistrates, the better that system of justice works.

I fear that compulsory amalgamations will inevitably lead to compulsory closure of a large number of magistrates courts throughout the country. Anyone who has doubts about that should reflect on the words of my hon. Friend the Minister who spoke of the system of management which flows directly from the Lord Chancellor and controls the money right through the committees and down to the courts. Ultimately that power of management will bring pressure to close a large number of local magistrates courts. That is what it is about.

9.45 pm

The Government have been quite clear: there will be many amalgamations. We in Kent have nothing to fear because, according to the map that I have seen, there is no proposition to disturb the magistrates court committee in my county. Kent is a large county with a large committee. We have already seen the power that the Department and the Treasury have brought to bear on those committees by way of cash limitations, and that has resulted in the closure of local magistrates courts.

When there was a proposal for such a closure in my constituency there was no support from anywhere to resist it. That was a highly efficient small court doing a first-class job, but the power of money led to its closure. In many constituencies the consequence of what we are debating will be the closure of local courts. On the ground of efficiency one could probably just about justify that, but in the interests of justice I do not think that it can be justified. I say "just about" because I do not believe that we are really talking about large sums. The Minister cited a figure of £350 million, but 95 per cent. of cases which come to

court are dealt with by the unpaid magistracy. I suspect that that is the best bargain justice anywhere in the world. We get tremendous value for that £350 million.

When challenged, the Minister did not produce examples of wastage. Perhaps, quite rightly and circumspectly, he did not want to refer to individual cases, but if there were wholesale wastage he would have been able to tell us about it. I do not think that there is such waste. Therefore, forcing amalgamations and, ultimately, forcing the closure of local courthouses will not bring enormous economic gain to the country.

Mr. Stephen: Is my hon. Friend suggesting that we live in a world in which the resources available for the administration of justice are unlimited and that there may never be a strong argument for the amalgamation of magistrates courts in the national interest and over which the Lord Chancellor needs statutory power?

Sir Roger Moate: There is no evidence to suggest that that is necessary. If there is evidence of wastage and inefficiency and proof that we need such statutory powers, let us hear it. It is easy to develop theories about management, but the taking of powers should be justified and I have not seen any justification. When a court closure is proposed in my hon. Friend's constituency he might say, "I protest, I want to prevent this."

Mr. Stephen: We should always look at the national interest.

Sir Roger Moate: I suggest that my hon. Friend would have a legitimate local interest and would go to the rather large regional committee which is quite remote from his area. But he will be told, "I am sorry but we have cash limits imposed by our new, highly efficient chief executive who is operating the cash limits imposed by the Treasury."

I do not say that that is necessarily wrong, but I wish that the House could have the power to resist that trend and to help my hon. Friend and other hon. Members when they experience the undesirable closure of courthouses. It has started and it will continue. The Government are seeking to take a further power to undermine the sort of local justice which means a great deal to hon. Members and to local magistrates who serve unpaid and do sterling work.

I fear what we are doing: I think that we have got it wrong and I hope that there will be future opportunities to try to redress that. I do not think that the Opposition amendment helps us particularly in that respect, butI hope that we shall be able to find other opportunities in future to try to correct this error.

Mr. Boateng: There was nothing in the world to stop the hon. Member for Faversham (Sir R. Moate) from tabling his own amendments if he was so dissatisfied with ours. Perhaps the fact that he did not is an indication of his interest in these matters, but I am disappointed that we have not had the opportunity to consider his amendments.

I hope that the last two speeches had a soporific and desensitising effect on the Minister, who was becoming a little carried away earlier, and that he will answer the case that we have put in a rational way. What aspect of the current proposals for outer London involving a strategic management board makes such arrangements unsuitable for the rest of the country? They would deal with the two critical issues with which the Le Vay report was concerned —greater efficiency and better management.

The Lord Chancellor now has the power to ensure that the inspectorate is brought to bear on improving efficiency. He has the power to control the budget of the magistrates courts committee, to demand management information statistics and to call for reports on a whole range of issues. What further power does he seek? Why does he seek it? We still have not had answers to those questions.

We are not satisfied with the Minister's response. He throws up his hands in shock and horror, but he should not be surprised that we are not satisfied: that is one thing which ought not to surprise someone of his experience. He knows how things work. Oppositions tend not to be satisfied by Ministers' responses, and in this instance we have every reason not to be satisfied. The Minister's objections to these modest amendments are bunkum, and he knows it. We want to hear more, but in the interests of the House we shall not push the matter to a Division.

I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

Amendment made: No. 72, new schedule—*Continuing Functions of Receiver for the Metropolitan Police District in Relation to Pensions etc. of Court Staff*—

1. In this Schedule—

"court staff" has the same meaning as in section 59 of the 1979 Act,

"the inner London magistrates' courts committee" has the same meaning as in section [*Pensions etc. of justices' chief executive, justices' clerks and staff in inner London area*] of this Act,

"the Receiver" means the Receiver for the Metropolitan Police District, and

"responsible authority" has the same meaning as in section 55 of the 1979 Act.

2. The Receiver shall pay out of the metropolitan police fund any superannuation benefits payable in respect of justices' clerks and other officers employed by the committee of magistrates or the inner London magistrates' courts committee under any enactment or instrument applied to those clerks or other officers by regulations having effect in accordance with section 15(9) of the Superannuation (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1967, other than benefits payable by the London Residuary Body, and any superannuation contributions and other payments for which the inner London magistrates' courts committee may be liable as their employer under any such enactment or instrument.

3. Nothing in paragraph 2 above shall require the Receiver to incur any expenditure or make any payment which would cause the net cost to him in any year of the matters mentioned in paragraph 4 below to exceed the amount which, in relation to that year, is for the time being determined by the Lord Chancellor under paragraph 5(b) below.

4. The Lord Chancellor may out of money provided by Parliament pay to the Receiver grants towards the net cost to the Receiver in any year—

(a) of the Receiver's functions under paragraph 2 above, and

(b) of the Receiver's functions corresponding to those of responsible authorities under regulations made, or having effect as if made, under section 7 of the Superannuation Act 1972 with respect to court staff.

5. The amount of any grant under paragraph 4 above towards the net cost to the Receiver in any year of the matters mentioned in that paragraph shall not exceed 80 per cent of whichever of the following is the less, namely—

(a) that net cost, and

(b) the amount which, in relation to that year, is for the time being determined for the purposes of this paragraph by the Lord Chancellor.

6. In subsections (5), (6) and (7) of section 59 of the 1979 Act (grants by Lord Chancellor to responsible authorities)—

[Mr. Boateng]

(a) references to that section include references to this Schedule, and

(b) references to the matters mentioned in subsection (1) of that section include references to the matters mentioned in paragraph 4 above.'—*[Mr. John M. Taylor.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

Clause 63

ALTERATION OF MAGISTRATES' COURTS COMMITTEE AREAS

Amendments made: No. 77, in page 33, line 27, at end insert—

'(bb) a county borough council,'.

No. 78, in page 33, line 34, at end insert—

'(12) Until 1st April 1996, the definition of "unitary authority" in subsection (10) above shall have effect with the omission of paragraph (bb).'—*[Mr. John M. Taylor.]*

Clause 72

INDEPENDENCE OF JUSTICES' CLERK AND STAFF IN RELATION TO LEGAL FUNCTIONS

Mr. Boateng: I beg to move amendment No. 7, in page 39, line 42, after 'peace', insert 'or'.

We will be dividing the House on this amendment very shortly. It goes to the heart of our debates, dealing with a question that remains unaddressed by the Government—the independence of the judiciary, and the basis on which justices' clerks will be able and required to carry out their functions. Those functions, which lie at the heart of our justice system, are threatened by the Government's failure to produce an adequate safeguard for their independence.

The amendment seeks to make it clear in statute that there must be a guarantee of independence in relation to the three separate and important functions that a justices' clerk is called on to perform—the discharge of statutory duties, the giving of advice to the magistracy and the handling of individual cases. Those three essential elements must be protected. They were identified by the Lord Chief Justice and by a former Lord of Appeal in Ordinary, Lord Ackner, in the other place.

Those elements are threatened by a Government who, while introducing legislation that superimposes the powers of the Treasury on those of justices and their clerks, subordinate the interests of justice to those of the market and a Treasury determined to claw back the deficit created by the Government. As it stands, the legislation fails to preserve the necessary independence. There is nothing more important than that, and we shall return to the matter on Third Reading. There is nothing more important than the independence of the judiciary, and the independence of the justices' clerks in the context of the administration of justice.

We are not satisfied with the clause as it stands, we seek to strengthen it, and we shall divide the House in order to do so.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The amendment is interesting; it is called "or". The Opposition desire to put into clause 72, between the word "peace" and the word "in", the simple word "or". The very essence is or. The amendment sounds innocuous—[HON. MEMBERS: "He has not grasped it."] Yes, I have grasped it. It sounds innocuous, but I realise that it is not as disingenuous or innocent as it appears; actually, it is rather sinister.

Clause 72 deals with the independence of the justices' clerks and staff in relation to legal functions. As drafted, it specifies two important areas in which the justices' clerks are protected in the independence of their legal function. One, set out in subsection (2), consists of a catalogue of functions deriving from the Magistrates' Courts Act 1980. I shall not weary the House with that catalogue.

The other area of work in which the justices' clerks enjoy independence in their legal functions is in "giving advice to justices of the peace in an individual case". If the word "or" were inserted the provision would read:

"When exercising the functions specified in subsection (2) below or giving advice to justices of the peace or in an individual case".

We should then have made an extra category that is legally independent, and in which nothing can be said. The justices' clerk would have an inviolate aura round him and could not be instructed in any way.

In other words, we should have given legal independence and the ability to be clear of any instruction, in matters concerning the use of the car park—that is, legal independence concerning the use of the car park, and concerning security and accommodation arrangements, the stocking of the library and the location of the waste paper basket.

The amendment is misguided and, with its single word "or", it is a wrecking amendment. I reject it.

Mr. Boateng: The location of the waste paper basket is one thing that the Minister should know, because that is where he should put his whole rotten Bill. Upon that basis, and upon the basis of his woefully inadequate grasp of the amendment, we shall divide the House.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 258, Noes 291.

Division No. 285] **[9.58 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Church, Judith
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hodge, Margaret
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Bdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
MacShane, Denis
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
Olner, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Straw, Jack
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Timms, Stephen
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd

Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Jon Owen Jones and
Mr. Eric Illsley.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, Sir John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Rt Hon Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Andrew Mitchell.

Question accordingly negatived.

It being after Ten o'clock, further consideration of the Bill stood adjourned.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business),

That, at this day's sitting, the Police and Magistrates' Courts Bill [*Lords*] may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

Question agreed to.

As amended (in the Standing Committee), again considered.

Clause 76

ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR MAGISTRATES' COURTS

Amendments made: No. 79, in page 44, line 14, at end insert—

'(bb) a county borough council,'.

No. 80, in page 44, line 17, at end insert—

'(11) Until 1st April 1996, the definition of "unitary authority" in subsection (10) above shall have effect with the omission of paragraph (bb).'—*[Mr. Howard.]*

Schedule 7

MAGISTRATES' COURTS: MINOR AND CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS

Amendments made: No. 73, in page 86, line 20, at end insert—

'Superannuation (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1967

24A. In section 15 of the Superannuation (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1967 (superannuation of metropolitan civil staffs), in subsection (1)(a)(ii), for the words from "or other officer" to "that area" there shall be substituted the words ", as a justices' chief executive for that area or as staff of the magistrates' courts committee for that area".

Pensions (Increase) Act 1971

24B. In Schedule 2 to the Pensions (Increase) Act 1971 (list of official pensions for the purposes of that Act), in paragraph 47, at the end of paragraph (b) there shall be added the words—

"or as staff of such a committee; or

(c) service as a justices' chief executive."

24C. In Schedule 6 to that Act (employments relevant to section 13(2) of that Act), in paragraph (d) after the words "for that area" there shall be inserted the words "or by any magistrates' courts committee whose area includes all or part of that area".'

No. 74, in page 87, line 47, at end insert—

'Local Government Finance Act 1992

32. In section 46 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (special items for purposes of section 45), in subsection (2)(d) for the words from "the magistrates' courts" to "that area" there shall be substituted the words "the probation service in the inner London area or the functions referred to in paragraph 4 of Schedule [*Continuing functions of Receiver for the Metropolitan Police District in relation to pensions etc. of court staff*] to the Police and Magistrates' Courts Act 1994".'—*[Mr. Howard.]*

Clause 87

COMMENCEMENT AND TRANSITIONAL PROVISIONS

Amendments made: No. 71, in page 49, leave out lines 7 to 11 and insert—

'(3) The following provisions of this Act—

(a) section 3 and Schedule 2, so far as they relate to—

(i) the power to make orders under the section inserted by section 3, or

(ii) the power to make regulations under paragraph 11 of the Schedule entitled Schedule 1C set out in Schedule 2,

(b) sections [*Provision of advice and assistance to international organisations etc.*] and [*Provision of advice and assistance to international organisations etc. (Scotland).*],

(c) sections [*Police officers engaged on service outside their force*] and [*Constables engaged on service outside their force*], subsections (3A) and (6)(a) of section 58, and paragraphs 19A to 19D of Schedule 5, so far as they relate to service in accordance with arrangements made under section 15A(2) of the Police Act 1964 or section 12A(2) of the Police (Scotland) Act 1967, and

(d) section 41, so far as it relates to paragraphs 19A to 19D of Schedule 5,

shall come into force on the passing of this Act.'

No. 39, in page 49, line 22, after '1964' insert '("the new police authorities")'.

No. 40, in page 49, line 23, after 'supersede' insert '("the old police authorities")'.

No. 41, in page 49, line 23, after 'them' insert

', for the performance by the old police authorities, before the new police authorities come into existence, of functions prescribed by the order'.

No. 42, in page 49, line 25, leave out from 'application' to end of line 26 and insert

'in relation to them of provisions of this or any other Act or of any instrument);'.

No. 38, in page 49, line 27, leave out 'of property' and insert

'and apportionment of property, and for the transfer, apportionment and creation of'.

No. 75, in page 49, leave out line 38 and insert—

'(a) for the transfer and apportionment of property, and for the transfer, apportionment and creation of rights and liabilities;'.—*[Mr. Howard.]*

Schedule 8

REPEALS

Amendments made: No. 27, in page 88, line 20, at end insert—

'9 & 10 Geo. c. 17.	The Police (Overseas Service) Act 1945.	Section 2(1), (1A) and (2). Section 3(1) and (2).'

No. 28, in page 89, line 13, column 3, at end insert—

'Section 43(1) to (3). In section 43(5) the words "and "police regulations" " onwards.'

No. 29, in page 89, line 25, column 3, at end insert—

'In Schedule 9, the entry relating to The Police (Overseas Service) Act 1945.'

No. 36, in page 89, line 49, column 3 at end insert—

'In section 24(3) the words from "and the expression" onwards.'.

No. 37, in page 89, line 56, column 3 at end insert—

'Section 38(1) to (3). In section 38(5), the words from ""police regulations"" onwards.'

No. 30, in page 90, line 7, column 3, at end insert—

		'In Schedule 4, the entry relating to the Police (Overseas Service) Act 1945.'

No. 31, in page 90, column 3, leave out lines 15 to 19 and insert—

		'Section 2.'

No. 32, in page 90, line 38, at end insert—

'1976 c. 35.	The Police Pensions Act 1976.	In Schedule 2, paragraph 1, in paragraph 5 the words "43(1) and" and in paragraph 6 the words from "1948" to "in both".'

No. 33, in page 90, column 3, leave out line 42 and insert—

		'Section 11.'

No. 55, in page 93, line 43, at end insert—

'1994 c. 00.	The Local Government (Wales) Act 1994.	Section 24.'

No. 76, in page 94, line 4, column 3, leave out 'and 4' and insert ', 4, 7 and 11'.—*[Mr. Howard.]*

Order for Third Reading read.

10.12 pm

Mr. Howard: I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

We are delighted to welcome the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) to the debate. We know that he has been heavily preoccupied. We know that there have been many demands on his time. We know, in particular, that he has been obliged to spend many hours redrafting his policy document on tackling crime because his party's policy makers thought it inadequate. According to the *Independent on Sunday*, the Labour party's Equality Commission has asked for extra paragraphs to be inserted into the hon. Gentleman's document on crime prevention and racism. It also stressed:

"It is essential to make the point that crime does not only affect the poor but all sections of the community."

There we have it. The Labour party's spokesman on home affairs has to be told by his party's Equality Commission that crime affects all sections of the community. It is little wonder, then, that his party's opposition to the Bill, as to all our reforms, has been so utterly muddled.

The Bill's central objective is to strengthen the police in their fight against crime. It will lay the foundations for a police service that can enter the 21st century confident that it will remain the finest in the world. The Bill will provide for a service with improved organisation and effectiveness and one that is more accountable to the community that it serves. It will ensure that the 16,000 extra police officers and 16,000 extra civilians recruited to the service since the Government took office can be mobilised to the maximum possible effect. Above all, it will ensure that we get the best value for money for the £6 billion that taxpayers spend every year on the police service.

The attitude of the Labour party has been to seek to frustrate those objectives at every turn. Labour has not expressed an ounce of regret for its appalling history. In 1979, the police service was hopelessly undermanned, badly paid and on the verge of a strike. Labour local authorities and some Labour Members queued up to undermine the police at every turn, not least during the miners' strike, and have shown bitter hostility to every measure that we have taken since 1979 in the fight against crime. So much for Labour being tough on crime.

The Labour party, we are told, has finally seen the light—another general election, another defeat, another Opposition spokesman and a new policy. Let us take the hon. Member for Sedgefield at his word for a moment. Let us assume that he means what he says. He has been his party's home affairs spokesman for more than two years. Last month, he delivered the annual Police Foundation lecture—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. The Home Secretary has given us enough preamble; he should now return to Third Reading of the Bill.

Mr. Howard: The points that I am about to make are directly related to the Bill.

The thoughts that the hon. Member for Sedgefield uttered on that occasion are directly relevant to the attitude that the Labour party has taken to the Bill. He informed us:

"self respect can only come through respect for others."

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Can you tell us what clause the Home Secretary is addressing?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That was a point of order out of the back pocket: it meant nothing.

Mr. Howard: The Bill deals with the objectives that are to be set for the police, and these matters are highly and directly relevant to those objectives.

Most of us learned what the hon. Member for Sedgefield said the other day when we were in short trousers. The same applies to other things that he has said. For instance, he told us:

"the police are part of the community and they must work closely with the community to deal with crime."

I have yet to find anybody who disagrees with that. Next, he delved into a bit more detail:

"We need a Police Service that is close to the public, but has at its disposal the latest in modern technology."

I do not suppose that one hon. Member disagrees with any of those remarks.

As the hon. Member for Sedgefield delivers these banalities, he contrives to give the impression not only that he has discovered the ten commandments but that he personally received them from the Almighty. It is as though no one had spoken of community before him, no one had recognised the need for tough action on crime before he pretended to do so, and no one had called for partnership between the police and the public—which this Bill is all about—before he did.

The hon. Gentleman has even suggested:

"the right has disregarded the importance of creating a society of opportunity."

Where has he been for the past 15 years? Can he so totally have forgotten the part that he played in attempting to thwart the opportunities that the right has created?

During his first general election, the hon. Gentleman supported the abolition of the opportunity for council tenants to buy their own homes—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Hon. Members are setting a great example of law and order in the House tonight. The Secretary of State must return to Third Reading. I have already drawn his attention to the need to do so; I do not want to have to do so again.

Mr. Howard: I entirely understand why the Opposition are so sensitive about their history and about the history of the hon. Member for Sedgefield. I am—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The Chair is not sensitive: I am concerned about the debate. Once again, I tell the Secretary of State that he must confine his remarks to the Third Reading of the Bill.

Mr. Howard: I am directing my remarks to the Bill, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I do not suggest that you are sensitive, but—*[Interuption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is difficult for the Chair to know whether the Secretary of State is in order when there is so much noise in the Chamber.

Mr. Howard: I have no doubt, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we shall hear much more about the sensitivity of the Opposition to their history, and especially to the history of the hon. Member for Sedgefield. The truth is that they have nothing to offer, on policing or anything else. It is the Government who are tackling the real problems.

At present, the police service suffers, first, because there are too many detailed Home Office controls on their operations—controls on police numbers, controls on local capital projects and controls on allocations of budgets. The Bill will sweep away those controls.

Secondly, local communities do not have enough input into local policing priorities. The Bill will put that right. Local policing plans will be drawn up by the police authority in consultation with the chief constable. There will be a duty to consult local communities before that is done. The new plans will give local police commanders a clear focus for their efforts and the freedom to use their budgets to achieve their objectives.

Thirdly, there is a need to strengthen the accountability of local police forces to their local communities. The Bill will achieve that accountability. It is because I want to see greater accountability that the Bill will create strengthened police authorities, not just committees of the council but strong, free-standing organisations. Independent members —independent of the council and of the Home Secretary —will greatly add to the range of experience of the new authorities. As they will be local people, they will ensure, together with elected members, that local concerns are at the forefront of the authorities' workings.

If accountability is to operate, local communities will need to have some sense of how well their police authority and service are doing. Local priorities, important though they are, cannot provide a complete picture. Without national objectives, how can one force ever be compared with another? If that comparison cannot be made, how can local communities have a full sense of how effectively the local fight against crime is going? In time, national objectives will be an invaluable way of driving up standards throughout the police service to the level of the best.

If we are to reform any great public service—whether it is the police, the national health service or any other service—objectives need to be set for that service and there needs to be proper public accountability for the achievement of those objectives. The so-called Labour modernisers are apparently content, as we have seen during the passage of the Bill, for the producers of public services to monitor themselves, with no right for the public to be informed. The hon. Member for Sedgefield would not reform public services to make them better. He would merely say to those responsible for delivering those services, "Set your own targets, measure your own performance and don't bother to publish the results."

That is why the Opposition have no time for the practical reforms that are contained in the Bill. For all its talk of modernisation, the Labour party remains firmly stuck in the past. It attacks our proposals for police authorities but has no clear view of its own. It used to favour directly elected authorities, but now it says that it does not.

Does it favour strengthening the work of police authorities by giving them independent status? It cannot or will not say. Does it object to our proposals for national objectives for the police service, increasing detection rates for burglaries, maintaining or if possible improving detection rates for violent crimes, targeting crimes that are a particular problem locally, providing high visibility policing and responding promptly to emergency calls from the public? To which of these objectives do the Opposition object? Which objective does the Labour party find offensive? Which objective undermines good policing practice? The truth is that the Labour party has no answers. It offers only destructive opposition.

The Bill will strengthen the links between the public and the police. It will free the hands of police commanders and it will powerfully assist the police in the fight against crime. It is an important measure which needs to be passed, and I commend it to the House.

10.24 pm

Mr. Blair: This Bill has occupied many days of debate in Committee and I pay tribute to my hon. Friends and to the officials of the House for their hard work.

The Bill was savaged in the other place, it came back to us and it still has absolutely no support anywhere outside the Conservative party. It is not supported by the police, the magistrates or independent commentators.

Mr. Nick Hawkins (Blackpool, South): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Blair: No, I am sorry.

What is more, not only does the Bill fail to do what the Home Office and the Home Secretary have said, but it takes policing in the opposite direction to that in which we wish it to go. If the Home Secretary wants local community policing: the measures in the Bill do not simply fail to support that local community policing: they actually undermine it.

The Bill undermines local community policing in three ways. First, the composition of police authorities is to be changed so that central Government end up appointing key members of police authorities. That is a centralising measure. It has no support. It does not even have the support of many Conservative councillors—or at least the few who remain in local government.

Secondly, not only does the Bill centralise the authority and the composition of its members, but when the Home Secretary refers to the national objectives that he is going to set, the objection is not to setting objectives, but to him setting them rather than local people. The difference between the two of us is that, while the Home Secretary wants objectives to be set centrally by central Government, the police, the Opposition and virtually everyone else believe that they should be set by local people.

Mr. Hawkins: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Blair: No, I am not going to give way.

Thirdly, not only does the Bill centralise the composition of the police authorities and ensure that the objectives are to be taken over and set by the Secretary of State even when they are in conflict with local objectives, but it provides for a wholly new mechanism of amalgamating police authorities. Conservative Members should think very carefully before supporting a Bill which includes those provisions.

In virtually every other situation, and certainly in the law until now, where there has been an amalgamation of a police authority, it has been subjected to a proper public inquiry. The proposals will allow the wholesale amalgamation of police authorities without any element of public inquiry. While even minor property developments are to be subjected to a public inquiry in which views can be put, something as central to local communities as the status of their police authorities will be removed from the public inquiry process altogether. That is a centralising measure.

There were debates in Committee about the nature of amalgamations. Ministers tried to pretend that nothing was further from their minds than such a notion. In fact, the gloss to the provisions was given in a recent Conservative research department briefing.

Mr. Rod Richards (Clwyd, North-West): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Blair: No, I will not give way, as many other hon. Members wish to speak.

That research briefing stated that—*[Interruption.]* Conservative Members should listen to this as I am referring to a briefing from their own research department. The briefing states:

"There are no current plans to amalgamate police forces. Amalgamations will only happen when the time is right."

Many people in the police service and elsewhere believe that the time will be right when the Bill and its problems are out of the way. There will then be a wholesale amalgamation of the smaller police services. That will remove local policing further from local people when there is no evidence that it will create a more effective police service.

Not merely is policing to be centralised; the magistrates courts are to be centralised as well. Time and time again in Committee, the case was made against the wholesale amalgamation of magistrates courts areas, yet that is precisely what will happen in the Bill.

The Bill, which is a centralising measure opposed by everyone other than the Conservative party, is a wasted opportunity. When the previous settlements were formed in the Police Act 1964, it was preceded by a royal commission. It was discussed, debated and properly consulted on. Where amalgamations occurred, they occurred as a result of public agreement. This Bill has had no such commission and no such prior consultation. The representations that were made have been entirely ignored. Not one authoritative body consulted on these measures has agreed to them. In fact, the authoritative bodies disagree with them, yet they will go through.

Only today, the president of the Association of Chief Police Officers said that the review of the police core functions—which is an integral part of the Bill—could "end with us being forced to withdraw from the vital social services role which the public tell us they value so much."

If modern policing is about partnership, shared responsibility and local people having control over local services, the Bill runs against every aspect of local democracy which it is possible to contemplate. When we need that local partnership more than ever, the Bill will not improve the fight against crime. It will undermine the fight against crime. That is not the view simply of Labour Members; it is the view of the police as well.

Why could not the money that is to be wasted on this—the millions of pounds to be spent—be better spent on crime prevention measures locally? Why could it not be better spent on a drugs education programme for young people? Why could it not be better spent in the fight against crime?

The Bill is a measure of dogma. It is not supported by the people of this country, and it is not supported by those who admire our public services and our police. It has no support anywhere and should be rejected by the House.

10.31 pm

Mr. Miller: It was fascinating to serve on the Committee dealing with the Bill. Labour Members recognise that the role of the police and magistrates in our society is under attack as a result of the measures incorporated in the Bill. Both the police and magistrates hold a special place in our society, and it is with great regret that I share the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) about the dogma incorporated in these measures.

In all our proceedings, no progress has been made on flushing out what is clearly behind the Government's statements about the number of police forces which were launched by the previous Secretary of State, now Chancellor of the Exchequer. No one has denied that his office was responsible for floating the number of police forces and suggesting that we would have only half the present number. The previous Secretary of State's sticky fingers were on that, as they were on a number of other aspects of the proceedings. It is clear that he is still having an influence on what is going on.

In an earlier debate under the heading of local partnerships to promote crime prevention, great opportunities were missed. The Government failed to recognise the importance of police officers serving in our communities, working towards education and helping with crime prevention measures. When the Government failed to recognise the importance of our amendments relating to local partnership, they missed an ideal opportunity to raise the status of police officers working in such fields.

The rejection of those important amendments will make it more difficult for police officers in such categories of work to have their important activities recognised by the police authorities which they serve. There is no doubt that officers who work in exercises such as the one that took place a few weeks ago in my constituency under the general heading "Kidsafe" play a vital role in our society. It is important that the service of such officers is recognised. The Government's approach will undermine that.

We have dealt with matters relating to private security. The Minister referred to cowboys in the industry—a recognition that there are some cowboys in the industry. How on earth does the Minister expect to regulate cowboys

without introducing some proper regulation? If they are not members of proper organisations, how can he expect to control them?

The Minister said that access to criminal records for vetting purposes for employment was being reviewed. It is interesting that that is under review, yet local authorities have recently been told that they will not have access to such information when employing people to become engaged in activities in which young people are involved. There seems to be a certain amount of double standard in that. The review is under way, yet changes have already taken place and at the same time the Government put up a stone wall on private security licensing.

There is no question about the importance of local justices as the proper vehicle for summary justice in our society. The Home Secretary gloats over the comments about outer London, yet he failed to comment on the closures of local courts that have been forced on magistrates committees by the failure of his Department properly to fund some areas within our community. I referred to one such area in Committee. We have had no answer from the Government.

The Home Secretary has not referred to the pressures that currently impinge on our society to close local court offices. A public consultation is being held in my area on that matter at this very moment. There was no mention of that or of the important public service that the local court offices provide.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) said, the Lord Chancellor has all the powers he needs in terms of financial control. My goodness, he can exercise them now, let alone with the powers that would be vested in him by the Bill.

The hon. Member for Faversham (Sir R. Moate) is not in his place just now. He let the cat out of the bag because he referred to a map. It is interesting that Conservative Members have a map showing the future structure of magistrates committees, but that that information has not been made available to members of the Committee or Opposition Members. The House is entitled to see such a map if it exists. If it does not exist, perhaps it was merely in the mind of the hon. Member for Faversham.

In a great piece of theatre, one of the Ministers referred at length to the importance of the word "or". The Government's rejection of that particularly important word in the amendment moved by my hon. Friends gives the game away. It is clear that the Government are determined to centralise powers. They have no intention of allowing people in our communities to have control over the process of summary justice. Nor do they have any intention of allowing any exercise of control over the management of many of the other services connected with the committees.

In his diatribe, the Home Secretary said that our opposition—

Mr. Michael: My hon. Friend is flattering the right hon. and learned Gentleman.

Mr. Miller: That is true.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman said that our opposition to the Government's reforms was muddled. Had he spent just one minute in Committee, he would know that that is far from true. We attempted to have structured debates about the important issues, but, because of the dogma behind the Bill, the Government simply rejected all our proposals.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman concluded by referring to the envisaged changes in police numbers and capital budgets, and it is clear from his comments that the previous Home Secretary, in his new guise, will have his sticky fingers all over those budgets and their implications for police numbers. The Home Secretary said that the Bill is designed to liberate, but it will do no such thing. It gives more centralised powers to a centralising Government, who do not believe in giving people in our communities the freedom to make decisions that affect them. On that basis, the Bill must be rejected.

The Government have a disastrous record on crime prevention, and the Bill is yet another abysmal failure. I urge my hon. Friends to reject the Government's short-sighted attempt to centralise and undermine still further services that are so important to our communities.

10.40 pm

Mr. John Greenway: I had not intended to speak, but I cannot allow what we have heard from Opposition Members, in particular the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), to go unchallenged.

I appreciate that the hour is late and that the House is weary, but, frankly, the country is weary of the level of crime. Throughout tonight's debate and in Committee, the Opposition complained bitterly that the Government were doing nothing about crime. The Bill contains important reforms to help the police to tackle crime all the better, but all that the Opposition want to do is to deny the Government the opportunity to do something about crime and to strengthen the police service.

The hon. Member for Sedgefield argued that the Bill has no friends. I wish that he had attended the meeting of the Select Committee on Home Affairs just three weeks ago, when the head of the National Crime Intelligence Service gave evidence to our Committee during its inquiry into international organised crime, which is sweeping not just this country, but Europe and the western world. The hon. Gentleman would have heard that man say that too many forces exist and that we need national strategic objectives to fight crime. That is what the Bill provides.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary recognises his responsibility to take the lead in tackling crime. That is why it must be right to set a national objective for policing. Throughout the many months of debate on the Bill, the Opposition have sought to suggest that by setting such an objective the Home Secretary is undermining local policing. That is total rot. Local policing is about creating proper relations between communities and their local police. Police authorities do not achieve that. That is why the policing of a neighbourhood is never an issue at local council elections. The issue is what the Government are doing nationally about crime. That is why the Bill is so right in its provisions. We achieve local objectives and policing not through police authorities, but through the police liaison panels which were set up under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. We need to see more of those.

There is much more that I could say, but I have received a glare from the silent one in the Committee. I refer hon. Members to some of the things that were said in Committee which were recorded in the *Hansard* report. It is total bunk for the Opposition to suggest that we lost the

[Mr. John Greenway]

argument in the Committee. We certainly did not. We won the votes then, we will win them tonight and we will take the country with us in the fight against crime.

The Home Secretary was extremely modest in what he had to say tonight, because it would appear from what the hon. Member for Sedgefield said that my right hon. and learned Friend had no friends in the police service at all. The truth is that the chairman of the Police Federation has said that the Home Secretary's policies on law and order are more in tune with the Police Federation than those of any Home Secretary for 30 years. That is another good reason why the Bill should be supported.

10.45 pm

Mr. Maclennan: If the Home Secretary was modest, he has—in the words of Winston Churchill about Clement Attlee—much to be modest about.

The reality is that the Bill is the misbegotten progeny of the ill-fated report of Sir Patrick Sheehy. The scrapings of that report were mixed up and submitted to another place. They were mangled there, and have been brought to the House in an almost unrecognisable form. The Bill does nothing to tackle the problems of crime which preoccupy and concern so many of our citizens. The Government have failed to tackle crime throughout their 15 years of office, and throughout the tenure of more than five Home Secretaries. They change with such frequency that it is scarcely surprising that there is no consistency of purpose to be found in that Department.

The core reason for the Home Secretary bringing forward the Bill appears to be that he thinks that if he is to convince the public that he is doing something about crime, he must bring a fairly substantial piece of legislation before the House. We are asked to suspend our judgment about its contents and merely to recognise that there are lot of clauses before us, regardless of whether they are apposite to deal with the matter. When their provisions are called into question, it is treated as captious opposition.

The pity is that the Bill did not follow a proper in-depth analysis of the role of the police in society and the needs of modern policing. Such analysis has always preceded the major police Bills which we have had in the past. We did not have a royal commission report to consider. We had a report the evanescent effect of which will go down only as a reminder of how not to tackle the problems of the police.

The philosophy behind the Bill has never been concealed by the Home Secretary—not even tonight. The right hon. and learned Gentleman indicated that the reality was that he wants to control the police. He wants to draw into his own hands the authority to tell the police what to do. The most obnoxious aspect of the Bill is the provision that enables him to set national objectives. To defend that, as the right hon. Gentleman did tonight, in terms of its being impossible to judge the effectiveness of the police other than by conformity with those objectives, is to fail to recognise how policy is conducted most effectively on the ground and that the police are an institution admired throughout the world.

The political control that the Home Secretary seeks to exercise is democratically dangerous and ineffective in reducing crime. Local policing means much more than the hon Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) suggested. It means involving the local community with the police in the fight against crime. It means accepting the local community's targets as those of the local police in brace. It does not mean translating targets set by the Home Secretary into some kind of local priorities—quite the reverse.

There are crime problems common throughout the country, but we live in a highly diverse nation, with different problems in different parts. The problems of inner cities and drugs are not those experienced in constituencies such as mine. My constituency is not a crime-free zone, but to impose on my constituents—and the Bill deals with Scotland—the priorities considered appropriate for Liverpool, Rochdale or the London suburbs is simply nonsense. That is what national objectives are about.

We know that the national objectives trial has not been greeted with great enthusiasm or acclaim by the police. Despite national concern about drug-related crime, there has been issuance of that from the Home Office as a national priority. I suppose that next year we will hear from the Home Secretary that crimes related to drugs must be treated as national priority. That will be hailed as a great new initiative—just as in the past there were new initiatives such as dangerous driving Bills and other ad hockery presented as a fight against crime. The Bill is a cover for the vacuity of the Home Secretary's approach.

My second principal objection to the Bill's contents is the way in which the Home Secretary has tampered with the independence of police authorities. Public confidence in the police rests historically on their understanding that police authorities are local and not the creatures of Whitehall. The Home Secretary has tampered with that in a foolhardy fashion.

It is true that, in another place, some of the Home Secretary's worst excesses were stopped in their tracks by the Lords of Appeal in Ordinary and a number of former Home Secretaries, who have more sense that the right hon. and learned Gentleman. There remains, however, a flawed approach to the construction of police authorities.

The dangerously unhistorical approach to the amalgamation of police authorities demonstrates the Home Secretary's urge to control, politicise and answer demands relating not to the delivery of justice or the criminal justice system but to Treasury requirements. We heard constantly about value for money, but little about the merits of the criminal justice system.

I fear that the amalgamations will be pushed through —not as in the 1960s, when my noble Friend Lord Jenkins of Hillhead had responsibility for such matters. Far greater changes in the structure of the police force took place in 1966-67 than have been admitted by the Home Secretary. At that time, those great changes were not unacceptably held up by local public inquiries. Such inquiries took place, but the process of justice was not damaged and confidence in policing was retained. The locality of policing was strengthened and its effectiveness and efficiency were secured.

The Home Secretary is drawing the strings of power further into his hands. As a consequence, he will be held more directly responsible for future policing failures than is desirable for a Home Secretary. It will be said that his objectives have not worked, that they are wrong, and he will bring into contention matters that would be much better left for resolution at local level. He should have underpinned and not undermined the tripartite system, which is our police system's unique safeguard.

The final part of the Bill dealing with magistrates courts is also unloved, but it has been largely gutted by amendments in another place. Here again, there are dangerous centralising tendencies and a dangerous removal of democratic control, but not with an eye to strengthening our criminal justice system. Our magistrates system, which is cheap and efficient compared with the systems in other countries, and which is locally accountable, is being put at risk by Treasury pressure that the Lord Chancellor is quite unable to resist. It is being done in the name of spurious accountability. There has not been public criticism of our magistrates courts system to merit such changes.

People visit this country from all over the world to see how our magistrates courts system works and how local justice is delivered efficiently and effectively and gives value for money. This is a bad Bill and the House should have no hesitation in rejecting it.

10.57 pm

Ms Glenda Jackson (Hampstead and Highgate): Perhaps the Secretary of State's reluctance to speak about the Bill stems from the defeat visited upon his previous piece of legislation in the other place only this evening. I found particularly bewildering the reference to the accountability of police authorities to their local communities. That bewilderment stemmed from the fact that as a citizen of this great city and having the privilege to represent a London constituency, I found that in the Bill, as in other legislation, London has been denied an overall police authority.

In my constituency, crime has increased by 8 per cent., and a crime is committed every 20 minutes. We are to lose 22 police officers, there is to be a reorganisation of divisions, but there is nothing in the Bill to reassure me or my constituents that crime and criminal activity will be reduced.

It has been well established, not only in Committee but in the House, in debates on the seemingly unstoppable rise in crime, that the war will not be won if the only weapon that is sent in against the criminal is the police force. We will defeat crime only by the combined efforts of the police, local authorities and citizens. In my local authority area of Camden, there was a particularly successful example of that tripartite approach to defeating crime—Operation Welwyn. That was a perfect example of the way that efforts to defeat crime and criminals should be moving.

There is nothing in the Bill or in any other piece of legislation presented by the Secretary of State that enforces or reinforces the will of every law-abiding citizen—and, despite the crime figures, such people comprise the majority of our citizens—to harness themselves in concert with their local authorities and their police forces to defeat crime and criminals.

One of the main causes of concern in my constituency is fear of crime, particularly among women. The largest single group in my constituency are pensioners, and the majority of them are women. They are caused grave disquiet as much by the fear of crime as by the actual crimes that we know are being committed. They believe—and I believe—in the deterrent power of a uniform, but nothing in the Bill or in the plans that the Home Secretary has presented to the House leads me to believe that we shall have the deterrent provided by a policeman on the beat, now or in the future.

The hon. Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) spoke of police force numbers. It is possible to visit any part of London now and observe that, although there is indeed more than one police force, there is also an increase in the number of advertising hoardings announcing that estates, individual properties and commercial premises are being guarded by private security firms. If that is the path that the Home Secretary wishes policing to follow, it will be of little comfort to my constituents or the country as a whole.

The people who experience crime should be able to make an important contribution in regard to the way in which criminals are defeated and crime is prevented. Nothing in the Bill deals with crime prevention, although it must surely be an integral part of the defeat of criminals.

I know that many hon. Members wish to speak. Let me end by saying that my constituents are only too willing to support the police, greatly admire their local police and are well aware that an essential part of policing is not simply the catching of criminals but—as the police themselves say—the time, care and consideration that they can devote to victims of crime. They realise that the Bill will remove that aspect, and—most important of all—the essential, basic trust that is so vital if crime is to be defeated. That will be lost by the Bill, and I strongly urge all hon. Members to vote against it.

11.3 pm

Sir Ivan Lawrence (Burton): It was Mogadon man who forced me to my feet. I could not bear to hear the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) say that he resented the fact that a British Home Secretary might have more control over the powers of the police, given that his party wants to give more and more control to an international organisation in Brussels.

The hon. Gentleman also objected to the fact that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has refused to accede to a large number of the Sheehy proposals. I remember the hon. Gentleman's saying that he himself was against those proposals. No doubt he supported the slimming away of some of the fat in the middle of the police force: indeed, I think I recall his saying on some other occasion that he did. Yet that is in the Bill, and he is opposed to it.

The hon. Gentleman has not even been anywhere near Scotland in the past two years, although his constituency is there. If he had, he would have seen that in Scotland over the past two years the Government have brought down the rise in crime. It is beginning to fall in Scotland, as it has been falling in England over the past 12 months. There has been a 16 per cent. reduction in the number of burglaries in London; the figures for Manchester, Cambridgeshire and parts of Wales are 17 per cent., 26 per cent. and 27 per cent. respectively.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): Since when?

Sir Ivan Lawrence: The hon. Gentleman is not acquainted with the facts of law and order. He has not bothered to find out that for the last 12 months there has been a fall in crime. *[Interruption.]* Let me tell the hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott), who is shouting at me from a sedentary position, exactly why that has happened. It has happened because the police forces are

[Sir Ivan Lawrence]

freer now to target particular burglars, and because the courts have been sentencing and removing from circulation for longer periods those who have been targeted for burglary. As a result, burglary has fallen—and it has fallen because of the activities of the Government and the Home Secretary.

As for policing, when one considers what has gone wrong with law and order over the past few years, one sees that we have given more powers to the police and the courts, and more money for law and order. Everything that we have done has been dedicated to reducing the rise in crime, yet still it has not been effective. Until fairly recently, crime has risen and the police have been making fewer and fewer arrests.

What is the answer? Anybody with even the smallest connection with business will know that the problem was lack of organisation and lack of management. The Bill is all about improving the organisation and management of the police force, and freeing the chief constables—the local chiefs of police—so that they can deploy the money as they think fit to target the burglars and support the courts.

There has been a development almost in anticipation of the success that the Bill will have in freeing the police forces and giving more powers to the people who really matter—that is, the local policemen, in response to the local people. Under the provisions of the Bill, the business men whose shops are burgled and ram-raided, and the local householders, will be backed by the local police force. Almost in anticipation of that, in the past 12 months the police force has taken a grip on itself and responded to the promise that there would be legislation to give local police chiefs more power and freedom.

All that nonsense about the Government presiding over rising crime over the past year or so can be brushed to one side, because crime is falling.

Mr. Maclennan: No, it is not.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: If the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland goes to his constituency, he will find that crime is falling there, as it is everywhere else. If that is not happening, it may explain why that extraordinary constituency has for so long been represented by such an extraordinary Member of Parliament.

The hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) disappeared for a week or two to prepare his speech for this debate. He was sighted here, but he has now gone, no doubt to prepare his acceptance speech. But if—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I ruled earlier, when the Home Secretary was speaking, that I wanted to hear about the Third Reading of the Bill, not about personalities or individuals.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: I listened with great care to the Third Reading speech of the hon. Member for Sedgefield, and if that is the best that he can do, the Conservative party has nothing to worry about.

11.7 pm

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I venture to suggest that most Conservative Members who vote tonight will be unaware of one of the changes resulting from the Bill that will affect them in the conduct of their duties as Members of Parliament. I refer to the changes proposed to the revised powers of the Police Complaints Authority.

The authority was set up under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 to deal with investigations against police officers and matters referred by police officers, and to decide on disciplinary matters. I understand that it is now expressing grave concern about the practical effects of the proposal that misconduct procedures can be considered only when an officer might have committed a crime, or breached the codes of practice in such a way as to have a detrimental impact on a member of the public. That could result in behaviour that now breaches the police discipline code being dealt with in future as unsatisfactory performance.

When the allegation resulted from a complaint from a member of the public—many such cases go through our hands—such cases would be dealt with entirely by the police force concerned, with no involvement of the Police Complaints Authority. That has major implications for us as Members of this House because certainly some of us, during our time as hon. Members, have had to advise our constituents on how to seek address for the grievances which they have raised in our surgeries. We are seeing a change. The responsibility to carry out inquiries in many of those areas will move from the independent Police Complaints Authority to an internal police disciplinary procedure.

During 1993, the Police Complaints Authority considered 1,916 complaints alleging incivility by police officers. Since that is neither a criminal offence nor a breach of the codes of practice, such cases will in future be handled entirely by the police with no civilian oversight at all. Taking a more serious example, the authority dealt with 1,830 alleged failures of duty during 1993. Many of those did not constitute breaches of the codes of practice and would not, therefore, be considered as misconduct under the new system. However, they raise concerns about the grey area between clear-cut performance failures and acts of misconduct.

The Police Complaints Authority fully supports the objective of making police managers more clearly responsible for the performance of their officers. However, that aim must be balanced against the need to ensure that the public's complaints against police officers will be thoroughly and objectively investigated. That is why the authority was set up.

The standing of the Police Complaints Authority will be undermined if the public see that a number of their complaints are to be excluded from its considerations. That is why the Police Complaints Authority has consistently argued that there should be a right of review in such cases. Where a divisional commander, possibly after a limited initial inquiry, determines that a complaint from a member of the public is to be considered under the performance procedure, the authority proposes that the commander should write to the complainant, setting out his decision and explaining how the matter will be dealt with. He should also indicate that, if dissatisfied, the complainant would have, say, 21 days in which to exercise his right to have the police decision reviewed by the authority. Failure to respond will be taken as acquiescence in the force's decision. The only decision to be taken by the authority would be whether a complaint would be correctly regarded as one relating to performance or whether it should be dealt with as misconduct.

The authority already hears some criticism that the police power to determine whether to record a complaint undermines the independence of the system from the very outset. I had a complaint in my constituency in the case of a Mrs. Steele in Workington, which I did not believe had been dealt with correctly by the police. It should be the subject of the fullest possible inquiry, yet I cannot get it to be considered in the police complaints procedure. The existence of a review power in performance cases would provide reassurance against similar criticisms that the police could keep potentially serious complaints away from civilian oversight. However, in doing so, it would not interfere with the responsibility of police managers for the performance of their officers.

Confidence in the system of provision of information to the general public by the Police Complaints Authority depends largely on the authority's ability to explain the action that it has taken to ensure that a complaint has been thoroughly and impartially investigated. That ability is severely constrained by the impact of section 98 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, which makes it a criminal offence to disclose information about a case, except in a summary or other general statement made by the authority, which does not identify the person from whom the information was received or any person to whom it relates. The authority frequently has to tell complainants —our constituents—and their legal advisers, and Members of Parliament, that it cannot meet our reasonable requests for more information because of the requirements of section 98. That leaves the authority looking like a secretive body, unable to explain the strength of a case in public.

I believe that this matter should have been dealt with in the Bill. I understand that the legislation is to go on to the other place for further discussion. If so, I appeal to their Lordships to reconsider the issue, and the revised powers as they relate to the PCA. Unless they do so, I believe that Members of Parliament will find themselves embarrassed in their surgeries in the future.

11.15 pm

Mr. Mike O'Brien: I had not planned to speak in this debate, but the hon. Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) said something that must be answered. I have heard Conservative Members quote the chairman of the Police Federation, Mr. Richard Coyles, before, and the hon. Gentleman only half-quoted him.

Mr. Coyles's comment deserves to be put in context. That context is his strong opposition to this Bill. He would want me to place on record the fact that the Police Federation is not in the pocket of any political party; it is a non-partisan organisation, and it is certainly not in the pocket of the Home Secretary and party who brought us the Sheehy report, this Bill, and the review of police core functions.

In the past decade, crime and the fear of crime have increased right across the country. Burglaries in Warwickshire have trebled and car thefts there have quadrupled since 1979. In the face of all this, have the Government supported the police and enhanced their morale? No, they have not.

In the past two years, the police have faced three challenges from the Government. First, there was the Sheehy report, which sought to destroy the terms and conditions of most police officers. It aroused greater anger among them than anything this or any other Government have done in more than a century. The Government half backed down on the report, but the fag end of it remains in this Bill.

The second challenge came in the form of this Bill. The concern of the police and of their federation was that the Bill would centralise and politicise the police. The Police Federation and other police organisations conducted a lobbying campaign in another place to challenge the Bill's worst aspects. They feared that the Government's agenda was to implement the fag end of Sheehy, to prepare the ground for the amalgamation of constabularies, and to put Home Office placemen in police authorities—in short, to centralise and politicise the police. Fortunately, their Lordships amended some of the worst aspects of the Bill, but much remains that is dangerous and must be opposed.

The third challenge created for the police by the Government is still in process, for the Bill in some ways prepares the way for it. I refer to the Home Office review of the core functions of the police, scheduled to report by the end of the year. The general secretary of the Police Federation, Lyn Williams, not a man given to exaggeration —besides which his comments have been backed up by academic studies—believes that the review is likely to reduce the number of full-time police officers from the current 126,000 to 80,000 by the end of the decade—a drop of 46,000. That is why the Home Secretary will not have the federation or any police officer in his pocket.

The Bill should be rejected because it has more to do with dogma than with fighting crime. It undermines police morale. If the Home Secretary was really concerned to fight crime and boost police morale, why did he not listen to the police? Why did he reject police requests for changes to disciplinary rules? Why did he reject police requests for the regulation of private security organisations and the criminals who, on occasion, are infiltrating them and putting themselves forward to guard people's homes and factories? Why has he sought to undermine the role of the chief constable, about which the Police Federation and the Association of Chief Police Officers have expressed concern? If the Home Secretary supports the police, why did not he listen to them and ditch the Bill?

11.19 pm

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): It was with much sadness that I served on the Standing Committee. I do not think that the Government understand what they are doing, or, if they do, what they are doing is completely reprehensible. They do not understand the difference between a public service and a market decision. The Government's response to the problems of the police is to call in a private sector guru, Sir Patrick Sheehy, to analyse what is wrong, if there is anything wrong, and then to apply private sector nostrums.

I wonder how many visits Sir Patrick Sheehy has from people abroad wishing to listen to him. I doubt whether he has many. Yet the British police are visited by people from all over the world, seeking to understand what is so special about the British police system. It does not matter which part of the world one is talking about; there is a realisation that there is something worth learning from the public service element and the sense of community to be found in the British police. Sir Patrick Sheehy does not have visitors

[Mr. Tony Worthington]

from all over the world because British private industry is not admired in the way the the British police service is admired. That is true.

The total anti-local authority perspective of the Bill is also sad. Hon. Members on both sides of the House will be disappointed by the performance of certain local authorities. Some local authorities will not be so good as they could be. But when one talks of community, as hon. Members on both sides of the House have done during the Bill's passage, it is impossible to see any way in which the fulness, the richness and the overall quality of community can be fulfilled without local authorities being at the centre of it. The introduction of the private sector is about atomisation, individualisation and marketisation.

One needs to see the potential for developing community in a much fuller way. There is no doubt that such community development can come only with an improved local authority at its heart. If we and the the Home Office have learnt anything during the past few years it is that crime is too big and important for the police alone to cope with. It is the local community and the departments of the local authority that can tackle crime by preventing it.

The Government have not fully understood the sensitivity of what they are dealing with—the tripartite relationship between the chief constable, the local authority and the Government. For instance, the background literature from the Home Office said that the primary object of a police force is the prevention of crime. I doubt whether any hon. Member would quarrel with that. If crime does not occur, that is a total achievement. But when one sets national objectives, the primary objective of a police force is not the prevention of crime. The prevention of crime is the one thing that cannot be included in a performance target. One simply cannot measure the prevention of crime. It is impossible to measure whether it has occurred. Yet we are to have performance indicators.

Let us consider one of those performance indicators —the number of violent crimes detected per 100 officers. There is not a chief constable in the country who could not achieve a high rate of success against that measurement. It would be easy for a chief constable to find enough violent criminals to increase his figures. He would act like a world cup referee who has to give out yellow or red cards. Crimes figures are among the most creative and least natural statistics in the world. They are compiled each year using a complicated social process. Any chief constable who knows that he is being measured against the number of violent crimes detected in a year will achieve that target.

Finally, I wish to deal with how the Bill has been dealt with from a Scottish viewpoint. The Conservative party in Scotland is in dire straits and is now supported by 10 per cent. of the electorate. If the Government want to know why they are doing so badly—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The situation facing the Conservative party in Scotland has nothing to do with the Third Reading of the Bill.

Mr. Worthington: Part II of the Bill applies to Scotland, yet it has not been discussed and no policy documents have been issued. The Minister with responsibility for policing in Scotland has not made a public statement on why the changes are necessary. That is contemptuous.

The hon. and learned Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) spoke of the fall in crime in Scotland. That cannot have been achieved as a result of the Government's policies in Scotland, because no one knows what their policies are. The Minister responsible has not spoken for the past two years on crime in Scotland. I doubt whether the hon. and learned Member for Burton can even tell me who the Minister is. There is a vacuum here.

The partnership in Scotland between local authorities —the Scottish police Minister has now emerged—and the police force, which was called for by my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) but which this Bill will seek to break up, has begun to succeed. That is one of the reasons why I feel so sad about the introduction of the Bill.

11.27 pm

Mr. Boateng: This is a hapless and friendless Bill, which may explain why the Home Secretary has such a close affinity with it. He sees in it a kindred spirit. The danger is that the Bill is likely to be around considerably longer than he is.

That is why we heard from him what passed as a plea in mitigation—it could not be described as anything else. I know his past, and the criminal law was never one of his strong suits: planning, yes—crime, no. He would have done well to leave the plea in mitigation to someone else, not least because a lawyer who defends himself has a fool for a client, and that was never truer than in relation to the right hon. and learned Gentleman.

It is clear—*[Interruption.]* The Home Secretary misdirects himself as I have nothing to defend. It is he and the Government who have brought forward this monstrous Bill and he should be under no illusions. We are fighting it because it is a creature of dogma and a centralising measure, whether in relation to the Home Office or to the Lord Chancellor's Department. We are fighting the Bill because it is ineffective and will not aid the cause of crime prevention. It will not lead to one fewer crime being committed. It will not further the interests of justice, whether of the civil or criminal law. It will do nothing for the consumer of legal services. For these reasons, we are fighting the Bill.

The true nature of the Government's purpose in bringing forward the Bill was revealed by the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence). In a characteristically trenchant way—bullish he was in every respect—he gave the game away. The purpose is to impose business on the police and the magistracy. The so-called disciplines of the market are to be imposed on the administration of justice and on those who seek to ensure that crime is defeated and law and order upheld.

We say that the market has no place in that area, because the police are and should be a public service and because the magistracy seeks to serve the public. The Bill is hapless and friendless because they believe that it will do nothing to further the cause of justice. It will do nothing to further the cause of crime prevention. That is why we oppose it.

In Committee, the Government were prepared to make only one concession in respect of the magistracy. Only one amendment were they prepared to accept in that area. Interestingly enough, it was an amendment which sought to remove from the Bill the only reference to the Treasury.

That amendment they were prepared to accept. I can well understand why the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department was prepared to take that course. He must feel, as surely as the magistrates and the justices' clerks do, the Treasury incubus on his back. The magistrates and the justices' clerks know, just as Lord Justice Purchase knows, along with those in another place who rightly criticise the Bill, that it is the Treasury and not the interests of justice that predominates in the considerations that lie behind the measure.

The Lord Chancellor's Department has failed in its duty to uphold the interests of the citizen. The Home Office has failed in its duty to uphold the interests of the police and the citizen. That is why we shall oppose this measure root and branch, now and in the future.

11.33 pm

Mr. John M. Taylor: My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary is to be congratulated on the determination with which he and the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department have sustained the momentum of the vital police measures set out in the Bill. They are not least about priorities, performance, objectives, targets and achievements.

The hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Mr. Miller), in the context of the magistracy, talked about the indicative map as though it were secret. It was not secret —3,500 copies were printed and sent to the magistrates service.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) was robust, vivid and forceful, but I would not accuse the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) of any of those things. The hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng), who often produces more heat than light, tonight was incandescently obscure.

For my part of the Bill, I yield to no one in my admiration for the magistrates and their justice. For my part of the Bill, I seek only to improve the administration that supports them. I wish the Bill a Third Reading.

Question put, That the Bill be now read the Third time:—

The House divided: Ayes 293, Noes 253.

Division No. 286] **[11.34 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shr)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, Sir John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Moiyneaux, Rt Hon James
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Rt Hon Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth

Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Timothy Wood.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Church, Judith
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hodge, Margaret
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
MacShane, Denis
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
Olner, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*

Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Straw, Jack
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Timms, Stephen
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Eric Illsley and
Mr. John Cummings.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Bill read the Third time, and passed, with amendments.

Section 11 Funding (Bradford)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

11.47 pm

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): I am extremely pleased to introduce this short debate on section 11 funding in Bradford, which is of considerable concern not only to all Bradford Members but to hon. Members representing many parts of the United Kingdom. I am pleased that my hon. Friends the Members for Bradford, South (Mr. Sutcliffe) and for Bradford, North (Mr. Rooney) are both in their places.

I am sorry that the hon. Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller), who is ill, is unable to be here tonight. He asked me to read the following statement from him:

"Having visited schools in my constituency where up to 95 per cent. of the roll are of ethnic minority origin, I know how important this issue is, and that is why I was glad to have an opportunity of discussing it with the Minister for Inner Cities just a few weeks ago.

An understanding of English and an ability to use the language are vital prerequisites to the learning process. Any child who lacks those basic skills is bound to be at a serious disadvantage and to start losing time which can never be made up.

Our objective must be to ensure that every child starts his or her schooling with an ability to make the most of what it can offer. To that end more Section 11 money should perhaps be devoted to the pre-school sector and to working with parents who, in most cases, are very anxious to give their children a good start in life but who may be poorly equipped to do so.

All too evidently, the problems are here and now. Money spent today, if wisely used, will certainly be repaid in the future by cutting the cost of tomorrow's unemployment and tomorrow's social disadvantage.

I hope that Bradford will combine with Government to put together a bid within the context of the Single Regeneration Budget which, among other things, clearly addresses the problems which section 11 was intended to resolve, and which also provides good value for taxpayers' and Council Tax payers' money.

'Few challenges are of greater significance in terms of individual development and the future of our communities generally."

The fact that it is a matter of general concern is demonstrated by an early-day motion, which has been signed by more than 70 Members. As the hon. Member for Keighley said, the problem is here and now in Bradford. By the year 2000, one in every two pupils in schools in Bradford will be of ethnic minority origin. At present, nearly 82,000 pupils are on roll, 27 per cent. of ethnic minority origin.

The parents charter from the Secretary of State for Education recently flopped through all our letter boxes. It states:

"You have a right to a good education for your child. This means that you have a right to expect the school to do its best to make sure every child does as well as he or she possibly can.

The Government's education reforms are designed to support schools' and teachers' efforts to achieve that."

In Bradford, that means that some children need help to speak, write and understand English. That is essential if they are to meet the requirements and demands of the national curriculum. That, sadly, is not the case today.

Continuous monitoring of 20,000 ethnic minority pupils in Bradford suggests that, on leaving first schools aged nine, 27 per cent. of those pupils have still not achieved national curriculum level 2. That has an impact on subsequent achievement, because assessment records show that 59 per cent. of ethnic minority pupils entering upper schools, aged 13, have not yet achieved national

[Mr. Max Madden]

curriculum level 4. The proportion of Bradford students who do not achieve GCSE grade C or above is the highest in the country.

Bradford still has a number of pupils and students who arrive at school with no English. Of the September 1993 intake, there were 177 such children in first schools, 114 in our middle schools and 48 in our upper schools. Although most of our children are second generation, few have parents who were educated in Britain. There is a still a propensity for a spouse in an arranged marriage to come from overseas, often speaking little or no English. It is not surprising that those parents cannot teach their children English at home. Because of the number of parents who cannot speak English, there is a significant need for more adult literacy provision. I know that the Minister is concerned about that, and I hope that he will say something about it.

Nearly all our children in Bradford live in areas of high stress and social and economic deprivation. The need for literacy development to meet national averages is high. Many Asian children are bilingual and some as young as six, seven or eight are multilingual. Although they achieve such proficiency in languages, they are given little or no credit. If those same children spoke English, German, Italian or French, we would all say, "What clever children." They would win enormous recognition and credit. Because they speak Urdu, Punjabi or Pushto, little or no credit is given to them.

Given support, tuition and the support that section 11 offers to many schools in Bradford and in other parts of the United Kingdom, those children can be given the support and education that they not only deserve but to which their parents are entitled—not just through the parents charter but as taxpayers and council tax payers. That is, sadly, not the case today.

In November last year, the Home Office announced that section 11 funding would be transferred to the Department of the Environment and administered regionally through the single regeneration budget; popularly known as the SRB. Initial guidance indicated that section 11, a revenue-based grant, would not sit easily in the SRB which is largely a capital-based programme.

From April 1995, Bradford city council will no longer receive section 11 funding. To sustain its current level of service commitment, it will be required to identify more than £4 million against the context of further budget reductions. Bradford city council now employs 587 section 11 staff in 19 projects. The full effect of the £4.2 million budget reduction will be the loss of nearly 300 staff.

Every project faces serious staff reductions, and community-based projects will be devastated. Those projects currently employ 121 staff, of whom 82 are on fixed-term and sessional contracts. In school-based projects, 320 teachers and other staff are employed, of whom 142 are on fixed-term contracts. Of all the projects, the most dramatic impact will be felt in nursery and first schools where 47 per cent., or 91 staff, are on fixed-term contracts.

I wish to end—my hon. Friends the Members for Bradford, North and for Bradford, South wish to intervene briefly—by asking the Minister a number of questions. First, I should be grateful to know whether he is in principle prepared to meet with an all-party delegation to discuss the problems which I have been outlining this evening. I requested such a meeting some time ago.

Secondly, will the Government consider extending section 11 for another two years, administered by the Home Office, to assist places such as Bradford which were advised by the Home Office to submit three-year section 11 bids which end next April? A number of metropolitan districts which submitted five-year bids will be able to bid for SRB allocations, and that strikes many of us as extremely unfair and anomalous.

Alternatively, if my suggestion to the Minister is unacceptable, will the Government consider grants for education purposes available through the SRB being administered by the Home Office and the Department for Education? If the Government decide that section 11-type initiatives are to remain within the SRB, that would need to be earmarked within the budget so that there are clear criteria distinguishing capital and revenue grants.

Finally, recognising the importance of section 11 funding in places such as Bradford, will the Government provide additional resources to support section 11 work in schools, either through the SRB or in some other way? The hon. Member for Keighley mentioned in his statement that he recently met the Minister for Housing, Inner Cities and Construction. It is interesting to note that the Minister, when replying to a debate on housing and urban regeneration and referring to section 11 and to my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South whom he had met recently, said:

"We do understand the issue and we will do what we can to find a way through."—[*Official Report*, 29 June 1994; Vol. 245, c. 909.]

That admission is interesting, and I hope very much that, when the Minister of State replies, he will be able to give some indication of what thinking is going on in Whitehall. The matter is presided over by three Departments, and there seem to be major internal contradictions in the policy that is emerging. I hope that those contradictions can be resolved, because the victims of them are many thousands of children throughout the country who deserve the best education that we can provide. I hope that ways will quickly be found of ensuring that those resources find their way to the children of this country.

11.59 pm

Mr. Gerry Sutcliffe (Bradford, South): There is cross-party recognition that the loss of section 11 funding is turning the Government's policies on their head. Section 11 funding has been successful in respect of nursery education. This evening, we are concentrating on Bradford because it suffered the double blow of losing SSA support for ethnicity. Funding must be continued. Bradford's bid was reduced from five years to three, and the loss of SSA meant a cut of £18.3 million.

Initiatives such as city challenge and the urban programme were the result of problems in inner-city areas. We do not want to return to the days of a lack of funding to provide equality of opportunity.

Over the past three years, Bradford has provided £4.2 million from mainline funding to support section 11 programmes, but it cannot continue to do so after an SSA cut of £18.3 million. The Government must concentrate on what they are trying to achieve. If that is not done, they will create problems and defeat their own projects.

As a minimum, section 11 funding of earmarked schemes must be protected for at least a further two years, making five years. If that cannot be done, the Government must acknowledge the need to do something. In areas such as Bradford and most other metropolitan authorities, there must be greater concentration on section 11-type schemes to support people in dramatic need.

12.2 am

Mr. Terry Rooney (Bradford, North): Two years ago, together with my hon Friend the Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) and our late hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South, I had a meeting with Home Office and Education Ministers about the future of section 11. Strong advice from the Home Office meant that bids were for only three years—with the promise of close co-operation and advice, to assist the authority when projects came up for renewal. The single regeneration budget came as a bombshell after all the promises that we were given.

One problem is that Bradford has never had a race riot. If it had been otherwise, large sums of money might have followed, as happened with Bristol, Toxteth and Brixton. Fortunately, we have never had such happenings, and part of the reason for that is the extensive and profitable use of section 11 funds in the youth service and in further education. I know that the Minister is sympathetic to our case, and I hope that we shall hear some good news.

12.3 am

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Peter Lloyd): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) for raising the subject and for speaking so knowledgeably about the good work that is carried out under section 11, especially in Bradford, and about the continuing need there for instruction and practice in English for those members of the community, especially the younger members, for whom English is not the first language.

I am also grateful to the hon. Member for Bradford, West for bringing the message from my hon Friend the Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller). I am glad that the hon. Members for Bradford, South (Mr. Sutcliffe) and for Bradford, North (Mr. Rooney) stayed to add their voices to the debate.

I regret that this year's reduction in section 11 funding was necessary in the overall Exchequer retrenchment, but we should acknowledge that, during the late 1980s and early 1990s, the grant was rapidly increased and reached high levels in recent years. Even at the reduced level of £110 million, the amount provided under section 11 compares favourably with the £33 million that was made available in 1979-80, and the £88 million paid out in 1988-89.

As soon as I was aware that it would not be possible to sustain the grant at the level to which it had risen, I got my Department to write to local education authorities to give them some 16 months' notice, so that they could have the maximum time for the difficult task of planning how best to manage the reduction. Following that and the result of extensive consultation with local authorities and their associations, we also changed the basis on which the grant was distributed, using a straight cash grant allocation to each local authority rather than distributing funding as a percentage of the cost of each approved project. That was because that method meant that funding would be lost if local authorities were unable to increase their contribution to each project.

I am glad to say that more than 60 per cent. of LEAs that have reported their decisions to us plan to make up the shortfall and keep all existing projects going. We have yet to hear from 23 per cent. of LEAs, but I am glad that Bradford is among those that have been able to maintain section 11 spending this year. At £4.2 million, Bradford still has the third largest section 11 grant in the country.

The hon. Members for Bradford, West, for Bradford, South and for Bradford, North also expressed particular concern about the absorption of Bradford's section 11 money into the single regeneration budget. I can understand that that worry is heightened by their knowledge that Bradford's projects are all three-year ones and are due to end this year. Responsibility for the SRB to which section 11 is being transferred lies not with the Home Office but with the Department of the Environment.

My right hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Inner Cities and Construction met the hon. Member for Bradford, South and my hon. Friend the Member for Keighley, together with representatives of ethnic groups in Bradford, to discuss these issues last month. My right hon. Friend tells me that he found the meeting useful. The hon. Member for Bradford, West has asked to see me and a ministerial colleague from the Department for Education with other hon. Members to discuss these issues. I shall endeavour to arrange such a meeting before the recess, so that we can look more broadly at the issues.

Although responsibility for the SRB does not lie with the Home Office, I should like to make some observations. The SRB conforms to the kind of integrated model recommended by a large number of independent organisations—the local authority associations and many voluntary organisations as well as the Audit Commission and the National Audit Office. This new arrangement marks the end of what the Audit Commission has referred to as

"a patchwork quilt of complexity and idiosyncrasies".

It is surely sensible to have regeneration programmes put together as near as possible to the areas benefiting and at a point where local organisations can most effectively bring their own ideas and priorities to bear.

The management of the budget through the 10 Government offices for the regions will ensure the involvement of people who are much closer to the concerns of local communities and better equipped to form judgments on local needs than are Whitehall Departments. It is an essential ingredient of the whole initiative that resources should be allocated on the basis of local perceptions of need and not just according to the priorities that are set nationally.

The hon. Members for Bradford, West, for Bradford, North and for Bradford, South painted a clear picture of the position in Bradford. From my knowledge, it is similar in many respects to the situation in many other parts of the country with substantial ethnic minority populations. But Bradford also has its own heritage, characteristics, circumstances and needs which deserve, and have, to be identified and addressed in their own individual fashion. Decisions about Bradford should be reached on the basis of those, not some general blueprint.

The hon. Member for Bradford, West asked for section 11-type projects to be ring-fenced or "earmarked" to ensure their protection. I am afraid that ring fencing would

[Mr. Peter Lloyd]

undermine the very purpose of the SRB, which allows local organisations the greatest flexibility in how they bid for and spend money from central Government.

The opportunity is there for local authorities, training and enterprise councils and others—in Bradford and elsewhere—to submit applications under the SRB for funds to meet the particular needs of their areas. Most promisingly, in view of the hon. Gentlemen's concerns, the SRB means that initiatives aimed at ethnic minorities can be considered in the context of wider regeneration programmes. Members of ethnic minorities should no longer feel that they are being treated differently, or being marginalised, as some have certainly felt they were in relation to existing programmes.

As sponsor Minister for three city challenge programmes in the west midlands, I have seen the achievements that are possible through local authorities, TECs, the private sector and voluntary organisations working closely in partnership—achievements which I suspect would not have been possible otherwise. Something else that I have learnt from my experience as a sponsor Minister is that education, and training in English for those who do not speak it—especially those just entering education—is soon identified as a key priority for those who wish to regenerate parts of our urban areas containing minority communities who do not speak English as a first language.

Nevertheless, I have heard anxieties voiced by some groups—which lay behind all that the hon. Gentlemen said—that large regeneration programmes such as the SRB, or to a lesser extent city challenge, tend to target economic revival and regeneration over and above all other aspects. However, if economic regeneration is to be possible and local people are to be adequately trained for the employment opportunities that regeneration will create, it is vital for them to be able to speak English and have sufficient command of it to take up those opportunities in training and in work.

In that way, many city challenge projects have realised the importance of investing in education as a vital part of their overall programme. If they think through their priorities sensibly, the regional offices and those bidding for funds will realise the key role that education plays in urban regeneration, and will see the need to target their bids accordingly.

The Home Office is emphatically not bowing out of the process, although we do not have departmental responsibility for it. We remain the Department responsible for promoting the interests of the ethnic minority communities. For the first time, senior Home Office officials will be based in each of the Government regional offices; they will pay particularly close attention to the way in which bids and programmes are being designed, and the impact that they will have on the communities concerned.

Most important, all projects will be monitored after implementation to ensure that the benefits that this expenditure brings have reached the ethnic minorities, and the other communities and groups that are most in need. Such monitoring is vital. It will apply to all SRB initiatives, not just to those that are recognisable as the kind hitherto funded under programmes such as section 11. That will create a substantial opportunity to ensure that, in future, the ethnic minorities benefit more fully from a wider range of Government spending than they have in the past.

We are certainly aware in the Home Office—and, I believe, in the regional offices—of the particular issue relating to section 11 funding in Bradford to which the hon. Member for Bradford, West and his hon. Friends have referred. The SRB is intended to support a wide range of local regeneration activity, and to encourage locally devised and implemented initiatives. It would be wrong for the Government to predetermine the outcome of any of the bids, but I believe that the outcome of the bids can be more effectively targeted than Opposition Members may think, on the areas on which they would like them to focus

Matters are still at an early stage. Potential applicants have been invited to let the regional government office have an outline of their proposals as a basis for dialogue and negotiation; I understand that Bradford has sent its outline proposals to the Yorkshire and Humberside office. The regional offices are currently considering the draft bids that they have received, and have been getting in touch with potential applicants to discuss them—although I understand that the Yorkshire and Humberside office has not yet had such a feedback meeting with Bradford.

Much further work will then need to be done before 7 September, the closing date for applications. At that stage, when it has been possible to consider proposed initiatives in greater detail, and with the necessary flesh on the skeleton outline, it will be for the Government offices to make properly informed recommendations to Ministers about the bids on the table.

I am glad to have had the opportunity provided by the hon. Member for Bradford, West to develop some thoughts on that crucial subject, and I look forward to meeting him and other colleagues in the near future to consider the matter a little more fully.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at fifteen minutes past Twelve midnight.

House of Commons

Wednesday 6 July 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

CROYDON TRAMLINK BILL [*Lords*]
Considered; to be read the Third time.

LONDON LOCAL AUTHORITIES BILL [*Lords*]
Considered; amendments agreed to.
To be read the Third time.

Oral Answers to Questions

SCOTLAND

Water

1. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of the new water authority board members will be councillors.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Sir Hector Monro): There will be a significant number of elected councillors among the membership of the new water and sewerage authorities. Further decisions on appointments have not yet been taken.

Mr. Dunnachie: I thank the Minister for his reply. The Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), wrote the Minister a letter some time ago expressing the anxieties of Eastwood district council about the lack of elected membership on the governing bodies of the water boards. The Minister's reply was terse, to say the least. He told the Under-Secretary of State that it would be wrong to put elected members in a position of power on the water boards in case they went against Government policy, inasmuch as the Minister thought that elected members were not the representatives of the people and that local people should be represented on the boards by those with money, companies and so forth—not ordinary elected members, but lackeys whom the Minister would pick—

Madam Speaker: Order. I hope that a question will come my way soon, instead of a statement. Perhaps the Minister can attempt an answer.

Sir Hector Monro: I think that the hon. Gentleman was paraphrasing a rather good letter. I can assure the House, as I have done before, both in the Chamber and in Committee, that there will be a significant number of local elected councillors on the water authorities. They will be there for their blend of skills and experience and perhaps because of their previous work with water authorities and local authorities. After we have consulted and the Bill has been enacted, I think that Opposition Members will be very pleased with the results.

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: For the benefit of Opposition Members, will my hon. Friend take this opportunity to say clearly and slowly, if possible in words of one syllable, that under his plans water will not be privatised but will remain in public hands, that that is enshrined in law, that there can be no disconnections, and that local elected councillors will be on the boards? Will he also confirm that, regardless of what system is in place, water bills in Scotland will have to rise, due to the investment required?

Sir Hector Monro: Yes, yes, yes, yes and yes. I thank my hon. Friend very much for putting his question so concisely.

Madam Speaker: A splendid response.

Mrs. Ray Michie: What guarantee can the Minister give that the large rural areas of Scotland will be represented on the water quangos? For example, will Orkney and Shetland have any representation in the Northern water area, will Argyll and Bute have any in the Western area, and will Dumfries and Galloway have any in the Eastern area? There is a real anxiety that some of the smaller unitary authorities could end up with no representation at all.

Sir Hector Monro: There is always anxiety in any world where change is envisaged. I assure the hon. Lady that this change will be very much for the better. All areas will have reasonable representation, not only on the water authorities, but on the councils that we are appointing.

Mr. Salmond: Has the Minister had time to look at the *Which?* report on English private water companies, which states that while costs and profits of water companies south of the border have increased by 70 per cent. water costs to consumers have doubled? Indeed, it says that the only things rising faster than the exorbitant cost of water south of the border are the extravagant salaries of the chief executives of water companies. Given the disaster that is unfolding south of the border, is that not an argument for keeping Scottish water under local democratic control?

Sir Hector Monro: The answer to the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question is no. On the second part, the hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well, having read the Committee's deliberations, that the authorities that we have set up are public authorities, the members of which are appointed by the Secretary of State and are democratically responsible to him. I think that all will be well and that we shall get on with doing what is required —improving the water and sewerage services in Scotland as soon as possible.

Mr. George Robertson: The Minister will recall that in March this year, 97 per cent. of the people of Strathclyde region rejected the Government's proposals for putting water into the hands of quangos. Last Thursday, more than 97 per cent. of the people of Monklands, East rejected the Government and their policies as well, giving the Government their worst election result in any parliamentary by-election or election since 1918 when the universal franchise came in. Does the Minister realise that one of the factors contributing to that is the Government's Marie

Antoinette approach to Scottish water? The people of Scotland are clearly saying to the Government that they want water in the hands of local elected people and that unless the Government do that they will continue to be humiliated and punished by the people whom they deny.

Sir Hector Monro: Even by the hon. Gentleman's own standards, that is about as far away from the question on the Order Paper as he could possibly get. After all that has happened in the past three weeks, I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman should have raised the subject of Monklands at all. I should have thought that he would go into purdah and shut up for the next couple of years, and see just how much work his party has to do to bring democratic government back into local government in Scotland.

Outdoor Education Centres

2. **Mr. Jamieson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received regarding safety at outdoor education centres.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): My right hon. Friend has received no recent representations on safety at outdoor education centres. He is, however, fully aware of the action that has followed the canoeing tragedy in Lyme Bay, Dorset. In particular, the Government's response to that incident—including new guidance on safety at outdoor activity centres—extends to Scotland.

Mr. Jamieson: Is the Minister aware that every year thousands of children in Scotland attend outdoor education centres and undertake potentially hazardous activities? What guidelines have been given to schools in Scotland and what measures have been taken to accredit and inspect the centres to ensure that children's lives are not put at risk?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am aware of the hon. Gentleman's concerns. I can confirm that guidance is likely to be published in the late summer and is intended to supplement the existing guidance, "Safety in Outdoor Education," which was published in 1989.

The hon. Gentleman will be pleased to learn that there are reports this morning that Grampian regional council has issued its own guidance to keep it up to date. I am very pleased that it has done that, and I am sure that it will be of value to schools in the region. I hope that other local authorities will do that as well. We do not want an excess of guidance, but we will ensure that the best possible guidance is put in place. The Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), is pursuing a campaign of safety in relation to mountaineering and hill and mountain safety.

Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill

3. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his latest estimate of the extra cost to be incurred by Government sources as a result of alterations in the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill between the Bill as presented at First Reading and its current state.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Allan Stewart): The Government have incurred no significant costs as a result of alterations made to the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill since its introduction.

Mr. Dalyell: In the light of the Rowntree study, which showed that the economies of scale in education would be disaggregated, are the Government quite certain that there will be no increase in service delivery costs?

Mr. Stewart: I have made the figures absolutely clear, and the changes that the Government have made since the introduction have been widely welcomed. I quote the views of West Lothian district council in the hon. Gentleman's constituency:

> "The new structure of local government must combine democracy and efficiency. A new West Lothian Council would strike exactly the right balance. It would also lend itself to a quick and economical transition, thus maintaining the continuity of service which is vital to both citizens, business and partner organisations."

It was to those representations that the Government rightly listened.

Mr. Bates: What assessment has my hon. Friend made of the additional savings that will result from the Bill's provision for the abolition of Monklands district council? In particular, has he received any representations from the hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan (Mr. Wray), who stated in *The Herald* on 30 June that he had seen figures which proved the existence of corruption? Does my hon. Friend agree that if those figures were made available to him we could arrange an inquiry into the matter of corruption, which seems to be gaining all-party recognition?

Mr. Stewart: If anyone has evidence that Monklands district council—or any other local authority in Scotland—is in breach of its statutory responsibilities, of course the Government will look into it. I have received no representations from Opposition Members seeking a meeting, but if the hon. Member for Monklands, East (Mrs. Liddell) or the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) wishes to seek a joint meeting with me, I have no doubt that such a meeting would be an entertaining and interesting occasion.

Mr. Canavan: Will the Government now do the decent thing and abandon their expensive and unwanted carve-up of Scottish local government? Would it not show absolute contempt for the wishes of the people of Scotland if a Tory Government proceeded with such gerrymandering plans, especially after the Tories were so resoundingly defeated in the recent regional elections and were virtually annihilated in the Monklands by-election?

Mr. Stewart: I suggest that the hon. Gentleman consult his own district council, Falkirk, which I understand is very content with the Government's proposals.

Mr. Riddick: Does my hon. Friend agree that any extra costs resulting from the Bill and associated with the abolition of Monklands district council will be money well spent? Do not the revelations of corruption, nepotism and dubious job practices in Monklands during the recent by-election vindicate Conservative Members who have pointed to the corruption in that council? How many other Labour councils in Scotland are getting up to similar shenanigans?

Mr. Stewart: The short answer is that I do not know. The Scottish Office cannot take action simply because a

local authority may indulge in practices that others would criticise; we can act only if a council is in breach of its statutory responsibilities.

Sir David Steel: To return to the main question, can the Minister tell us whether he included in his calculation of the cost of the local government changes the cost of providing in every centre of population the all-purpose offices that will be necessary in areas such as the Borders if local government is to continue to have any meaning at all?

Mr. Stewart: I certainly hope that there will not be huge all-purpose offices in the centres of all the new local authorities—for the very good reason that at the centre of our local government proposals is an emphasis on decentralisation of facilities rather than centralisation. Of course some costs may be incurred, but there will also be savings. The figures published by the Government take no account, for instance, of receipts from property sales.

Mr. Foulkes: Will the Minister confirm that he has received a deputation and a request from members and employees of Kyle and Carrick district council? This is the real scandal in Scottish local government. The authority is now re-tendering a contract for cleansing and refuse collection which still had three weeks to run, and it has been discovered that the provost of Kyle and Carrick had five secret meetings with a Spanish contracting company before making the decision. That is the kind of corruption that is taking place in Tory-controlled Kyle and Carrick. The Minister has received a request for an inquiry: when will he conduct one?

Mr. Stewart: I must say that that remark was pretty racist from a party that is supposed to be "communautaire". Did not the favourite for the leadership of the Opposition recently say that it was communautaire? [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer the question."] I shall answer the question as soon as hon. Members give me an opportunity to do so.

I met the delegation led by the hon. Gentleman, and I listened courteously and carefully to the points that were made. I told the hon. Gentleman that, prior to that meeting, we had had no evidence whatever of wrongdoing by Kyle and Carrick district council, but that I would examine the evidence which the hon. Gentleman put to me and write to him. That remains the position.

Mr. McLeish: While the Minister sits back and enjoys his hypocrisy and complacency—

Madam Speaker: Order. There is no hypocrisy in this House. Will the hon. Gentleman rephrase what he has just said?

Mr. McLeish: While the Minister sits back and enjoys his complacency over allegations of corruption, does he accept that the time scale for the implementation of reorganisation proposals is simply a shambles? Does he accept that if he proceeds with the timetable services will be destroyed, jobs will be lost and local government will lose a great deal that it has built up over the past 30 years? In view of the result in Monklands last week, is there not some political merit for the Tories in abandoning the elections next year and returning to the real problems facing local government? Why does the Minister not announce today that there will be a year's delay? Better still, why does he not scrap such crazy, ill-conceived proposals?

Mr. Stewart: The timetable is almost the same as for the last reorganisation of local government in Scotland, when some difficulties arose during that period—notably a coal strike and a general election, neither of which we envisage happening between now and the elections for the shadow authorities next year. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman should consult Fife regional council—his own Labour-controlled council—which estimates that the Government's proposals will save £68 million over 15 years. Moreover, it has made no representations to the Government suggesting that it is anything other than happy with the proposals.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. In view of the evasive nature of the Minister's answers, I hope to raise the matter on the Adjournment.

Scottish Nuclear

4. **Mr. Eric Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he has had with Scottish Nuclear on its expansion proposals for nuclear electricity generating capacity.

Mr. Stewart: As Scottish Nuclear has no plans to expand its nuclear generating capacity, my right hon. Friend has naturally not discussed the subject with it.

Mr. Clarke: Will the Minister take it from me that moves are afoot to expand the nuclear industry? I am surprised at the answer that I have just received. Does he recognise that more than 50 per cent. of the electricity industry's generating capacity in Scotland is through nuclear power, which is extremely inefficient as it costs Scottish people more than alternative forms of energy? When he meets Scottish Nuclear about its expansion, will he recognise the fact that a question mark hangs over environmental arguments and the decommissioning of Hunterston A before he grants permission for any type of expansion? A moratorium would be better. I hope that the Minister will join me in ensuring that the people of Scotland are not penalised further because of the folly of nuclear power in their area.

Mr. Stewart: A large number of people, not just on this side of the House, would disagree with the hon. Gentleman's views. There are no plans for an expansion of nuclear-generated capacity. There is interest in replacement of Hunterston B, but that is a different matter. I should make it clear that the Government are committed to the nuclear option, provided that it can prove economic. One of Scotland's great benefits is the variety of sources of supply to its electricity generation industry.

Mr. Gallie: Does my hon. Friend agree that Scottish Nuclear is built on success in electricity generation? Does he also agree that, given the restrictions on carbon dioxide emissions, an adequate and cost-effective supply of energy resources in Scotland will depend largely on the nuclear resource if Scotland's economic future is to be secure?

Mr. Stewart: My hon. Friend is absolutely right to point to the importance of nuclear energy for Scottish industry and Scottish consumers. Scottish Nuclear Ltd. plans to increase its output by 18 per cent. by 1998 and to

control costs—wholly consistently with safety, of course. The contribution that SNL has made to electricity generation is one of which all Scotland should be proud.

Mr. Hood: The Minister will know that thousands of Scottish children travel from school to visit nuclear power station exhibition centres, and they do so in minibuses and coaches. When do the Government intend to bring forward legislation to make seat belts compulsory to protect our children—

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is on totally the wrong question. In that case, we shall now move on.

Unemployment

5. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the change in the numbers unemployed in Scotland since December 1992.

Mr. Stewart: Since December 1992, the number of seasonally adjusted unemployed in Scotland has fallen by 17,100.

Mr. Marshall: As unemployment throughout the European Community has increased by 1.5 million during that time, will my hon. Friend consider holding a seminar at one of Scotland's ancient universities—preferably the university of St. Andrews—at which he could point out that deregulation and modern labour relations create jobs while a minimum wage and the social chapter destroy jobs?

Mr. Stewart: My hon. Friend is absolutely right to point out that the United Kingdom is clearly coming out of the recession ahead of most of the rest of the European Community. As regards seminars, I recently addressed a seminar in Glasgow on the European Community's White Paper, where I made precisely some of the valid points that my hon. Friend has mentioned about Britain's economic success.

Mr. Wray: Does the Minister agree with me that, like the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Bates), he is misleading the Scottish people and misleading the House by giving those figures? Does he also agree that the 249,000 figure of December 1992 is the peak figure, although it is 17,100 lower? Why did he not take the August 1990 figure of 197,000, which is the lowest figure? Does he agree that the figure is 34,700 higher than that?

Hon. Members: Now answer that.

Mr. Stewart: The short answer is that the question was:
"what is the change in the numbers unemployed in Scotland since December 1992",
and I gave the figure in answer to that question. I hope that the hon. Gentleman, and all hon. Members, will recognise that unemployment in Scotland is falling, and will continue to fall. *[Interruption.]* Opposition Members obviously do not like the fact that unemployment is falling. I am disappointed that they take such a completely negative attitude to the evidence of Scotland's economic success.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Will my hon. Friend reflect on the fact that we still have very low strike rates in the United Kingdom? Does he believe that Scottish unemployment is decreasing because the Scottish work force in the main refused to strike? Will he, therefore, make it clear to hon. Members in all parts of the House that the condoning of strike action, from wherever it comes, should be condemned from all parts of the House?

Mr. Stewart: I agree with my hon. Friend. All the evidence from inward investment work clearly shows the importance that firms from north America and the far east attach to Scotland's excellent industrial relations. We have a superb and skilled work force in Scotland, as our inward investment record demonstrates.

Mr. Donohoe: How many changes have there been to the calculations on unemployment figures since the Government came to power in 1979? If the Minister was able to calculate the figures on the basis that he is suggesting from 1992, could he confirm that the total would be about double that which he suggests?

Mr. Stewart: What I do know is that all the Labour Governments in history have ended up with unemployment higher at the end of their period in office than at the beginning. The hon. Gentleman clearly will not face up to the fact that unemployment in Scotland, which of course is high, is below that of the United Kingdom average for the first time since the 1920s. Unemployment there is falling at a time when it is not falling in the rest of the European Community.

Mr. Welsh: Does the Minister agree that adult training is crucial to overcoming unemployment? Why are no adult training places available in Angus and Dundee? Why are existing places under threat? Why is adult training not a priority for the Government?

Mr. Stewart: Of course, places are available. There is a further education college in Dundee. Adult training is a priority of the Government, which is why we are giving £200 million to the Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise network to provide the resources for adult training in Scotland.

Pollution, Clyde Estuary

6. **Mr. Graham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals he has to arrange for the clearing up of pollution on the foreshores of the Clyde estuary.

Sir Hector Monro: Responsibility for cleaning beaches lies with district or islands councils.

Mr. Graham: Will the Minister borrow a small canoe and paddle up the River Clyde to see the pollution in the water and the dereliction? He will come to the Erskine bridge. A recent paper stated that the bridge is crumbling and my constituents are worried that it may not be safe. Will the Minister give the House and my constituents an assurance that the bridge will be made safe? Will he make a public announcement on the present state of the bridge?

Sir Hector Monro: I would rather paddle down the river than up it. The hon. Gentleman makes a serious point, but it is far removed from my sphere of responsibility. My hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton), who is responsible for the bridge and for roads in Scotland, will have heard the exchange, and I am sure that if action needs to be taken, he will take it.

Mr. McAvoy: The Minister is aware that chromium waste dumping sites in Cambuslang, Rutherglen and Toryglen pollute water courses that flow into the River

Clyde, and that contamination ends up in the Clyde estuary. The Secretary of State has said that no resources will be made available to clear up those contaminated waste sites in my constituency. Bearing in mind the fact that the public health board has said that the situation is potentially risky and the fact that the Secretary of State has refused to help because he is looking for evidence, will the Minister tell me what evidence will satisfy the Secretary of State? Is he waiting for someone to die?

Sir Hector Monro: The hon. Gentleman must not put it like that. He has had meetings with the Secretary of State and me, and he knows that discussions have taken place and are taking place on how to deal with that serious issue. There is no doubt that action will have to be taken, whether through the enterprise company, the region or the district —the problem must be resolved. I assure him that the Scottish Office will play a full part in trying to find the right solution.

Community Care

7. **Mr. Robert Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he intends to conduct a review of community care in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: We continually monitor and review the progress of the operation of community care in Scotland. A major evaluation and research project is being undertaken at Stirling university.

Mr. Hughes: Is the Minister aware of the great anguish and anxiety caused when trusts publish business plans stating how many people are to be discharged into the community and which hostels are to be closed, but make no mention of how the care is to be provided?

Would not it be more sensible to publish a patient plan in conjunction with the authorities that will provide patient care and, in tandem, produce a business plan showing how the costs of the whole package will be met? Does the hon. Gentleman agree that until that is done and until there is a sensible way of planning and operating community care, there should be no hospital closures in Scotland?

Mr. Stewart: I am aware of the hon. Gentleman's concern about these matters, which he raised in the Scottish Grand Committee yesterday. First, a business plan is an essential starting point. Secondly, like the hon. Gentleman, I believe that close co-operation with local authorities is very important, and we have a working party studying that. Thirdly, no hospital can be closed until after a period of public consultation and after a submission to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Mr. Bill Walker: When my hon. Friend and his colleagues are consulting, will they consider Meigle cottage hospital and the proposal to turn it into a day-care centre? If, on examining that proposal, it is found that its capital and revenue costs, especially transporting people long distances to the hospital, are the same as, or greater than, the cost of maintaining the hospital as it is, will my hon. Friend review the decision to close it?

Mr. Stewart: It is no great surprise to hear my hon. Friend raise the issue of Meigle cottage hospital. I reassure him that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State and I will keep the position at Meigle under the closest review and scrutiny.

Mrs. Fyfe: Does the Minister realise that his avowed concern for these matters is somewhat less than convincing because earlier this year he admitted that he did not know the number of people paying the full cost of accommodation in residential care and nursing homes, or how many people had sold their homes to meet the charges for their residential care? Is the hon. Gentleman any better informed now?

Will the Minister, before it is too late, consider the impact of the break-up of the social work departments on this and other aspects of community care? It is a consequence of his tearing apart of Scottish local authorities to meet the Government's narrow political ends.

Mr. Stewart: We regularly collect and publish a whole range of statistics on community care as part of the monitoring process. Inspections are carried out by the social work services inspectorate and the reviews by the NHS management executive.

I do not for a moment accept the hon. Lady's views on the consequences of local government reform. A single-tier system will be a great deal more sensible. There are enormous advantages in, for example, having social work and housing services in the same authority.

Mr. Kynoch: Does my hon. Friend agree that the principle of care in the community is commendable? Does he further agree that to keep the elderly and mentally sick in normal conditions in the community for as long as possible is better than institutionalising them and putting them in hospital? Will my hon. Friend join me in commending Grampian health care trust on its business plan, although it is only an outline plan? It not only includes, sadly, proposals to close some hospitals, but—this is something that the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) did not mention—plans for significant capital expenditure on new hospital provision for those who have to remain in hospital, so that they can have even better care.

Mr. Stewart: My hon. Friend is right. The trust's plan includes considerable capital expenditure. The objective is not simply to maintain, but to improve the standards of patient care.

Housing

8. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will meet the chairman of Scottish Homes to discuss disposal of housing stock.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland has already issued guidance to Scottish Homes on the procedure for the disposal of housing stock. He has no plans to meet the chairman of Scottish Homes to discuss that further.

Mr. McKelvey: You will be as appalled as I am by that answer, Madam Speaker, when you hear that Scottish Homes held a meeting last week and invited only selected tenants to discuss the disposal of the property. Democratically elected members of tenants associations, residents associations and district councils, and even the

local Member of Parliament, were debarred from that meeting, presumably because Scottish Homes thought that they might impose some evil influence on its decision. The Minister will be surprised to hear that those selected tenants unanimously rejected the association that Scottish Homes hoped they would adopt and said that they wanted unfettered—

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is now making a statement, which is quite unfair. There are many questions on the Order Paper and unless questions and answers are brisk, many Scottish Members will be disappointed. I am asking for a direct question and a brisk answer.

Mr. McKelvey: I take the point, Madam Speaker, but I am seriously concerned about this business. Will the Minister, therefore, direct Scottish Homes to give all Scottish tenants a free and unfettered choice in their future landlords?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: At the end of the day, if a majority of tenants wish to remain in the public sector, they will have the opportunity to do so through the ballot paper and by voting to remain with Scottish Homes. As for the meeting that the hon. Gentleman mentioned, I understand that owner-occupiers were not dealt with in exactly the same way as tenants. Owner-occupiers have an interest in the proposed new landlords and they are entitled to attend public meetings. Representatives of a residents association, representing tenants and owner-occupiers, would have access to the tenants' independent adviser. Unlike tenants, an owner-occupier will not be entitled to vote in the ballot as a tenant because a home owner's landlord is himself or herself.

Mr. Wilson: Will the Minister give me one good reason why tenants of Scottish Homes in my constituency who wish to become tenants of the local authority should be prevented from doing so?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The current arrangements do not preclude a local authority from presenting proposals to acquire Scottish Homes stock. In special circumstances, that option can be put forward, as it was in the case of Berwickshire. Those special circumstances would include, first, the number of properties involved; secondly, their location; and, thirdly, the percentage of houses already held by the local authority. In Kilmarnock and Loudoun, some 44 per cent. of houses are in the public sector, which is substantially higher than the national average. It is our aim to have more choice and diversity in housing stock.

Konver Initiative

9. **Ms Rachel Squire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the Konver initiative; and what funding he proposes to make available to local authorities to progress economic development.

Mr. Stewart: Scotland received more than £1.7 million from the first Konver initiative, which ran as a one-year programme in 1993. The European Commission is in the process of issuing guidelines for the next round of Community initiatives, including a second Konver programme.

Ms Squire: Does the Minister agree that the Government should introduce a national strategy for defence diversification if any progress is to be made in economic development in areas that depend heavily on defence-related activities, such as Fife, which has the highest unemployment rate in Scotland and where we have lost 4,000 jobs at Rosyth in the past three years? Does he further agree that no EC initiative could replace the 8,000 jobs that depend on Rosyth's future? Will he say clearly today that he supports Rosyth and will he link his future to that of the naval base and to those 8,000 jobs?

Mr. Stewart: On the second question, the hon. Lady knows that no decision has been made on the future of the naval base, as well as the other establishments being reviewed under "Front Line First". She will know that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence is to make a statement before the House rises for the summer recess.

As for the hon. Lady's main question on a defence initiative, we do have a Scottish defence initiative which has been implemented in particular by two local enterprise companies—Fife Enterprise and the Glasgow Development Agency. They have developed several programmes to reduce the impact of defence reductions, aimed mainly at diversification and support for redundant workers. For example, under the new product development programme they have assisted more than 850 people from more than 50 companies. I assure the hon. Lady—indeed, she may know this from her own contacts—that Fife Enterprise has close relationships with important key companies in the sector and is developing a range of specific initiatives.

Mr. Fabricant: My hon. Friend is to be congratulated on the Locate in Scotland programme, which has attracted firms such as Hoover, Motorola and Mitsubishi. But does he agree that the distance between Scotland and the centre of gravity of Europe puts it at a great disadvantage? Is it not therefore even more amazing that freight transport from Scotland to the rest of Europe is being disrupted today by the rail strike—*[Interruption.]*—and is it not even more surprising that the Opposition Front Bench—

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must relate what he says more to the original question. Will the Minister answer the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question?

Mr. Stewart *rose—*

Mr. McLeish: Does he remember it?

Mr. Stewart: Yes, I remember it. My hon. Friend is right to stress the importance of transport links between Scotland and Europe. That is why the Eurofreight terminal in Mossend is important, as is the open skies policy pursued by the Government. My hon. Friend is also right to say that Scotland is an extremely attractive location for multinational companies, which make their decisions wholly objectively. The recent figures from Locate in Scotland amply prove that.

Dr. Reid: In keeping with the spirit of the times, would any of the candidates at the hustings for the post of Secretary of State for Scotland like to dissociate himself from the treacherous betrayal of Rosyth by the two previous Secretaries of State? The present Secretary of State—the incumbent for the time being—has failed to lift

a finger for Rosyth, and the previous Secretary of State, now Secretary of State for Defence, has physically presided over the impending closure of Rosyth? Why should anyone in Rosyth or in the rest of Scotland who is interested in jobs or in the defence of Scotland and the rest of Britain ever trust whoever succeeds the present incumbent?

Mr. Stewart: Such personal attacks are unbecoming to the hon. Gentleman and are wholly without foundation. I suggest that he awaits the statement by the Secretary of State for Defence.

Mr. George Robertson: Is it just possible that the Secretary of State might manage to take time out from the royal pageant in Edinburgh to consider the future of Her Majesty's naval base at Rosyth, or has he completely given up the fight to save it? May I tell the Minister, who seems to be standing in for the absent Secretary of State today, that if the Government do not listen to the defence case and the human case for—[HON. MEMBERS: "He is taking some advice."] Obviously the parliamentary private secretary is giving the Minister advice. Let us hope that it is the right advice—although if I were the Minister I would rather accept advice from somebody else. If the Government do not listen to the defence case and the human case for the Rosyth naval base, and act on it, they will be roundly condemned all over the country. If they do not fight for the base, they will betray the defence of Britain and the thousands of people whose livelihoods depend on Rosyth. If they do not care about Rosyth and the people connected with it, they will be swept away—and swept away for a generation.

Mr. Stewart: Of course, the Secretary of State for Scotland is in touch with the Secretary of State for Defence on matters affecting Scotland. Naturally, there is constant communication on such matters. I must tell Opposition Members that I find it astonishing that a party that historically has favoured cutting defence expenditure year after year, with manifesto commitment after manifesto commitment, now wants very high expenditure on defence. But of course the matter is of concern. That is why, for example, I understand that yesterday my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence met a delegation from Fife accompanied by my hon. Friends the Members for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) and for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker)

Skill Shortages

10. **Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about skill shortages in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: It is primarily for business to identify and provide the skills and associated training which it requires for success in today's global marketplace. The substantial funding given to Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise enables them to assist businesses and individuals to acquire skills which will benefit the economy of Scotland.

Mr. Worthington: The short answer is that the Minister knows nothing at all about skill shortages in Scotland, and he admits that in his parliamentary answers to my questions. He referred me to Scottish Enterprise. Scottish Enterprise wrote to me and said that it does not collect information on skill shortages in Scotland. How can the Minister give assurances that all is well, when neither he nor Scottish Enterprise has a clue about skill shortages in Scotland?

Mr. Stewart: I can tell the hon. Gentleman one figure, if he is interested. It is from the latest CBI industrial trends survey, in which the percentage of respondents quoting shortages of skilled or other labour as a constraint on investment was precisely zero.

Mr. McLeish: Is that all the Minister has got?

Mr. Stewart: If the hon. Gentleman will give me a moment, I shall tell him. May I, in particular, refer the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) and other hon. Members to the clear strategy set out by Scottish Enterprise last week?

Mr. Worthington: It does not mention skill shortages.

Mr. Stewart: The hon. Gentleman says that it does not mention skills. He obviously has not read the document. The document lays great stress on Scotland's skills and knowledge base as the greatest single source of competitive advantage. In that context, Scottish Enterprise aims to improve and develop the national training schemes which it delivers to combine development of appropriate skills with placing people in work to stimulate and help articulate demand for skills from businesses and individuals. However, of course, the bulk of training is and will continue to be carried out by companies themselves. That is the point which the hon. Gentleman appears not to appreciate.

Mr. Dickens: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the Locate in Scotland campaign has been so successful that £5 billion has either been invested or planned to be invested and that that has created jobs for or retrained 96,000 people in Scotland? But, returning to the skill shortages, 47 per cent. of all companies from overseas who have located in Scotland conduct research and development. That is where the skills come from and it is time that Scottish Opposition Members woke up to that.

Mr. Stewart: I agree with my hon. Friend, but I fear that he is being optimistic if he thinks that Opposition Members will ever find it in themselves to say anything good about what happens in Scotland. My hon. Friend is right to point to the success of Locate in Scotland, which had a record year last year. I pay tribute to the dedicated staff of Locate in Scotland for all their work. Again and again, potential inward investors say to us that one of the great attractions of Scotland is—[HON. MEMBERS: "The golf courses."] It is not the golf courses. One of the great attractions is the skilled and dedicated work force that is available.

Mrs. Adams: If the Minister insists that the largest amount of training is done in industries in Scotland, will he take my word for it that Rolls-Royce in my constituency, which was one of the great trainers of apprentices in Scotland, has, in the past six years, trained six apprentice engineers, the last of whom finished a year ago? There are now no new apprenticeships at Rolls-Royce in Hillington. Will the Minister produce his evidence and tell us how many industrial apprenticeships there are in Scotland?

Mr. Stewart: Is the hon. Lady seriously suggesting that the number of apprentices is an appropriate measurement

of the total training undertaken by British industry? That is absurd. Employers in Britain spend more than £20 billion a year on employee training and development. The comparable figure for Scotland is about £2 billion a year. That is a measure of Scottish companies' commitment to training of all sorts.

Fisheries

11. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent representations he has received from fishermen's organisations regarding the use of drift nets; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: I receive frequent representations from those concerned about the drift net fishery for salmon off the coast of north-east England. The matter of drift net fisheries was discussed at the last Fisheries Council.

Mr. Bellingham: Will my hon. Friend find time today to recognise the important economic contribution of angling to the rural communities of Scotland? Will he pay tribute to the fact that in Scotland drift net fishing for salmon has been almost entirely curtailed? Does he agree that the Northumberland drift net fishery, which catches almost exclusively salmon heading for Scottish rivers, is an anomaly and a disgrace, and that, after proper compensation to the netsmen, it should be stopped?

Sir Hector Monro: I agree with my hon. Friend that salmon fishing in Scotland is of enormous importance to the community in that it brings tourism and business for hotels and shops, for example. We want to see as many anglers coming to Scotland as possible. My hon. Friend is right also to say that we banned drift net fishing many years ago around the Scottish coast. The issue of the north-east drift net fishery is complicated and it is difficult to be precise when discussing it.

We have, as my hon. Friend knows, introduced a net limitation order and the number of licences for salmon nets has fallen by 12.7 per cent. in the past year. That is a step in the right direction. We must move on the basis of scientific advice, which is provided by the National Rivers Authority. I have my hon. Friend's point very much in mind, and I hope that one of these days we shall find the right solution.

Mr. Macdonald: Can the Minister justify and explain why it is right for monofilament nets to be used by English fishermen in English coastal waters but not by Scottish fishermen in Scottish coastal waters?

Sir Hector Monro: As the hon. Gentleman knows, the use of such nets has been banned in Scotland for many years. We feel that that is the right step to take, bearing in mind the conservation of fish as well as the power of catching. I believe that we have come to the right decision. It is not always accepted by fishermen, especially those on the west coast, but throughout the rest of Scotland it is generally believed that we have made the right decision.

Governance of Scotland

12. **Mr. Trimble:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on developments relating to the governance of Scotland since the publication of "Scotland in the Union: A Partnership for Good".

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: We have pressed ahead vigorously to implement the various proposals in the White Paper "Scotland in the Union: A Partnership for Good", published last year. All the commitments have either been implemented or are well in hand.

Mr. Trimble: Does the Minister agree that earlier supplementary questions suggest that Labour will revert to cover-up and bluster rather than taking the opportunity to clean out the Augean stables that exist in its organisation in the Greater Glasgow area? Does he further agree that the recent election result shows that there is an urgent need for the creation of a moderate, right-of-centre, pro-Union alternative to Labour, which the present Conservative and Liberal Democratic parties cannot provide, and that without such an alternative the outlook for Scottish politics is not encouraging?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I welcome the hon. Gentleman's sturdy support of the Union of Great Britain. The Conservative party stood on that platform before the last general election and the number of Conservative Members increased as a result. We will continue to fight as hard as we can for the Union on every conceivable occasion. The proposals in the White Paper strengthen the Union between Scotland and England. The Standing Order changes that are proposed will be introduced early next Session after being debated and we look forward to Scotland benefiting greatly from the changes. We will bear in mind the problems in relation to Greater Glasgow that the hon. Member has mentioned.

Mr. Connarty: Does the Minister accept that the whole concept of the White Paper has been made ludicrous in the eyes of the people of Scotland because of the growing number of quangos and the fact that the Secretary of State appoints all those people who are answerable only to him? With regard to health, the quango is answerable to a health Minister who is in another place and who has not even been elected, having been rejected by the people of Scotland. How can the people of Scotland give any credibility to any movement in "Scotland in the Union: A Partnership for Good" until we get rid of the quangos and put elected people in responsible positions in Scotland?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am astonished that the hon. Gentleman has the nerve to ask a question of that nature when the shadow Secretary of State for Scotland served on the Scottish tourist board, the Scottish Development Agency and on a third quango relating to the police. We have considerably reduced the number of quangos throughout Britain and that is greatly to our credit. However, where there is a need for them—for example, Scottish Homes—they will, of course, survive in the public interest.

Madam Speaker: Time is up. I call the Secretary of State for National Heritage to make his statement.

Mr. David Clelland (Tyne Bridge): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I take points of order after statements.

BBC

3.30 pm

The Secretary of State for National Heritage (Mr. Peter Brooke): With permission, Madam Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the future of the BBC.

I am today publishing a White Paper with the Government's policies for the BBC's role and operations after December 1996, when its present royal charter expires. A copy of the White Paper, with a user-friendly summary, will be available in the Vote Office when I have finished speaking.

In developing these policies, we have been able to take account of advice, ideas and comments from a wide variety of sources. We had the replies from many organisations and individuals to the Government's consultation document, published in November 1992. I am grateful to everyone who wrote to us, and especially to those who arranged conferences and seminars so that the issues could be discussed. The BBC put forward its own views about its future, which provided a useful focus for public debate, and it has continued to develop its proposals, taking account of the debate about its future and changes in the world of broadcasting.

We also had the benefit of the National Heritage Select Committee's report, "The Future of the BBC", which was published in December last year. The Committee took evidence from a large number of interested parties. The White Paper includes the Government's response to the Select Committee's report and its recommendations. I have, of course, not yet had time to consider the Select Committee's report entitled "Sports Sponsorship and Television Coverage" which was published earlier today.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): The right hon. Member had better hurry up; he will not be here next week.

Mr. Brooke: The Select Committee's views on listed events and subscription channels have attracted a great deal of interest and the Government will take careful note of them. The White Paper acknowledges that the present restrictions are necessary and that there are arguments for strengthening them.

Our consultation document made it clear that the Government saw a continuing role for the BBC as the major public service broadcaster in the United Kingdom. But new opportunities are being created by technological developments. The Government believe that the BBC is well placed to evolve into an international multi-media enterprise, building on its present commercial services in this country and overseas. We will do all we can to encourage this process.

The responses to our consultation document showed that there is considerable public support for the wide range and diversity of the programmes and services which the BBC provides for audiences throughout the United Kingdom. However, public support for the BBC would diminish unless the corporation could demonstrate that it was cost-effective.

The BBC has, in the last few years, set in hand extensive, and often painful, measures to improve its efficiency, reducing its overheads and reorganising its operations. It is in the midst of a difficult process of modernisation, which the Government expect to continue in the years ahead. The results so far are encouraging. As a broadcaster, the BBC has been able to invest over £100 million more in programmes. As an organisation, it can face the future with more flexibility and with a clearer view of how its various activities contribute to fulfilling its strategic purpose—to provide broadcast services of information, entertainment and education.

In the light of that, the Government will recommend that the BBC should be granted a new royal charter for a term of 10 years from January 1997. [HON. MEMBERS: "Shame."] A new agreement between the Government and the BBC would govern its operations; that would replace the present licence and agreement.

The new royal charter will set out the responsibilities of the governors and the national councils in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The board of governors will have a strategic oversight of the BBC's activities and management. The governors and the national councils will have a special responsibility for ensuring that the BBC's services reflect the interests and needs of the public throughout the country, and for improving the BBC's accountability to its audiences and to Parliament.

Within the United Kingdom, the BBC should continue to take a lead in programme making and to provide its present television and radio services. Those will be funded from the licence fee, at least for the time being. The Select Committee, after considering all the options, concluded that the licence fee was the best available method of funding the BBC's services. [HON. MEMBERS: "Rubbish."] The Government agree with the Committee's view. However, we propose that there should be a review of funding from the licence fee before the year 2001 in the light of technological and other changes.

The BBC will, of course, continue to be editorially independent and we shall expect it to maintain high standards in all its programming. Like other broadcasters, it will continue to have obligations to observe due impartiality on controversial issues—

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): You must be joking.

Mr. Brooke: —and to ensure that programmes do not encourage crime or offend against good taste, decency or public feeling.

Overseas, the BBC will continue to broadcast World Service radio, financed by grant in aid from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. That service has more than 130 million listeners and it is widely recognised for the reliability and accuracy of its news. That reputation is an asset of great value, both culturally and commercially. The Government consider that the BBC should be encouraged to exploit further its commercial potential.

The main changes that we propose for the future, therefore, are aimed at the development of the BBC's commercial activities, particularly its international television services. As the Select Committee recognised, a new and expanding global market is opening up for broadcasting services. Broadcasting has been transformed from a mainly national to an international activity. Moreover, broadcasting, as we have known it, is likely to become only one strand in an international media market, which will include some services and products which combine elements of different media—sound, pictures and text—allowing users to decide which they prefer.

Those developments will greatly extend the variety and choice available to everyone in this country and elsewhere.

[Mr. Brooke]

The BBC is well placed to take advantage of that growing international market. It is well known internationally; it has highly skilled production staff, a large production capacity and considerable programme archives, and it has experience of operating commercially at home and abroad.

However, we should not risk licence payers' or taxpayers' money on commercial ventures. That is why we have encouraged the BBC to forge new partnerships with the private sector. In that way, it can take advantage of the private finance initiative and of the commercial expertise of its private sector partners. Understandably, the BBC is anxious that those partnerships should allow the BBC to keep editorial control over its programmes. That will help it to protect its brand name, which is recognised worldwide.

The Government believe that the BBC should compete commercially, but it must also compete fairly. The BBC has published a commitment to fair trading and it is preparing detailed guidelines. We shall want to examine those guidelines closely and ensure that they are implemented effectively. For that reason, it is essential that its services financed from the licence fee and the grant in aid should be operated separately from its commercial activities.

We are exploring with the BBC various options for the future of its transmission services. Those include privatisation, in full or in part. The BBC is preparing for an early introduction of digital broadcasting services for radio and then for television. Digital technology is more efficient in the use of the frequency spectrum and it opens up the possibility of even more services. It also offers opportunities to United Kingdom manufacturers of equipment and receivers.

The purpose of those studies, which should be completed toward the end of the year, is to seek to combine the early introduction of digital broadcasting services with the advantages of privatisation. Those include the benefits of private sector finance, since the Government do not intend to increase the licence fee to pay for introducing digital services. The Government and the BBC are clear that functions should be kept within the BBC only when there is a compelling reason for doing so.

Although we intend that the BBC should continue to be established by royal charter, a number of the Government's proposals will require legislation. When there is a suitable opportunity, we propose to repeal the provisions in the Broadcasting Act 1990 which prevent the Independent Television Commission and the Radio Authority from licensing services owned or partly owned by the BBC. In future, any commercial broadcasting services operated by the BBC would have to be licensed by the commission or the authority.

More generally, we intend to give the commission and the authority new powers to license and regulate commercial digital television and radio services. Reflecting widespread concern over standards, we also propose to merge the Broadcasting Standards Council and the Broadcasting Complaints Commission. That will provide a clearer focus for the public's complaints about broadcasting services and reduce the number of regulatory bodies.

Madam Speaker, the Government recognise that, in the BBC, the United States—*[Interruption.]* Madam Speaker, as I directed that sentence to you, I shall read it again. The Government recognise that, in the BBC, the United Kingdom has an organisation which is a world leader. It makes more programmes than any organisation outside the United States and Japan. Over 99 per cent. of the population of the United Kingdom can receive its services, and most people use them regularly. From the perspective of my Department, no other organisation provides such active and creative patronage of the arts or does so much to make major national and artistic events, and the cultural heritage of the country, accessible to everyone.

In the next 10 years, there are likely to be significant and rapid changes in broadcasting and the media generally. No one can foresee the outcome of those changes, either nationally or internationally, but it is clear that they offer huge opportunities both for the BBC and for other United Kingdom broadcasters.

The Government wish the BBC to be in a position to take advantage of these opportunities. Our policies keep a wide range of options open for the BBC's long-term future. We confirm its role as the United Kingdom's major public service broadcaster, but we are encouraging it to develop into a multi-media enterprise with international interests. That prospect is reflected in the title of our White Paper: "The Future of the BBC: Serving the Nation; Competing World-wide".

Ms Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): We thank the Secretary of State for the White Paper. We welcome it. We have had a long wait, but we are glad that it is here at last.

We have never wavered in our support for public service broadcasting, unlike the Government. We believe that for a democracy to flourish, it is crucial to uphold individuals' rights to free expression and information. We believe that the BBC's role is crucial to that—it is central. The BBC is part of our national life and its future should be guaranteed in the way that it is by the White Paper.

We are relieved that the Government have abandoned their calls for privatisation—apart from some age-old Thatcherites in odd parts of the House today. We are pleased that that has been abandoned. We also welcome the continuation of the licence fee, but would appreciate clarification on whether it will be index linked up to the review at the end of the decade.

In a sense, it is sad that the Government have simply gone for the status quo. We would have been more ambitious for the future development and growth of the BBC. We believe that there is a need to respond to the changes that have taken place in Britain since the previous royal charter, and the decline in our shared sense of national identity and community. We would have wanted more in the statement today. *[Interruption.]* I will give some examples.

Can the Secretary of State tell the House why, in his statement today, he has not encouraged the BBC to continue to do and emphasise what it is good at, which is good-quality programming, especially in education? Today, there was an opportunity to emphasise education, which would have given us the opportunity to have an extra teacher in every classroom and every household in the country. It is sad that that has not happened.

It would be useful if the Secretary of State could tell us why the Government have not made up their mind on the future of transmission services.

Mr. Michael Fabricant (Mid-Staffordshire): They have.

Ms Mowlam: They have not. I have had only 20 minutes to read the paper, but it is clear that the Government have not made up their mind on transmission services. What they have done is say that there may be a future, there may not; it may be privatised, it may not.

The Opposition want a time limit from the Secretary of State for that discussion. We want a date to be put on that continued question mark over the future of transmission services. The future of the BBC depends on keeping transmission services in house. If digital is to be developed, which is what we would like, it is important for licence fee holders and the BBC to know about that decision sooner rather than later. [HON. MEMBERS: "Question."] Yes, that was the second question.

My third question is why, apart from one throwaway line, did not the Secretary of State reassert the importance of regional programming for Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the English regions? When he talks about regionalism, we want to be sure that he means that the BBC skills base will be located in the regions and that it will not continue the march of the media to London.

The Secretary of State acknowledged the internal changes that have taken place in the BBC. Will he also acknowledge the serious morale problems that it faces as a result of the growth of short-term contracts? It would be valuable if the Secretary of State would emphasise instead the value of staff loyalty, which can result from the stability that long-term contracts bring.

The Secretary of State mentioned streamlining and accountability, and merging the Broadcasting Standards Council with the Broadcasting Complaints Commission —a merger which has already been discussed by those two groups for many months, and we welcome it. Why did he not get to the heart of the question of accountability in the BBC and deal with the appointment and remit of its governors, and with changing the royal charter to an Act of Parliament, to enable an open and transparent debate in the House?

We welcome the right hon. Gentleman's statement about the BBC's worldwide service—a decision which the BBC announced many months ago—but would like further clarification that licence fee money will be kept separate for domestic production, rather than for international growth. *[Interruption.]* This is the second-last question, for those hon. Members who are getting touchy.

We also want to know why the Government have waited so long before allowing the BBC to compete internationally against dominant players, such as Murdoch's News Corporation. Such folk are already trying to drive British newspapers out of the market with the present price war, and we want to be sure that British broadcasters do not face the same future.

Finally, why, when the Secretary of State just paid lip service to editorial independence, is he not at long last going to lift the ridiculed and discredited broadcasting ban, as the Irish Government have already done?

Mr. Brooke: I thank the hon. Lady for her initial welcoming remarks. She asked a serious of questions, which I will try to answer concisely.

On the licence fee, there will be a review of the formula under which it is calculated, at the time of the new charter in 1997. That will precede the review of the licence fee process, which will be before 2001.

As to the hon. Lady's observation that we have not encouraged the BBC to produce good programmes, I fear that in my statement there was a clear proclamation about the BBC's programme making and, as the hon Lady knows, its commitment to education is age-old.

As to the future of the transmission service, on which the hon. Lady asked a specific question, I said in my statement that consultants would study the matter in conjunction with the BBC, which has acknowledged the possibility that that service will be privatised fully or in part. That analysis and one of the relationship with the digital expansion programme will be conducted during the balance of the year.

On regional programmes and the skills base, the BBC has already announced the extent to which it will move programme making out of London, not only to the other countries of the United Kingdom, but to the other regions of this country.

As to the hon. Lady's question about morale, of course I acknowledge that during a period of management change as rapid as the one the BBC has undergone, there is potential for demoralisation. The management of the process, about which the hon. Lady specifically asked, is a matter for the BBC. Some Government Members were disappointed that one or two members of the Labour party were not prepared to cross picket lines the other day. Whether her question in this instance is asked on behalf of the Broadcasting, Entertainment, Cinematograph and Theatre Union is something which the hon. Lady may clarify later.

As to accountability, the White Paper makes quite clear the separation of the role of the governors from the act of governance and the avoidance of their getting involved in management. The hon. Lady will know that she finds common cause in seeking an Act of Parliament with a number of my hon. Friends in this Chamber and noble Friends in another place. They might find common cause with her on grounds other than her own, but she will know that if we were to have such a debate on an Act of Parliament, it would range fairly wide.

As to separate accounting, I said that the BBC has published its fair trading commitment, and it is due to publish further details. I said in my statement that the Government will be analysing and scrutinising those closely when they come.

The hon. Lady asked why the BBC was not allowed to compete earlier. I am not sure to what she was alluding in saying that there was a restraint upon the BBC. I shall simply remark about her article in *The Independent*— newly minted this very day—that she addressed a number of issues which people in other places were thinking about at least two years ago.

Finally, the hon. Lady asked about the Irish issue. As I said in my last parliamentary answer on the subject, it is a matter which is kept under review.

Mr. Tim Renton (Mid-Sussex): May I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his statement to the House today? May I congratulate him, too, on the fact that, at a time of increased speed in technological change in the broadcasting world, he has resisted the temptation of going for too much change in the BBC at this moment? Surely most

[Mr. Tim Renton]

people in this country—at a time of vast increases in the number of television and radio channels—welcome the BBC as a sort of friendly rock of ages. They know, and like to know, that they can find Radio 4 in a familiar place on long wave.

What does my right hon. Friend have in mind when he talks about increasing commercial services on the BBC? Is he talking about encouraging more sponsorship of artistic programmes on the BBC? Surely in due course it will be necessary for the streams of revenue from commercial activities to be intermingled with the licence fee. Finally, where does he see the role of the governors as a supervisory body as being different from their present role?

Mr. Brooke: I am most grateful to my right hon. Friend for his remarks about the stance that the Government have taken in the White Paper.

The particular expansion of commercial services is clearly intended to take place overseas, but my right hon. Friend will be aware that BBC Enterprises has become more profitable during the past year and there clearly will be some expansion in the United Kingdom.

The role of the governors is reasserted in the White Paper, but, in my response to the hon. Member for Redcar (Ms Mowlam), I alluded to the fact that the governors are there to provide the overall regulation of the BBC, and are not intended to be involved in a detailed way in management.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): May I welcome the Secretary of State's announcement that he intends to renew the BBC's charter and licence fee? We want a thriving, widely appealing, impartial and vigorously independent BBC which competes in world markets and gives value for money to the licence payers.

Does not the right hon. Gentleman recognise that his proposals for the cosy self-regulation of the BBC by its board of governors do not go far enough? Should not their responsibilities be given to an independent regulator for all television broadcasting which can secure its charter obligations, monitor the operation of the BBC agreement and prevent the possible misuse of the BBC's licence revenues?

Mr. Brooke: The hon. Gentleman asked why we could not have a single independent regulator for all broadcasting. The Government believe that the BBC's public service broadcasting role is better regulated and overseen by a separate regulator or regulators, in the form of the governors, because it is a distinct role. We propose that that should continue.

Mr. David Evennett (Erith and Crayford): Some Conservative Members feel that privatisation is very good for all industries in this country. Can my right hon. Friend tell us why the BBC should be exempt from it? I welcome his statement as far as it goes, but will he consider the whole question of commercial sponsorship for programmes, and also consider ways of improving the BBC's standards for the benefit of all licence payers? A number of my constituents are very concerned about not getting value for money.

Mr. Brooke: The Government ruled out the privatisation of the BBC, for the reason that I gave the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) —its public service broadcasting role. That role is better conducted in its present form, as it has been for the past 70 years.

As for my hon. Friend's more general question, it would be wrong to think that we are engaged in business as usual. What has been said about the BBC, and within the BBC, over the past two or three years has demonstrated that a major revolution has been taking place in the corporation, which the Government have applauded in terms of the results that have been secured.

As for the licence fee, I think that my hon. Friend will find that in many other countries service of such quality is not available for the price that we must pay here.

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): I congratulate the Secretary of State on his excellent statement. How could I do otherwise, given that practically everything that he said is contained in our unanimous Select Committee report?

May I put it to the right hon. Gentleman that the extension of 10 years in the BBC charter on which he has decided—in line with the Select Committee's recommendations—must be used by the BBC not simply for "business as usual", but to enable it to reassess its role and realign itself in the new contexts of media presentation and technology that will arise during the period concerned? The BBC must either dwindle into a low-audience, public broadcasting service or become what the Secretary of State has rightly said that it should become—an international multi-media enterprise.

Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the partnership that the BBC has already arranged with Pearsons, and its approach to the large American media company Cox Enterprises, are part of the way forward, but that the BBC needs to associate itself with a large telecommunications company such as British Telecom so that it can become a major international player in the media game? While protecting the public service ethos for which the BBC stands, such a partnership could help it to take part in the great and exciting future that is opening up for the people of this country in entertainment, education and information.

Mr. Brooke: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for the welcome that he gave my statement. He took a slightly selective view in saying that we had agreed with every single recommendation made by the Select Committee; but we were not an enormous distance away from it.

I agree with the right hon. Gentleman about the BBC's use of the next 10 years, but I think that he will agree that what has happened over the past two or three years has provided it with a springboard for the kind of thinking that he envisages. I shall not comment in substance on his remark about telecommunications, but the convergence in technologies with which he is familiar will drive media organisations such as the BBC in the direction of telecommunications.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): It is not often that I can say that I fully support a statement made by my right hon. Friend. Does he accept that the British Broadcasting Corporation has the finest reputation in the world as a broadcasting medium? The independent television companies do not wish the British Broadcasting Corporation to be privatised and to advertise; the proposals

in my right hon. Friend's statement give it the greatest opportunity that it has ever been given. Although I cannot speak for the all-party media group, which I have the honour to chair, because we have not yet taken a poll, I am sure that the group would fully endorse what my right hon. Friend has told the House this afternoon.

Mr. Brooke: I do not think that I would be trespassing on the confidentiality of conversations between my hon. Friend and myself if I revealed to the House that, 10 years ago, he told me that I was then the best pairing Whip that he had known in our party. It is extremely generous of him to follow that with another compliment a decade later. More than one compliment a decade might go to my head, but I am grateful to him for what he has said, not least in his position as chairman of the all-party media group.

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): Is the Minister aware that the Select Committee found that 10 million households have no regular weekly wage; 1.2 million of them cannot—not will not—pay their television licence; and 200,000 are prosecuted? Is he further aware that the Committee recommended that we should stop criminalising that offence and impose a fixed penalty like that imposed for not paying car tax, and that the BBC should introduce some form of hire purchase?

Four times as many women as men are prosecuted, because single parents and pensioners are at home during the day when the van usually goes round. That attitude to the poor is a major social problem, which is in danger of being shoved to the bottom of the back page of the report but about which the public are extremely concerned.

Mr. Brooke: The hon. Gentleman is being true to himself because he has raised that subject with me before in similar exchanges. I recognise what he says, but the fact remains that, on a daily basis, the licence fee is less than the cost of a first-class postage stamp. Many people will think that that is good value. On the pursuit of those who cannot pay the licence fee, TV Licensing and the BBC recover about twice as much in evaded fees as it costs them to engage in that recovery. There is widespread feeling in the country that the pursuit of those who are not paying their licence fee is appropriate. However, it is right that the hon. Gentleman should continue to remind us that it constitutes a real problem for some people.

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): Does my right hon. Friend accept that there is a good case for reviewing the licence fee from time to time, not only in view of the pace of technological change but because there appears to be evidence that the BBC is overmanned and still subject to restrictive practices? There must be room for improvement there.

What pressure will be put on the BBC in future to improve its domestic as opposed to overseas service? Many of us feel that its overseas service is a model of objective reporting, far removed from the service that we sometimes find here, which appears to be much more motivated by its producers' political prejudices.

Mr. Brooke: The rate at which the licence fee rises was reviewed in 1990 and again in 1993, and the formula will be looked at again in 1996-97. In a Green Paper in 1992, we said that the licence arrangement was an anomaly, but it was felt to be the best way to conduct the financing. My right hon. Friend will have heard me say, however, that before the year 2001, the process of the licence fee, not the formula, will be examined again in view of opportunities provided by new technology.

On my right hon. Friend's remarks about services abroad, as opposed to those in this country, I was not sure whether he was distinguishing between television and radio, but I am certain that his remarks will have been heard by those in the BBC.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Is the Minister aware that the attempt to introduce artificially a market system into the BBC has led to layers of bureaucracy and costing exercises that have no meaning, and has had a very bad effect on the security of those who work on the programme, and on their morale? Mark Tully and others who have great experience in the public service have drawn attention to that.

Is the Minister also aware that broadcasting is not just a matter of technology? The modern media are far more powerful than the mediaeval churches, and what we want in the next century is not just more of the same in other outlets, but access to the media and a diversity of opinion, fairly presented. I hope very much that when that comes forward, that will be a part of Government policy, because at the moment there are many people who get programmes that they may agree with or disagree with, but they do not have an opportunity to present their views to other members of the community through the broadcast media; that is the case for public service broadcasting.

Mr. Brooke: I have to remind the right hon. Gentleman, who referred to "layers of bureaucracy", that the process has released £100 million that has been able to be ploughed back into programme making. In the context of the BBC, and of those people who listen to it and watch it, that transfer of investment seems to me to be thoroughly in the interests of corporation and of audience. As to the diversity of opinion to which the right hon. Gentleman referred, obviously he is right that the changes in technology will open up large new options for us in several different directions, and I should be surprised if the recommendation that he makes were not in the spirit of the times.

Sir John Gorst (Hendon, North): Will my right hon. Friend make it quite clear to the BBC that the extension of the charter period is not a preservation order on a grade I listed building, which may not be tampered with by developers or entrepreneurs, but merely a breathing space to enable the corporation to transport itself from the past to the future, which may not necessarily be one that will be supported by a licence fee in the far-distant future?

Mr. Brooke: I hope that my hon. Friend will find, when he analyses my statement, that nothing that I said was in contradistinction to what he has said. I referred to the options that would be available to the BBC in future, and the way that we were maintaining the flexibility of those options. I look forward to the BBC, in its special way, distinguishing itself in the next century as it has in the present one.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): Will the Secretary of State acknowledge that, although some of his friends may not like it, implicit in his statement is the fact that so-called free market forces do not deliver quality programming, and that the reason why the BBC is admired throughout the world and almost universally in this country—apart from by some strange people who attend Conservative party

[Mr. Bruce Grocott]

conferences—is that it is a system which has been subject to democratic regulation and control? Will he finally acknowledge that it is fatuous to believe that the BBC can exist in isolation, while other areas of broadcasting are let rip without proper democratic regulation and control? When can we have a comprehensive statement on broadcasting, to cover ownership of satellite and cable, to cover quality of programming in satellite and cable and to cover the degree of British production provided by satellite and cable?

Mr. Brooke: I do not agree with the observation of the hon. Gentleman that, in his words, so-called free markets could not deliver quality television. It is one of the glories of our system, with public service broadcasting on the one hand and commercial broadcasting co-existing beside it, that we produce very fine television. I think that the system is the better for the introduction of commercial television, and I am conscious that the Labour party opposed that when it was introduced.

As to the question that the hon. Gentleman asked me about the next stage in developments, when I announced the cross-ownership media review in January this year, I said that the official stage in that should be completed by the end of June; that date has now passed, and we are therefore moving into the stage of consideration by Ministers.

Mr. David Mellor (Putney): I also warmly congratulate my right hon. Friend and his colleagues on the White Paper, which recognises that there is as great a need for a strong, well-resourced and independent BBC today as there ever has been in its history. His decision on the licence fee must surely be right, not only for the BBC, but for independent television, since one of the strengths of British broadcasting is that two entirely separate rivers of finance flow—one from the public and one from commercial advertising.

Is the vote of confidence by the Government in the BBC entirely occasioned by the radical changes that the director-general and his team have been carrying through? If those radical changes had not been carried through, would it have been possible for the Government to take the view that they have in the White Paper?

Mr. Brooke: I am particularly grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend, who is right in what he says about the interaction with independent television and the fact that there is, if not quite a seamless robe, something that must be seen as a whole. That is one reason why those in commercial television are as enthusiastic as they are to see the BBC thrive. I wholly agree with what my right hon. and learned Friend said about the radical changes introduced by BBC management.

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): In welcoming the Minister's basic proposals and his warm words of praise for the BBC, I must ask him whether he agrees that it is unfortunate that most of that was not said three years ago. Instead, the interim period was used to keep the BBC twisting in the wind and to turn his lunatic friends loose on it with their dark nostrums. As a result of that period, much damage has already been done. There has been a collapse of staff morale and a weakening in the quality and provision of programmes, particularly at a regional level. There have been cuts in the cultural and music provision. A pluralistic and diverse organisation has been forced into a Birtian corset when it should be much more diverse.

Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the problems of the BBC will not be solved by such tinkering? The best way of helping the BBC to be the major provider and the major competitor on the international scene that we need it to be is to keep up its confidence and maintain the supply of money to it to enable it to do its job.

Mr. Brooke: The hon. Gentleman asked me why I did not say something three years ago. The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) has told me that I will not be at this Dispatch Box in a week's time. I certainly was not at this Dispatch Box in my present capacity three years ago. Like shadow spokesmen in the Department, people in my position are here today and gone tomorrow.

On the hon. Gentleman's final question, patently, the morale of any organisation is the greater if it has confidence in what it is doing and confidence in its future. I hope that the White Paper that we have published today will reinforce that sense of confidence in the BBC.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Carrying on somewhat from the hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton), may I ask my right hon. Friend to enlighten me as to why the licensing authority should require those who apply for black and white television licences to sign a declaration to the effect that their televisions are black and white?

Mr. Brooke: I must congratulate my hon. Friend on having asked me a question for which I was not wholly prepared. I suspect that the answer is that, when the appropriate monitoring service visits houses, it is found on a number of occasions that the television sets are in colour, but the licences are for black and white sets. I dare say that, in order to avoid the possibility of colour blindness, there is concern when the licence is taken out that the householder should be conscious of what sort of television he owns.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): Within the framework described by the right hon. Gentleman why has not a much more radical degree of autonomy and decentralisation been sought within the BBC to create BBC Wales, BBC Scotland and regional stations that can flourish and develop away from the Birtian centralised view of life? That view is centralised, despite the semantic changes that he has recently made. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will not close his mind to those proposals.

Mr. Brooke: There is a limit to the amount of change that any organisation can make in a relatively short space of time. There is no question but that the present management of the BBC is moving power and authority out to the different countries of the United Kingdom and to the regions. I am sure that the BBC will have heard what the hon. Gentleman has said.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Will my right hon. Friend deal with the nonsense of ethnic quotas? The programme credits and the faces of those reading the news show that ethnic minorities are at least adequately represented. They are welcome, valued and fortunate to be

here, but should not they be told that British culture and attitudes should predominate, not least in the British Broadcasting Corporation?

Mr. Brooke: That is essentially a matter for the management of the BBC, conducted under the law. It is responsible for its programming and employment practices.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): In the right hon. Gentleman's very comprehensive statement, he said that there were obligations on the BBC to observe due impartiality. Does it have a responsibility to promote British culture and identity? Can he assure us that Northern Ireland may be subjected to less promotion of Irish nationalist culture and identity, as it, too, is part of this nation and the BBC is there to serve the British nation?

Mr. Brooke: The responsibility of the BBC for the culture, heritage and arts of this country is something to which I alluded in my statement. One of the glories of the BBC is that it has been speaking on behalf of the whole nation for more than 70 years. Every minority can expect to be represented, informed, educated and entertained. As someone who was resident in Northern Ireland for part of his career, I pay tribute to the manner in which BBC Northern Ireland conducts that remit.

Mr. Eric Pickles (Brentwood and Ongar): Does my right hon. Friend recognise that, during the BBC's extension, one of the most significant improvements in technology will be digitised broadcasting? Does he further recognise that, no matter what the BBC does in that area, it will be against the backdrop of a diminishing share? He should take that into account when considering the possible licensing of Channel 5—a terrestrial channel. Digitised broadcasting and Channel 5 would enhance the considerable advantage that British industry currently enjoys in that technology. It would be good for our local electronics companies and it would be good for Britain's balance of payments.

Mr. Brooke: My hon. Friend alludes to something to which there was a passing reference in my statement, but obviously his reference to Channel 5 goes outside the statement. There is widespread recognition of the industrial opportunities and the broadcasting gains that can flow both from advances in digital and from the potential of Channel 5. It is certainly a subject of which my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade and I never lose sight.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): The White Paper makes a commitment to the transfer of a proportion of network production from London to Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the regions of England. What assurances can the right hon. Gentleman give about the content of those programmes? Where will editorial control lie? It would not be good enough simply to transfer the production of those programmes, because it is important that they reflect the language, culture and tradition of each of those countries and regions.

Mr. Brooke: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his reference to the BBC's transfer of network production. However, the opinions that we gathered during the consultation process showed that there are as many people who want the production in Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and, indeed, in parts of England of programmes that have a universal application for the nation, as there are who want a strictly regional application. It is an exercise in balance that will have to be sustained within the countries and the regions themselves. However, it is a point which is not remotely lost on the BBC.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the BBC continues to give tremendous stimulus to music through its broadcasts, its orchestras and its promenade concerts and that the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) is completely wrong about it? I join in the general welcome for my right hon. Friend's decision on the 10-year charter and his references to the Select Committee's work, but will he accept that the licence system is not quite satisfactory? The evasion rate is 7 per cent., there are many criminal cases and all the expensive paraphernalia of detector vans. May we dare look forward to the day when eventually it will be possible to disconnect non-payers, as one would with water bills?

Mr. Brooke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for the tribute that he paid to the BBC's commitment to music and I pay tribute to his work as a member of the Select Committee. I alluded to the changes in technology that will make it possible to consider alternatives to the licensing system, let alone to examine the system itself, but he is right—there is resentment that some people in this country enjoy the benefits of television without paying for it.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): During his deliberations, did the Secretary of State receive any representations from those people who are versed in technological Babel and who are calling either for a merger between the BBC and British Telecom or Mercury or for joint public-private sector ventures between the BBC and British Telecom or Mercury? Does not he recognise that that road leads inevitably and inexorably, first, to loss of editorial control and, ultimately, to privatisation?

Mr. Brooke: In response to an earlier question from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), the Chairman of the Select Committee, I said that the issue of the convergence in the technologies would obviously overshadow the next 10 years of the licence fee, but I made no comment on the substance of the issue.

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): Is my right hon. Friend aware that many Conservative Members —although obviously not all—are pleased by his reassurance that the licence fee will be the fundamental way of financing the BBC over the next phase? However, does he realise that our support is necessarily provisional because, in the rapidly moving world of telecommunications and broadcasting, we want the following principles to be maintained: continuity, universality and above all, quality? In the past, the BBC has been renowned for those things, but we want a reassurance that they can be achieved in future.

Mr. Brooke: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend for introducing what might be regarded as a new issue: the fact that maintaining the critical mass of the BBC to achieve the objectives that he described has been an important element in our thinking. As for the provisionality of his views, there will be an opportunity, prior to the year 2000, to review the licensing system.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): Will the Secretary of State accept that, while I welcome his

[Mr. Brian Wilson]

statement's broad approach and the principles on which that it is based, there is real concern among broadcasters in Scotland, Wales and, I am sure, in the English regions—there is nothing parochial about that concern—that they do not wish to broadcast inwards but they wish a fair opportunity to broadcast outwards to the rest of the United Kingdom? Does he also accept that an antidote to the centralist tendencies in the BBC or any large organisation is needed and that the Government have a duty to ensure that resources and the commitment are there to allow all parts of the UK to play a full part in the BBC?

Mr. Brooke: In answer to other questions, I have mentioned the moves that the BBC has already made, but all hon. Members will be watching closely to see what the outcome will be. The BBC's heart is clearly in the right place.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Madam Speaker: Order. We shall now move on.

Points of Order

4.23 pm

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I know that you take a close interest in the affairs of the Principality and no doubt you will have read the leading article in the *Western Mail* which refers to a statement that the Secretary of State for Wales intends to make. The article reads:

"The Development Board for Rural Wales is to be scrapped. Welsh Secretary John Redwood will unveil his plans to abolish the quango in the Commons tomorrow."

It would not be appropriate to raise the substance of that matter today, because, even though it is controversial and will be bitterly resisted by Opposition Members, it is a matter for future debate.

However, I want to raise with you, Madam Speaker, the fact that such a statement seems to me a clear illustration of the arrogance of a Government who have been in power too long, and who demonstrate at every turn their total contempt for the people of Wales. Above all, it shows gross and deliberate discourtesy to the House, and to you, Madam Speaker. You have ruled before that when Ministers have a statement to make to the House of Commons, they should make it to the House of Commons, not pre-empt the proceedings of the House by running away and making statements to the press. Will you confirm that that is the practice, and that that is what you require Ministers to do?

Madam Speaker: I must confess that I am not an avid reader of the *Western Mail*, and as I am not in possession of all the relevant facts, I do not wish to comment on the specific case that the hon. Gentleman has raised. What I do know is that much newspaper comment is often speculation, but I reiterate my view that all important announcements by Ministers should be made to the House in the first instance. I hope that Ministers will always bear my comments in mind.

BALLOT FOR NOTICES OF MOTION FOR FRIDAY 22 JULY

Members successful in the ballot were:

Mr. Harry Cohen
Lady Olga Maitland
Mr. Alan Meale

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Would it be possible for you to outline your thinking on statements? I understand the position of the Speaker if there is a pressing day and urgent business, but we all know that today is a very light day—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."]. Only eight Members were still seeking to catch your eye earlier, Madam Speaker, and we finished at 4.23, not even at a "round figure" such as 4.30 or some other magic hour. May I ask for your thinking on the subject?

Madam Speaker: I do not operate on magic hours; I operate on the basis of when I think the statement made by a Secretary of State has been exhausted by Back-Bench Members. I felt that that was the case today, as I do on many occasions. I have many factors to weigh and to take into account—such as the business before us, which I do not consider at all light, and the fact that we shall return to the issue. I also take into account the fact that I often see frustration on the faces of many hon. Members who are very active; the hon. Gentleman is one of them. I know that he likes to put questions to Ministers, but I have to take so many things into account, and I think that it was fair enough that we finished when we did today. Of course I shall remember the hon. Gentleman on a future occasion, just as I will remember other hon. Members in all parts of the House.

School Leavers Community Service

4.27 pm

Mr. Gyles Brandreth (City of Chester): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to amend section 22 of the Education Reform Act 1988 to introduce a mandatory requirement for the National Record of Achievement of every school leaver to include details of the school leaver's contribution to community service; and for connected purposes.

You will not be surprised to learn, Madam Speaker, that my favourite English historians are Messrs Sellars and Yeatman who, in their classic work "1066 and All That", divided the great moments and the great figures of history into those that were a Good Thing and those that were not. I believe that the whole House will accept that community service is indisputably a Good Thing.

In my part of the world, hundreds of young people are involved in community service—through their schools, through the scouts, the guides and the sea cadets, through Church groups and through voluntary organisations as different as the YMCA and the Chester rural youth action team, and through schemes as well established as the Duke of Edinburgh's award and as innovatory as the Central Council of Physical Recreation's sports leadership award.

Many young people in Chester and beyond are giving freely of their time—helping senior citizens to paint a kitchen, clearing a local canal, picking stones off waste land to turn it into a playing field, working with a will in the local hospital or hospice, serving the homeless and the discarded. Many thousands of young people are already committed to voluntary service—but not enough. We need more. In fact, we need them all, because community service should be part and parcel of every young person's education.

A number of people have been floating ideas in this area for a number of years. Indeed, looking through the cuttings file in the Library, it seems that the notion of some kind of national community service has been on somebody or other's agenda since the ending of national military service back in 1963. The Prince of Wales raised the issue again last week. The Labour party's Commission on Social Justice has explored the possibility. The Government have promised £350,000 as part of their "Make a Difference" initiative to encourage more first-time volunteers and to provide new opportunities and easier access to volunteering.

Across the political spectrum, I hear people talking about the role of the active citizen. I think that I even detect a certain squabbling as to the ownership of the concept of civic responsibility.

The Secretary of State for Education (Mr. John Patten): We thought of it first.

Mr. Brandreth: The Secretary of State asserts that we thought of it first. He is right on most things, so I shall give him the benefit of the doubt on this. Argument, debate, conferences, pamphlets, editorials are all very well, but it is time for action, which is why I am proposing today a practical first step.

Thanks to the Education Reform Act 1988, every school leaver is now equipped with a national record of achievement. My Bill proposes that that all-important document should contain space for a clear and detailed record of the school leaver's contribution to the community. So, alongside the national vocational qualifications and the GSCEs, one would be obliged to show the detail of the community service that one has undertaken.

We can learn from the experience of the United States in this area. In 1992, Maryland became the first state to require community service from students as a condition of high school graduation. Other states now follow Maryland's example. I am not advocating a top-down approach with a heavy structure to impose compulsory community service, but a simple mechanism which will encourage an ever-increasing number of young people to give their time, energy and talent to the community, so helping the community and, equally important, helping themselves.

The move will have wide support. Dr. Martin Stephen, the chairman of the HMC community service committee, has been a pioneer champion of the cause. Community service volunteers, through its CSV education programme, are actively working with schools and colleges to involve young people in positive community action. Martyn Lewis, the good news broadcaster who is visiting the House today, is patron of "Youth for UK", a scheme designed to promote volunteering by 16 to 25-year-olds, based on the belief that all young people should be encouraged to undertake a period of voluntary work.

Wisely, "Youth for UK" wants young volunteers to begin by taking advantage of the opportunities that already exist. It wants to encourage greater co-operation between current providers without in any way threatening their independence. It wants to extend the scope for volunteering so that, in time, sooner rather than later, every young person in Britain will see community service not simply as an exciting challenge, but as a natural part of civilised life in a civilised society.

As you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have been a Member for a couple years only, which is why I still claim to be loosely in touch with reality. Amid the arcane procedures and curious rituals that we have here, several of which still puzzle me, I have nothing but praise and thanks for the opportunities which exist for hon. Members to promote private Members' Bills. My first such Bill did not get past its Second Reading, but the essence of it was taken up by the DTI. My second Bill did not reach Committee, but aspects of it now form part of a Department of the Environment planning policy guidance note. The Video Recordings Act 1993 is now the law of the land and the Marriage Bill may yet be. I am pleased to report that it completed its consideration in Committee this morning.

Whatever the cynics may say in the House and beyond, we Back Benchers, as well as making a noise, occasionally make a difference. I understand that, since 1970, just six ten-minute Bills have reached the statute book. Given the contribution that the young can make to community service and given the contribution that community service can make to the young, it would be glorious if this Bill could be the magnificent seventh.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Gyles Brandreth, Mr. Sebastian Coe, Mr. Charles Hendry, Mr. Graham Riddick and Mr. Nigel Forman.

SCHOOL LEAVERS COMMUNITY SERVICE

Mr. Gyles Brandreth accordingly presented a Bill to amend section 22 of the Education Reform Act 1988 to introduce a mandatory requirement for the National Record of Achievement of every school leaver to include

details of the school leaver's contribution to community service; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 15 July, and to be printed. [Bill 142.]

Orders of the Day

Education Bill *[Lords]*

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered

New clause 1

COMMENCEMENT

'Part I of this Act shall come into force at the end of the period of twelve months beginning with the day on which it is passed.'. —*[Mrs. Ann Taylor.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

4.35 pm

Mrs. Ann Taylor (Dewsbury): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): With this, it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments: No. 4, in clause 5, page 3, line 32, after 'may', insert 'after 1st April 1996'.

No. 11, in clause 26, page 16, leave out lines 26 to 29.

Mrs. Taylor: The Opposition have tabled the new clause and amendments to give the Government another chance to reconsider their ludicrous timetable for the implementation of the measures contained in the Bill. We are opposed to the Bill in principle and we think that it has some serious practical faults. We are extremely unhappy with the Government's lack of attention to the practical difficulties that their proposals will bring to education. We believe that it would be appropriate, even at this late stage, for the Government to think again.

One of the main features of education in the past decade, and especially in the past two years, has been change on change, experiment on experiment and change seemingly for the sake of change. If any hon. Member asks a parent, a school governor or a teacher to state their concerns about education, above all else—there is much else that they complain about—they will speak out about the pace of change that the Government have imposed on education.

Regulations have been introduced before those that preceded them were implemented. Enormous amounts of education legislation have been introduced in recent years. Even now, the Government having been forced to reconsider the national curriculum, there is an insistence that that be done at breakneck speed.

The Bill is yet another example of the haste that the Government show when introducing their legislation. I thought of asking the House who it was who claimed that a good maxim is legislating in haste and repenting at leisure. On reflection, I considered that that would not be a fair question to put to the House because the statement was made by the Secretary of State at the time of an Appeal Court hearing by the National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers.

It is fair to ask why the Secretary of State always insists on legislating before consultations are complete and in pushing legislation through regardless of the views of those involved in education. Why does the right hon. Gentleman, time and again, tell us that every piece of legislation that he brings before us will be the last piece in the jigsaw? That was the phrase that he used when the Bill came before the House for Second Reading. Alas, it was the phrase that he used on Second Reading of what became

the Education Act 1993. Whoever is Secretary of State when the next piece of education legislation comes before us will undoubtedly use similar terminology.

I shall remind the House how rapid has been the change to education that the Government have introduced. In March, the Secretary of State announced that the SCITT —school-centred initial teacher training—pilot schemes were to go ahead. At the time, he said that those pilot schemes were going to be in advance of any future reforms. However, the Education Bill was introduced in the House of Lords on 23 November and, as the Secretary of State was forced to acknowledge in response to parliamentary questions from my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Ms Morris), the results of those pilot schemes will not be known until next May.

Therefore, we have a Bill which is supposed to be based on the experience of pilot schemes, but we are debating this important legislation before we know the outcome of those pilot schemes. It is clear that the pilot schemes were no more than a sop, a pretence and an appearance that the Government were going to be reasonable.

There are no arguments in favour of the very rapid timetable that the Government have introduced, but there are many arguments against it. One of the arguments against the Government's timetable is the confusion in Government quarters about what they think should be happening with regard to teacher education generally.

The Opposition argued on Second Reading and in Committee that it was essential that teacher education should be provided by a partnership between higher education and schools which could provide practical experience. That point was acknowledged on occasions by junior Ministers who seemed to accept that that was the best way to proceed. However, that is not what the Bill allows for. It allows for that partnership to be broken.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Further and Higher Education (Mr. Tim Boswell): Just for the record, does the hon. Lady concede that the Bill does not preclude that either? The fact that something may be desirable does not necessarily mean that it must be prescribed in statute.

Mrs. Taylor: Something as desirable as a partnership in this critical area should be on the face of the Bill. We will reach a critical amendment on that point later and I know that some Conservative Back-Bench Members are concerned about that issue.

I hope that Ministers will respond to my point at this early stage. What is the Government's collective view on the future of teacher education and that partnership between higher education and schools? I have seen the document which has been prepared by the Northern Ireland Office. That significant and official document is dated 1 June 1994. It is therefore also a very recent document. It is therefore a recent statement of Government policy. It states:

"The planning and implementation of ITT will necessitate the strongest possible partnership between ITT providers and schools."

It is clear that Northern Ireland Ministers expect that partnership to be important and to continue.

In the past couple of days, I have seen an even more interesting statement by a Minister, this time at the Scottish Office. I assume that one Department responsible for education consults another Department responsible for education. However, in Scotland, the Scottish Office has decided that, far from schools having an even greater role in teacher education, the reverse will be the case.

Scottish Office Ministers have issued a document to the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities which contains new guidelines. According to those new guidelines, instead of the present arrangement which has been advocated by the Scottish Office whereby trainee teachers should spend 22 weeks in school, the Scottish Office is now recommending that they should spend 18 weeks in schools.

The Under-Secretary of State for Further and Higher Education may well look startled by my comments and I must admit that I was somewhat surprised when I read the new guidelines. While Ministers responsible for education in England and Wales are allowing school-centred initial teacher training—that is, schools to be the focal point of teacher training—their colleagues in Northern Ireland are talking about the importance of partnership and their colleagues in Scotland are reducing the number of weeks that trainee teachers need to spend in schools to obtain practical experience.

I submit that, with Ministers facing in so many different directions, it would be wise to accept the new clause and allow further time for reflection.

4.45 pm

Mr. Colin Pickthall (Lancashire, West): I was not aware of the points raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) about the Scottish Office and the Northern Ireland Office document. Her points add a great deal of weight to the new clause.

The fact that not enough time is being given to assess the results of the pilot schemes properly is very important to the new clause. However, the new clause, like the Bill, is also about the future of the quality of teacher education. Public confidence in our teachers in future will depend largely on what happens as a result of the Bill.

We believe that the Government intend in the longer term that their programmes like school-centred initial teacher training should be expanded across the whole of the teacher education sector. At the moment, the Government argue that that programme applies only to a section of postgraduate courses. In Committee, the Under-Secretary of State for Further and Higher Education said that there were no plans to expand the scheme at this time. When talking to a Centre for Policy Studies meeting last year, the Secretary of State said that SCITT schemes "give students the opportunity to bypass teacher training." That phrase says a great deal about the intentions.

In Committee, we also heard what many Back Benchers would like to see happening to teacher education. In contrast to that, the hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman) who has a distinguished record in education, said:

"By all means let us try to reform teacher training . . . by encouraging a great deal more emphasis on classroom skills and experience . . . However . . . we must be careful not to reduce too far the role of higher education institutions. They have a great deal to contribute".—[*Official Report*, 23 November 1993; Vol. 233, c. 353.]

That was well said and I hope that Ministers will take that point into account.

Clause 16 allows the Secretary of State to impose any changes he wishes on the Teacher Training Agency. That again opens up an avenue about which we are concerned. We have tabled new clause 1 because we believe that the consequences for education could be dire. It could be dire

[Mr. Colin Pickthall]

for the teaching profession; for schools and their pupils in consortia; for teacher education departments in universities and colleges; and for local authorities and their responsibilities.

Those dire consequences may not happen, although we do not know that. However, we know that education institutions of all kinds are infinitely adaptable and none more so than higher education and HE in so far as it is involved in teacher education. It has adapted enormously over the past two decades. However, the balance of probability is that there is a massive element of risk in what the Government are doing. About 99 per cent. of education practitioners are at best apprehensive about the consequences of the Bill, and at worst diametrically opposed to it. Asking why leads us to seek to amend the Bill.

In recent weeks, we have seen the disintegration of some partnerships or parts of partnership schemes. We know that the basis of partnership is being extended into SCITT schemes. In Committee, we noted that the deputy head of the Bishop Stopford school in Enfield was reported in *The Guardian* of 17 May as saying that the consequences of partnership for his school were extremely problematic. There had been serious consequences for senior members of staff who were using far too much time in the supervision of students, and therefore the school was withdrawing from the partnership.

In Committee, we were informed of an article in *The Times*, written by a mature student, Jeremy Howard, who had spent 15 years as an art dealer before experiencing such a partnership. His view—it is straight from the horse's mouth—is:

"The trouble with learning in the classroom is that you get few second chances. It is not easy in school to admit when things are going wrong, for fear of an unsympathetic response or being labelled incompetent."

He reports on Keith Holt, who leads the school-based pilot scheme at Whitmore school in Harrow and who believes that students who plunge straight into a school-based course tend to be less adventurous in their teaching. Perhaps that is what the Government want.

Attrition rates among mentors in partnership schemes are up as much as 25 per cent. That is what Manchester university has experienced. Student drop-out rates in partnerships are growing and are greater than in older established schemes. There have been reported cases of students in partnership schemes having restricted access to higher-ability pupils because the school fears for their over-exposure. Obviously, it has league tables in mind.

The Association of University Teachers and the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education sent hon. Members a document which pointed out that, in one Birmingham partnership scheme, all the selective schools have left the scheme because of pressure on staffing resources.

Those cases are anecdotes and individual examples, but they are important straws in the wind to demonstrate the risk that the new clause would avoid.

The response of head teachers in particular is that, as teachers of children, they are inherently unsuited to teach students in the school situation. Time is needed to examine that judgment, about which teachers have been informing us throughout the progress of the Bill.

Current pilot schemes obviously benefit from initial enthusiasm and commitment. One would expect that. Therefore, one would imagine that the Government had everything to gain from delay. Presumably, the results from pilot schemes will be good and will be enthusiastically reported. The Opposition believe that there should be time for them to be properly assessed.

There is much concern about the widening of and the effect of SCITT schemes over a period, the effect on cost assessment in schools, and the effect on the increased bureaucracy needed in schools to run the schemes. The Bill does not allow time to assess those wider implications. We have had reports of the pressures on teachers as a result of the incessant changes, which my hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury remarked on, and there have been the pressures of curriculum change, which I hope will ease a little over the next 12 months.

Mr. Oliver Heald (Hertfordshire, North): One understands that the hon. Gentleman is a former lecturer and that he wants to stand up for the old higher education lecturers who are his friends, but has he taken the trouble to go to a school which has a school-based initial training scheme and assess it for himself, as I asked in Committee? Has he done so yet?

Mr. Pickthall: I have not been to one of those schemes, but I intend to do so. As I said in Committee, I do not expect to be critical; I expect such schemes to be well run. That is not the substance of my argument.

There have also been league tables and reports of tensions that have been created by league tables, particularly if a schools finds itself slipping in comparison with other schools in the neighbourhood, which could happen because of over-exposure to students. One has seen that already. There have been problems in schools of managing surplus places and the financial consequences of that. There has been the exceedingly high incidence of retirements among experienced teachers in the past few years—the very teachers who would best be able to support students in those circumstances. All those factors mean that there will be excess stress on school staff involved in the schemes or the neglect of students—one or the other.

We also must consider the effects on students. In Committee, my hon. Friend the Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright) said that it takes five years to assess the success of a student's training or teacher education. I would not go that far; I do not think that one could wait that long, but at least some time is needed to assess output—one year, perhaps. For example, we should ask how many students have a job at all at the end and what problems they have in terms of their qualifications. Will there be two tiers of new entrants into the teaching profession as a result of the Bill? What success have students had in the first year, particularly now without a probationary year as a support?

What will be the effect on students of the lack of individual tutorial supervision, the lack of library and research back-up that higher education institutions have, and the lack—I would not underestimate it; it is terribly important—of student mutual support and welfare systems? We must also consider the effect on teacher education departments occupied by young lecturers as well as old ones, I might add, in universities and colleges. They need time, just as the country needs time, to assess the consequences for themselves.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): The hon. Gentleman seems to assume that all is well in higher education institutions. That is certainly not the case. There is enormous dissatisfaction with diploma of education courses and others. That is fundamental to the pressure for change, and the hon. Gentleman should know that.

Mr. Pickthall: I did not imply even remotely that everything was perfect in existing teacher education institutions—that would be foolish. Of course we need continual change and improvement. If such institutions are as appalling as the hon. Gentleman suggests, why are Ministers constantly concerned to tell us that they are only tinkering with a corner of the postgraduate certificate of education courses and leaving all the rest of them alone? If matters were as appalling as the hon. Gentleman says, they would wipe the lot out and start again. Some Conservative Back-Bench Members would like to see that happen. I have seen no evidence in any quantity to suggest that dissatisfaction with the present teacher education arrangements in colleges and universities is as widespread as the hon. Gentleman suggests.

Mr. Nick Hawkins (Blackpool, South): Does the hon. Gentleman regard it as an indictment of the training of teachers that so many school leavers are illiterate after 11 full years of compulsory state education? Is not that an indictment in some way of teaching training?

Mr. Pickthall: No, it is an indictment of 15 years of Conservative control of the education system. The hon. Member for Blackpool, South (Mr. Hawkins) cannot have it both ways. His Government have been in charge of the education system for 15 years, and presided over a period when the education standards to which he refers fell.

Mr. Hawkins: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way again.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Before we go any further, hon. Members should get back to debating commencement.

Mr. Hawkins: If the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Pickthall) is suggesting that the figure for the literacy of school leavers was significantly better in 1979, he is entirely mistaken. I suggest that he looks at the statistics.

5 pm

Mr. Pickthall: Is the hon. Gentleman saying that literacy has not decreased? I do not follow that argument at all. I shall try to wind up quickly.

Local education authorities also need time to adjust because the impact of consortia on local education authority networks will be considerable, depending on the concentration of them. They will have an impact on special educational needs provision, reading support services, the existing cluster arrangements and the existing feeder school arrangements. All that adds up to a compelling case for delay and for proper assessment of what is going on at present, much of which we approve of and want to support.

The Bill is going through on hope and guess. There is no disagreement about partnerships, which should be given more time to demonstrate that they can deliver better education. There is no disagreement about the need to continue to improve teacher education and to refine the increased class-based training. But those working in schools and colleges express deep concern about the likely outcome. They deserve to be reassured by proper assessments. We must get it right first time; otherwise, the Government essentially could be conducting an experiment on school pupils and students which is likely to fail.

Mr. David Evennett (Erith and Crayford): I want to make a brief contribution to the debate on new clause 1, not only as a former teacher from the 1970s but as someone who is married to a teacher. I shall begin by commending the work on the Bill by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and the Ministers on the Front Bench, my hon. Friends the Members for Daventry (Mr. Boswell) and for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire). It is pioneer work and should be supported by the House.

We all want better teachers. We want better trained teachers. We all want better standards in the classroom. We all want academic excellence, good vocational courses and good basic education. For all those things, we need well-trained, well-motivated teachers. I am disappointed that the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) said that we should put off the reforms for 12 months. Many of us feel that reform is long overdue because teacher training has been too academic; it has not looked enough at the chalk face of what is going on in schools, and it has been based too much in an ivory tower.

In the Bill, we have an innovative approach to providing better and more relevant teacher training so that teachers can do a better job, parents can be happier with the teaching in our schools and all pupils can be better educated. We all know that the majority of teachers in our schools do a good job. They have a difficult and demanding job and we must ensure that they have the tools to be able to do that job to the best of their ability. If we come along, as we have in this Bill, with considerable reform to try to improve teacher training, why should we wait? What is the benefit of saying that we want reforms and improvements but we want to wait?

Mr. John Gunnell (Morley and Leeds, South) *rose—*

Mr. Evennett: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman in a moment. It seems that he always wants to wait until tomorrow.

Mr. Gunnell: I am struck by the fact that the hon. Gentleman has told us that the majority of teachers are good. He said that the majority of teachers have the skills. Almost all of them have been through the present training system, and they have acquired those skills from that system. Why is the hon. Gentleman confident that these changes will result in all teachers having those skills? What evidence does he have that there will be an improvement? We think that the whole thing is rubbish and will not help at all.

Mr. Evennett: That is the voice of unenlightened self-interest—the voice of teacher training colleges and lecturers. What I am saying is that teaching changes. We are in a different world now. We are on this side of the House because Labour are still living in the 1960s.

Ms Estelle Morris (Birmingham, Yardley) *rose—*

Mr. Evennett: I will not give way. I must be brief because other hon. Members want to speak.

All I am saying is that we have come forward in the Bill with reforms that are necessary to deal with teacher training today to ensure that we can educate the children of

[Mr. Evennett]

today and tomorrow. The hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Gunnell) is looking back. There are some good teachers but they need retraining. More importantly, we want teachers to train our children for today and tomorrow so that they can compete in the world. As we all know, it is a competitive world out there. We want the best teachers. We want them trained so that they can get the best out of our nation's children. That is what the measure is about. We must therefore reject the new clause.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth) *rose—*

Mr. Evennett: I will not give way. The hon. Gentleman can make his own contribution in a moment; I know that he wants to do so.

What I am saying is that we must reject the new clause. We want the Bill implemented now for the interests of our children, the parents and, ultimately, the teachers. Teachers want to be well trained so that they can enable our future citizens to make a good contribution to and fight for this country with the skills that they need to take on the world in industry, commerce and so on. Without good, well-trained teachers, we cannot have well-educated children. Therefore, we must reject the new clause and get the Bill on the statute book as soon as possible, in the interests of education and in the interests of the people of this country.

Mr. Don Foster (Bath): It is extremely difficult to make a speech following the one by the hon. Member for Erith and Crayford (Mr. Evennett). The hon. Gentleman said that he wants to see high-quality teaching in our schools from well-trained and highly motivated teachers. No hon. Member would disagree with that. The problem is that the hon. Gentleman has failed to give an example of one element of the Bill which will lead to the improvements that he wants to see.

Mr. Heald: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster), who is bought and paid for by the union for higher education lecturers—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that the hon. Member for Bath is in order; otherwise I would have ruled him out of order.

Mr. Foster: I should point out to the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Heald) that I am not bought and paid for by the union for higher education. I would be interested to know the union to which the hon. Gentleman is referring. As he is well aware, and as I have declared on many occasions in the House, I am supported by two teachers' unions. That has been regularly declared, as the Secretary of State will recognise. *[Interruption.]* I am sure that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, would rule me out of order if I went into the question of how much, which would lead me to ask the Secretary of State how much he has been paid recently for a number of his activities.

If the new clause moved by the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) is accepted by the House, it will give the Government the opportunity to stop and think and, in doing so, to reflect on the Bill, especially part I. If we are lucky, they will realise the error of their ways.

The Secretary of State has claimed that the Bill is the last piece in the jigsaw of education reform. I hope that he will recognise that all the recent pieces that have been put in the jigsaw have been hastily introduced, have had little consultation and, following their introduction, have often had to be changed. For example, reference has already been made to the national curriculum and procedures for testing and assessment.

I hope that the Secretary of State will recognise those constant changes in higher education, to which he wants to add. In a recent speech he referred to the "pell-mell pace" of change. I also hope that he will recognise that many of our teachers are suffering from what can only be described as innovation fatigue. I suspect that the difficulties that have been caused by those rapidly introduced bits of the education jigsaw—ill-thought-out and poorly consulted on—together with what might generously be described as some insensitivity, might lead to the Secretary of State's downfall in the forthcoming Cabinet reshuffle.

Hon. Members may wish to remember that, on Second Reading, the Secretary of State said:

"When I eventually leave my post in a good number of years' time".—[*Official Report*, 3 May 1994; Vol. 242, c. 597.]

I think that his prediction is wrong. If he were willing to undergo a last-minute conversion and to accept the new clause and amendments, he might just save himself, although I suspect not. If he accepted the new clause, it would give him time to question why such legislation and such a body as the Teacher Training Agency are so important for England, but are not yet necessary for Wales or Scotland. It would give him time to consider whether it is right for the Secretary of State for Education to take on yet more powers. He already has more powers than any Cabinet Minister, other than the Prime Minister.

If the Secretary of State accepted the new clause and the amendments, it would give him an opportunity to reflect on whether it is right to establish yet another objectionable, costly and superfluous quango, whose membership is to be determined solely by him, thereby undermining any possibility of it being seen as independent or credible.

Mr. Heald: I was somewhat surprised to hear the hon. Gentleman deny that he represents the lecturers, as he does. He represents the Association of Teachers and Lecturers.

Is it not the case that he opposes school-based initial teacher training? If that is so, why does he want to introduce it in one years' time? Why the shilly-shallying? Is it because he does not want to nail his colours to the mast in case the changes succeed? Will he answer the question that I put to him in Committee? Does he support such training, or is it the usual Liberal compromise?

Mr. Foster: I shall answer the hon. Gentleman as clearly and unequivocally as I did in Committee. I am opposed to the introduction of entirely school-centred initial teacher training. I should have thought that he would have understood why I support the new clause, if he had been listening. It will create some time for the Secretary of State and his Front-Bench colleagues to reflect on the errors contained in this legislation and will possibly allow them to introduce further legislation that would prevent those moves from taking place.

Mr. Heald: Does the hon. Member agree that that is a complete nonsense? If he is against, he should be against

and not introduce the change in a years' time. That is shilly-shallying in case it succeeds—then the Liberal Democrats will change their tune.

Mr. Foster: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman could wait until Third Reading, when—by voting—I will make it absolutely clear where I and my party stand on the Bill.

The time that would be created, and might give the Secretary of State the opportunity to change his ways, would also enable him to consider whether it is right to fragment higher education, which is what the Bill will do, by separating the education of teachers from all other aspects of higher education and thereby diminishing the already fragile professional status of teachers.

The Secretary of State would also have time to reflect on why so many organisations oppose the proposals and so few accept them. On Second Reading he said:

"The success of all our reforms depends on teachers working hard to put them into effect."—[*Official Report*, 3 May 1994; Vol. 242, c. 600.]

If that is so, would it not be a good idea to ensure that those, or any new proposals, are widely accepted before they are implemented?

The hon. Member for Erith and Crayford (Mr. Evennett) said that he wanted well-motivated teachers, but the introduction of one piece of legislation after another with which they disagree is hardly the best way to motivate teachers.

Because of the time allowed in the new clause, the Government will be able to reflect on whether it is appropriate to have yet more changes in initial teacher training, on top of the many changes that have already taken place in recent years and which the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Pickthall) so rightly described. There would also be time to reflect once more on the advisability of moves towards skill-centred initial teacher training.

The hon. Member for Lancashire, West was not certain whether the Bill intended such a move. I believe that the Government intend to push hard towards school-centred initial teacher training.

5.15pm

If one wants evidence, one needs only to read the Secretary of State's words on Second Reading, when he said:

"We are taking training closer to the chalk face and out of the ivory silo."—[*Official Report*, 3 May 1994; Vol. 242, c. 600.]

Much more convincing evidence comes from the 1994 Conservative party campaign guide, which stated:

"The Education Bill currently before Parliament will give effect to the clear and distinctive Conservative view of teacher training—based on the belief that schools themselves should play the principal role in devising, and running, teacher training courses. Students should spend time in the classroom gaining practical experience and less time in higher education institutions learning (often left-wing) educational theory."

That is the principle that underlies the Government's move.

As other hon. Members have asked, is it not foolish to move towards school-based initial teacher training before the results of the pilot schemes have been evaluated?

One final matter on which the Secretary of State and Ministers may wish to reflect is that, if the measures go ahead, there is a danger that the number of institutions that participate in initial teacher training will decline markedly during the next few years. If that is the case, the very choice and diversity that Conservative Members are keen on providing will not be available.

I hope that the House will accept the new clause and the amendments, as they will give us time to reflect on the appalling proposals contained in the Bill and, having reflected, allow us ultimately to throw it out in its entirety.

Mr. Hawkins: In a very brief contribution I want to make one important point—that the people who matter in an education system are the children, followed by their parents.

As a former teacher, the son of a teacher and a university don and, most importantly, as a parent governor in a state junior school for some years, I was appalled by the low calibre of some people coming from teacher training colleges. There are many fine teachers and I pay tribute to their work, but when teachers leaving training colleges cannot spell properly, subtract, add up, or do simple mathematics, how are they supposed to pass on the required skills?

Mr. Enright *rose—*

Mr. Hawkins: I am sorry, but I shall not give way because I said that I would be very brief.

I speak for parents and children, who deserve better-quality teachers. That is what the Teacher Training Agency will provide and that is why we should reject the Opposition's new clause. We want full support for the Government's proposals.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (Mr. Robin Squire): The amendments moved by the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) and supported by Opposition Members are misguided. They attempt to go back over the same ground which was trodden earlier in Committee, except that this set of amendments is rather worse constructed than the earlier amendment covering the same issue. I shall come to the technical aspects later.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: Not too late.

Mr. Squire: I take that correction from a sedentary position from the hon. Lady.

The intention of the amendments is clear. The Opposition do not want to see the Teacher Training Agency up and running for another year, if at all. They do not want to see one body with an overview of teacher training bringing together the key functions of giving information to potential students and promoting teaching as a career, ensuring that all courses meet national standards, encouraging diversity in provision and offering choice to students, and allocating funds in pursuit of the statutory objective of raising the standards of teaching.

That is what the Teacher Training Agency will do and, as my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South (Mr. Hawkins) reminded us, it is something which the Government are firmly pledged to carry through. The House sees a compelling case for the agency, and voted accordingly on Second Reading.

I have yet to hear a compelling reason why the implementation of the new arrangements should be subject to an arbitrary and unnecessary delay. My hon. Friend the Member for Erith and Crayford (Mr. Evennett) commented on it with wise words, and I agree with him completely. I accept that changes to the new arrangements for funding and accreditation will need careful planning. Contrary to

[Mr. Squire]

the allegations of the hon. Member for Dewsbury, the changes will be phased in. Delaying the setting up of the agency will militate against sensible transition.

I listened to the hon. Member Lancashire, West (Mr. Pickthall)—as I did in Committee—talk about his fears and concerns about change and the possible risk. I accept that we are requiring a change in teacher training, but the change is designed to improve performance. We do not underestimate the importance of getting in the new arrangements properly with the co-operation of higher education and schools. The Teacher Training Agency will be well placed to oversee and monitor that process and adjust the funding and other arrangements as necessary.

Those, I submit, are arguments in favour of a specialist body and are scarcely arguments against. After all, only when the agency is up and running with members and officers can it start to take a view on the important issues. Not having an agency until this time next year will simply freeze the position for 12 months, and that will not help the agency at all. It appears that one single issue has blinded the Opposition to the range of important work that the agency will be doing and co-ordinating.

Mr. Don Foster: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Squire: I refer, of course, to school-centred initial teacher training and, at that precise moment, I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Foster: I was trying to catch the Minister's eye just before he moved on from that point. He said that the Teacher Training Agency will be making vital decisions affecting teaching. Will the meetings of the TTA be held in public, following the advice given by Baroness Blatch to the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education, as the agency is making vital decisions on one aspect of teaching?

Mr. Squire: The meetings will not be held in public, but the hon. Gentleman knows from the points raised in Committee that the general code of openness will apply to the proceedings and deliberations of the agency. It will not have open meetings as such.

The key issue from the Opposition's comments both here and in Committee has been the question of school-centred initial teacher training. Delaying the Bill would not prevent progress with school-centred training under existing legislation, which would carry on and be funded directly by the Department on pioneer courses. It would mean that, rather than the agency looking across all teacher training—in the light of all the evidence—and making judgments about the balance to strike between school-centred and other courses, that balance would remain for my right hon. Friend to determine for another year.

In the light of the comments of the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster), that is scarcely an example of more power being taken by the Secretary of State. On the contrary, the Bill is another example of my right hon. Friend passing up powers.

I accept all that has been said about the importance of the Ofsted evaluation of school-centred training, and I say the same about all Ofsted evaluations. The agency will be well placed to take account of the emerging messages in the decisions which it takes on funding or courses during the academic year 1995-96.

Mr. Greg Pope (Hyndburn): Does the Minister agree with the disgraceful comments made by the hon. Member for Blackpool, South (Mr. Hawkins) that many newly qualified teachers are of a low calibre? If he does agree with his hon. Friend, why does the Minister think that those low-calibre teachers are the people best placed to train the next generation of teachers?

Mr. Squire: The hon. Gentleman is trying to lead me down avenues which I am not particularly willing to go down. I am happy to tell him that, on the basis of several visits both to school-centred training and higher education teacher training, the calibre in general of new teachers is very good. *[Interruption.]* But I would think that it would not be a matter for argument across the Chamber that teaching in general needs ever higher standards to match the demands being made on schools by the world outside. I hope that that is not controversial. We are trying to ensure that there is a better chance of higher-calibre teachers emerging in the future.

Ms Estelle Morris: If the Bill becomes law, will the Government continue to make larger grants available to students sitting their teacher training course in a SCITT than to those sitting their course at another institution?

Mr. Squire: The hon. Lady is, in effect, referring to one of the many decisions that the Teacher Training Agency will need to take. That will be linked with the value for money which we have stressed throughout the proceedings. The agency will be looking for quality in courses and will also look for value for money. In very broad terms, the sums of money that school-centred initial teacher training courses will get will be similar to that which goes at present to higher education.

Ms Morris: The specific point about which I wished to talk was the grant being made available to students sitting their initial teacher training course. I think that I am right in saying that at the moment students get a greater grant when they are on a SCITT course than if they do the same training in another institution. Will the Government say whether that will continue, or will they allocate resources and grants equally to all students who are studying initial teacher training, whatever way they choose to do so?

Mr. Squire: I believe that I am right in saying that the intention is that students will be treated in the same way under whichever form of training they are going to be receiving, whether it is higher education-dominated and school-based or school-centred. If that is not true, I shall return to the point during our proceedings this afternoon. That is certainly my understanding of the matter.

I mentioned at the outset certain technical deficiencies, and I shall not spend too long on them. Amendment No. 11 removes the commencement provisions of the Bill. While new clause 1 would at least enable part I to be started—although late—it would not enable parts II and III to be started. That would not allow essential student union reforms and would leave much of part I ineffective without the general provisions of part III.

Amendment No. 4 adds little to the overall effect of amendment No. 11 and new clause 1. It would simply prevent the agency and the Higher Education Funding

Council for Wales from funding institutions under the Bill until the financial year 1996-97. Since the agency would not exist until 1995, that could hardly be described as a further bar as it could scarcely do otherwise.

The Government have no intention of agreeing to the amendment, or the others in the group. There is no reason to delay, and the case for the agency is clear cut and accepted by the House. The amendments are wrong in principle and in practice. They would create uncertainty and confusion, and I ask the House to resist them.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: The debate has been much longer than I expected when I moved the new clause. The Minister was correct in one point—the Opposition do not want to see the Teacher Training Agency established. We have consistently opposed the Bill in principle, and we are seeking with the new clause to give the Government time to reconsider and look at the evidence which is not yet available because the pilots have not been completed.

The Minister's responses to many of the questions show that there are still many points which need to be decided, such as the critical point which he was not able to answer with regard to student support.

Mr. Squire: Lest there be any confusion, let me confirm that SCITT students will be treated on precisely the same basis as HE students.

Mrs. Taylor: The Minister is learning all the time, and I think that that experience will apply to the whole Bill.

One of the most interesting comments was made by the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Heald), who said that the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) opposed the Bill in case it succeeded. If Conservative Members are speaking in such terms, they are clearly not convinced that it will succeed. The hon. Member for Blackpool, South (Mr. Hawkins) expressed concern about children; his first concern should be to stop the experimentation that has so disrupted the quality of education recently.

The Minister did not tell us why the Government were adopting inconsistent attitudes to Northern Ireland, Scotland and England and Wales. Perhaps we can return to that on another occasion.

I accept that the new clause and amendments may be technically deficient. I do not want to waste time; we have other important matters to discuss. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

New clause 2

FUNCTIONS OF HER MAJESTY'S CHIEF INSPECTORS OF SCHOOLS

'.—(1) Her Majesty's Chief Inspectors of Schools may cause any institution which provides initial training for school teachers to be inspected, as regards the provision of such training, by one or more of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (in this section referred to as "Inspectors").

(2) An Inspector shall for the purpose of inspecting an institution under this section have at all reasonable times—

(a) a right of entry to the premises of the institution;

(b) a right to inspect, and take copies of, any records kept by the institution, and any other documents containing information relating to the institution, which he considers relevant to the discharge of his function.

(3) It is an offence wilfully to obstruct an Inspector in the exercise of any of his functions under this section.

(4) A person guilty of such an offence is liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 4 on the standard scale.'.—*[Mr. Pawsey.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

5.30 pm

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss Government amendment No. 1.

Mr. Pawsey: Let me immediately declare an interest: I am an adviser to the Association of Teachers and Lecturers.

This is principally a probing new clause, designed to develop the case made in Committee for inspection of colleges providing initial teacher training. Those who served on the Committee will recall that I tabled amendments that would have given OFSTED a prominent role in the control of such training. Sadly, when the lead amendment was called I was taking a delegation to meet my hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside; as I obviously could not be in two places at once, I was unable to move the amendment. I am therefore anxious to raise the important issue of quality assessment in ITT and HMI's role in its improvement.

I was pleased that the amendments that I tabled in Committee received some support, and I thank my hon. Friend the Minister for his courtesy in responding so fully and agreeing to consider them further. I note that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has tabled amendments to clause 5 which deal with the first point that I made in Committee, and I am grateful to him. I believe that my right hon. Friend is a listening Secretary of State—*[Interruption.]* It is no good Opposition Members making funny noises. My right hon. Friend listens to arguments, and if they have substance he acts.

HMI's role should be clearly specified in the Bill. It has an important part to play in the work of the Teacher Training Agency, and no one would dispute that an objective and professional assessment of training would greatly assist decisions about the way in which money should be allocated. If the concept of "to the best, the most" is too elitist, at least we can ensure that colleges whose standards are lower receive less money.

In a newsletter dated April 1994, the Campaign for Real Education states:

"Educational reform will never succeed without radical improvements to the cultural attitudes prevalent in the teaching profession . . . Perhaps the first priority of the new agency should be an urgent review of the way trainee teachers are taught to teach reading? Improvements to this crucial part of teacher training could raise national standards more quickly than anything else. And may we look forward"—

this is the nub of the new clause—

"to careful checks on all teacher training courses, coupled with the withdrawal of funding for those where 'good practice' based on ideological beliefs takes precedence over proven teaching methods supported by research?"

The new clause will allow discussion about whether teacher training should be more closely associated with HMI's statutory duties. It may be considered slightly outside the mainstream of OFSTED's functions as set out in the Education (Schools) Act 1992, but we are now establishing a new statutory basis for initial teacher training, and I consider it entirely logical to set out a new statutory basis for its inspection.

I understand that HMI currently has the right to inspect schools, but—and it is an important but—no right to inspect higher education and teacher training. The new

[Mr. Pawsey]

clause takes a slightly different tack from the amendments tabled in Committee; I am trying to stress the need for HMI to inspect institutions—and, if it is given such a right, it will also need absolute rights of entry and access.

I realise that my suggestion may be considered slightly controversial, and may not be entirely to the liking of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals. It may be seen as a direct challenge of the committee's autonomy, or even as a challenge to academic freedom. Like all Conservative Members, I give way to no one in my belief that academic freedom is a pillar of our democracy: it is of the utmost importance. However, I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, East—[HON. MEMBERS: "Blackpool, South."] I am sorry; I meant my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South (Mr. Hawkins). He stressed the importance of parents in this connection; he also referred to the importance of teachers, and I was interested by Opposition Members' reaction to that. He is right: there should be a partnership between children, parents and teachers.

Mr. Harry Greenway: I congratulate my hon. Friend on his geography, but he seems to be moving away from his central argument. The principle that he advocates—proper inspection of the new scheme—is admirable. Does he envisage on-the-spot, unannounced visits, longer inspections over a set period or a combination of the two?

Mr. Pawsey: I thank my hon. Friend for supporting the general principle. He asks whether inspections should be unannounced, or whether HMI's descent should be clearly advertised. I subscribe to the former. I should like inspections to be carried out without notice.

I want to achieve a high standard of teacher training, which, in turn, will ensure a high standard of teaching. In its turn, that will ensure a high standard of education for the nation's children. High standards can be guaranteed only if there is some right of independent inspection. The new clause seeks to remedy what I regard as a defect in the Bill and underline the importance of proper inspections for, without them, the quality of teacher training cannot and will not be guaranteed. If rigorous inspections of schools are necessary, why should they be any less necessary in the training of teachers?

A leading article in *The Sunday Times* of 10 April said:

> "On the eve of the NUT conference, a report from the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit should have sent a shudder through the nation . . . It discovered that the number of young people who have serious problems with literacy and numeracy has risen in recent years from one in eight to one in five."

That quotation shows the whole justification for the Bill and the need substantially to change how teachers are trained.

Mr. Hawkins: Does my hon. Friend agree that the only negative thing that one could say about this reform is that it should have been done in 1979? It is long overdue, but I am delighted that it is happening at long last.

Mr. Pawsey: I accept what my hon. Friend has said.

I disagree with mixed-ability teaching. I am convinced that it is one of the fashionable panaceas that existed during the 1960s and 1970s. I have the utmost doubts about its effectiveness. I hope that I may be able to persuade my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to mention the matter, because it is outdated and should be dropped.

Mr. Enright: Will the hon. Gentleman define what he means by "mixed-ability teaching"? How would he organise it, for example, in religious or physical education?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Before the hon. Gentleman answers, it would help the debate and be correct if he would return to the subject of Her Majesty's inspectors of schools.

Mr. Pawsey: I am obliged to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. While I should have liked to have responded to the question of the hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright), perhaps I shall see him in his usual place in the Library in the fulness of time.

One of the issues that prompted me to table new clause 2 is the decline in the standard of English teaching. There is substantial evidence from Ofsted of particularly weak performance in that subject. For example, the new "Teacher in School" survey says that some 46 per cent. of new primary teachers do not feel adequately prepared to teach reading. That is a damning indictment of the present system and it underlines yet again the need for change and for a proper and adequate system of teacher training—and the need for its inspection. *[Interruption.]* I regret the fact that Labour Members seem to think that teacher training is a laughable matter. I believe that initial teacher training is a serious issue that should be given the consideration that it deserves. I am delighted that at least Conservative Members are treating it in a sober way.

I was about to compliment Opposition Members by saying that hon. Members on both sides of the House are anxious to improve the quality and standard of state education, where the overwhelming majority of the nation's children are educated. The Bill will do much to advance that laudable objective, but it will do so that much more easily if an adequate system of inspection is in place.

The new clause not only ensures that institutions providing initial teacher training will be inspected, but that inspectors—

Mr. David Jamieson (Plymouth, Devonport): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Pawsey: No, I shall not give way.

It ensures that inspectors have a right of entry to inspect and take copies of any records that are maintained by those institutions.

I have also built into the new clause penalties for failing to provide inspectors with the co-operation which they will require in exercising their duties. I suspect that my right hon. Friend may have some modest difficulty in accepting that part of the new clause, yet unless a penalty exists, the rigorous inspection that is required will not take place.

5.45 pm

Mr. George Walden (Buckingham): Naturally, I sympathise with the passions that drive my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) in proposing the new clause. I hope that he will forgive me for sounding a little cynical in what I am about to say.

One of the problems which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education faces is that he can work only with the material available, whether that be children whose parents cannot even talk because they spend their time watching television at home; whether it be children from hopelessly deregulated families; or whether it be

children who are subjected to an old-fashioned system of education, based on a defunct philosophy. I am talking about John Dewey's philosophy—the rot set in during the 1890s, not the 1960s, with phoney theories that have gripped the minds of generations of well-meaning, not always very bright, members of the profession.

What worries me about my hon. Friend's proposal is that I cannot see how we shall find inspectors to go into those institutions and root out the philosophical addiction that lies deep in the minds—worse, in the souls—of people who are often not at all left-wing. Worse, they are deeply sentimental people who have, deep in their souls, a mistaken philosophy of education, which it will be impossible to eradicate by inspectors, not least because we shall be unable to find inspectors who are free from the same virus—unless we use some form of thought police.

I confess to being a little surprised by the phrasing of the new clause, which says:

"A person guilty of such an offence is liable on summary conviction"—

that sounds a little Stalinist—

"to a fine not exceeding level 4 on the standard scale."

That conjures up the idea of some sort of right-wing thought police going into those establishments, complete with manacles and scales of fines, who would try to constrain those people financially or even physically. The Chinese communists would call it "thought reform", which is what is needed because nothing short of thought reform à la Chinoise—if we are still allowed to use French—will change those people's minds. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State would not want to be associated with that.

Mr. Pawsey: May I respectfully remind my hon. Friend that one of the quotations that I used was drawn from the Campaign for Real Education. As it seems that he may have inadvertently forgotten, I said:

"Educational reform will never succeed without radical improvements to the cultural attitudes prevalent in the teaching profession."

I do not believe that there is so much of a gulf between us.

Mr. Walden: I did notice that phrase, with mental approval. However, the second part of my argument, which I shall now develop, is that one will not be able to find the inspectors to do that job, and to change the culture of the people inside the institutions, because they themselves are the product of those institutions.

I should like to ask my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State what he makes of a detailed, and I think responsible, report in *The Daily Telegraph* today by John Clare, one of the most distinguished and seriously engaged people in the field, which enunciates some of my private misgivings, which perhaps I should have voiced at the time—mea culpa on that—about the new inspection arrangements.

My misgivings were based precisely on the fear that one will not be able to find people to do a better job at inspecting schools in the private sector, when inevitably they come from the same stable as existed in the public sector. Mr. Clare's report shows, in its detailed accounts of what appear to be serious failings in individual schools, that those inspectors, who cost a lot of money, incidentally, are using the same wily, evasive phrases as were, and I imagine still are, current among Her Majesty's official inspectors, such as, "the lessons seem to me to be"—what is that terrible phrase?—"satisfactory or better". It seems awfully low on the scale to me to have a "satisfactory" level of teaching, and "better" is slightly woolly, to say the least.

Mr. Alan Howarth (Stratford-on-Avon) *rose—*

Mr. Walden: I see that my hon. Friend is about to get up, and I will give way, but I shall finish this thought while it remains a coherent one.

My hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth is proposing a new clause for more inspection by Ofsted, and I am pointing out that, according to that evidence and other anecdotal evidence that I have heard, the new system is not working brilliantly in schools, so why should it work well in those heartlands of education, the teacher training establishments?

Mr. Howarth: My hon. Friend is waxing deeply melancholic. On the logic of his position—that those people who are products of a system can never improve it—and given his view that the system is unspeakably awful, should we not give up education altogether?

Mr. Walden: That would be an option, and in a sense it is one that I have taken, by withdrawing my three children from the state education system, at colossal cost to myself over the years. I begrudge every penny of that, because my friends in France, who have a rather elitist form of state education—and often turn out to have more money than I do—send their children to state schools where they very often receive a good, demanding education, which is so difficult to find in this country, as the putative Leader of the Opposition is about to discover. I am not being vindictive, but I attach a lot of importance to education, and I think that the press will be justified in watching very closely the personal judgments made by the putative Leader of the Opposition when it comes to his own children.

I am not being negative about that; in a way I am being more positive, by pointing up the question, than people who evade it by—

Mr. Enright: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Walden: Let me finish the thought, and then I will certainly give way. I am being more positive than people who evade it by proposing solutions that I consider unworkable.

Mr. Enright: Is the hon. Gentleman seriously suggesting that it is wrong for the putative Leader of the Opposition to send his children to a Catholic school?

Mr. Walden: I see Mr.—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. What has that to do with the inspectors of schools? *[Interruption.]* Order. Wherever anyone wants to send their children to school, it is nothing to do with the new clause before us, which is about the inspectors of schools.

Mr. Walden: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I had a good answer to that intervention, but I now feel prohibited from giving it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) posed the real question, which is that if I believe that we are caught in a vicious circle, which we are, and he accuses me of being—I forget how he put it—negative—

Mr. Howarth: Melancholic.

Mr. Walden: I once wrote a pamphlet on that very subject, called "The Blocked Society". It was a melancholy analysis. The new clause is a perfect example, which is why I rise to speak to it, of the nature of the blockage in this country. It is "Quis custodiet custodes?" My hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth is asking people to go into those establishments when they have not—obviously it is only my view—the necessary critical approach to those philosophies, which date back to the early part of this century, to John Dewey and so on, and are deeply ingrained, and have been enormously damaging to this country for many decades.

I must come up with a solution, because it is no good simply stating that there is a blockage. The first part of the solution is to state the blockage and not evade it, as I am afraid that my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth may be in danger of doing.

The second thing to do, which may sound slightly idealistic although I can think of no other solution, is to try to get people—I admit that it is difficult—who are not tainted by what I call "conventional thinking" in those matters, and who are capable of taking an international view and considering what goes on in France, in Germany and even in Russia. One of the few things on which the Soviet regime made progress, although it did not get it right, was education. Those people should consider other countries and ask why we all have such a fundamental problem about education in this country. Even Opposition Members, in their quieter moments, know that we have a fundamental problem—a "blockage", in my terms—about education.

Those people should try to bring together two or three authoritative people—I dare even use the word "intellectuals"—thinking people, respected people, and obviously not all Tories because this is something that is so much more important than politics. They should commission those people to take a hard look at educational establishments, from the point of view of the philosophy that is obviously prevalent in all of them as far as I can see, because all the people I meet say the same thing, and to ask themselves what good that way of thinking has done our country, whether they consider that it is still the right way of thinking, and if not—as seems to me self-evident, but they may reach another conclusion—what can be done to change, in a non-party way, the text books that are used in those establishments.

To return to the new clause of the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth, which I support, they should decide what intellectual guidance can be given to inspectors to update their thinking when it comes to inspecting those establishments.

Mr. Harry Greenway: I am following my hon. Friend's argument with great care and deep interest, and I think that the House is. I hope I do not belittle him—that is the last thing that I intend to do or have the right to do —but does he not seem to assume intellectual sterility in the generation about which he worries so much, and assume that there is no dynamic about the thinking, even though they have been badly educated? If he does think that, I think that he is mistaken. If he does not think that, why does he not think that they can break out of their weak education by the natural dynamic that is in every human being?

Mr. Walden: My hon. Friend makes a good point, and perhaps I am in danger of sounding as though nothing has happened. Obviously a lot has happened, especially on the Conservative Benches, in that field. Even reading the speeches of the putative Leader of the Opposition on education and educational philosophy, which is so closely linked to the new clause of my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth, one senses a certain edginess about what is going on in education, together with a resolute desire not to offend the educational clientele of the Labour party. That sort of edginess, which can even be seen in the speeches of the putative Leader of the Opposition, comes from the dynamic thinking on education that has taken place—among Conservative Members rather than Opposition Members—over all these years. Therefore, it is correct to say that things have moved on.

However, the point that I am making is still correct. How does one implement the new clause with the thinking in the army out there without changing that thinking? We know that that problem has always been the bugbear ever since we started the reforms—we started late, in 1983-84 rather than 1979. We have not cracked the nut. The solution to the problem is not to try to crack it by party-political, ideological heavy-handedness. We must obtain—I hate to use the phrase, but it is the only one that I can think of—a national consensus that there is something gravely and philosophically amiss in our teacher training colleges.

I agree with the new clause, but I should like it to be accompanied by an extremely serious, high-level and possibly bipartisan proposal for the appointment of, perhaps a trio, of nationally respected people. Those appointees should not necessarily come from the educational sphere, but they must ask the question: something is deeply wrong—what can be done about it?

6 pm

The Secretary of State for Education (Mr. John Patten): I have been allowed by my hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell), the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Further and Higher Education, and my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire), the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education, who bore the heat in Committee, to have a brief airing today to reply to new clause 2.

I welcome the opportunity to have a brief discussion on issues of quality that are of central importance to the success of our reforms in this as in all other sectors. Labour members of the Committee offered no suggestions on this subject in Committee. They were not concerned with quality and it was left to my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) to raise that issue and to gain an assurance then that we would return to the subject on Report. The Labour party was not interested in quality. My hon. Friend has also, in a probing spirit, as he has emphasised, tabled new clause 2 to stimulate further brief debate.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: The Secretary of State did not choose to serve on the Committee of the Bill. Had he done so, he would have been familiar with the amendments tabled in Committee, including the one dealing with quality that was similar to the new clause that we are

discussing today, although it related to another clause. I hope that, in view of that, the right hon. Gentleman will withdraw his comments.

Mr. Patten: If one looks at the account of the Committee's debate in *Hansard*, one sees that there was very little, if any, concern for quality shown by the official Opposition. It was the issue of quality that brought my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) to his feet. He made some interesting suggestions, with one of which I shall begin my comments and one of which I shall use to end them.

My hon. Friend's first suggestion was that I should, in a Brezhnevian way, introduce some thought police to go round teacher training colleges to take a close look. I had never thought of that idea, but as it has been suggested by my hon. Friend I shall ponder it.

My hon. Friend was saddened and felt that state schools were inadequate for some children in this country. I visited a couple of good state schools—both grant-maintained—in his constituency of Buckingham last month, shortly before I was egged in Buckingham marketplace—not by my hon. Friend. The egger was much more accurate than the National Union of Students has ever been and destroyed my suit in the process.

My hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham referred to the quality of inspection. The House knows that Professor Sutherland, the chief inspector, takes seriously, and will investigate, any allegation that registered inspectors are not being rigorous enough in their reports on schools. It is clear that the inspectors are being tough. Already, 10 schools have been declared to require special attention as failing schools.

That was thought to be an outrageous concept two years ago when I introduced it in the Education Act 1993. It is now part of the warp and weft of the way that we look at schools in difficulty. Local authorities are learning that they must co-operate to turn such schools round. Where necessary, we shall ensure that such schools are transferred to an educational association. A new and strengthened framework for inspection was issued last month. It takes account of the experiences of the first year of inspection and strengthens the criteria against which inspectors must report.

My hon. Friend made the important suggestion that we should consider bringing in international expertise. That is not a matter for me; it is for the chief inspector. I shall draw my hon. Friend's proposal to the attention of Professor Sutherland. I shall draw to the attention of everyone in the Department for Education the fact that we in the Department must do all that we can to ensure that we never indulge in politically correct language and encourage a degree of approval in national life for intellectualism. One of the great barriers to national advance has been that for most of this century there has been such a strong anti-intellectual streak in British culture. That has not done us any good.

My hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham feels that there are some difficulties. My hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South (Mr. Hawkins) said that it was important that we got going and regretted the fact that we did not begin the reforms of teacher training 15 years ago. That may be a fair comment, but I say to my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham that we must start somewhere, and we must do so with the tools that we have to hand. I prefer to start as we are doing now rather than do nothing.

Improving quality in teacher training is extremely important. We have taken the first steps towards ensuring quality by setting out the necessary knowledge and skills that all new teachers need. Teachers and their trainers now know what is expected of them. I believe that that step has been welcomed on both sides of the House, but it is not enough. To find out where the best initial teacher training is taking place—to promote best practice and help it to drive out outdated and ineffective approaches—we need good first-hand evidence about quality and the way in which different courses are succeeding or failing. It is critical that we do that.

I think that we are all alarmed—my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth certainly expressed alarm in his notable speech when he moved the new clause—at the evidence that almost half of all recently qualified primary school teachers reported that after four years in college they felt ill equipped to teach the reading of English. If that is not a matter for alarm, I shall be very surprised. I hope that it is taken as seriously by Opposition Members as by Conservative Members.

We read in the recent, hard-hitting OFSTED report of the need for primary teachers to use a range of teaching styles, including whole-class teaching and grouping by ability. I understand that the Select Committee on Education, on which a number of right hon. and hon. Members serve, has been hearing from some eminent teacher trainers—not men and women of the left or right in conventional terms, but people who a few years ago might have been characterised as part of the education establishment—about the extreme difficulties of mixed ability teaching. If they had talked five years ago in the terms that they used in Committee only two or three weeks ago, there would have been a fatwah against them—I see that my hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington), who serves with distinction on that Committee, is nodding in assent.

Teacher training institutions must urgently address those key issues and the inspectorate must judge how effective they are in tackling them. It is to stress our commitment to quality and to the inspection of teacher training that I have tabled amendment No. 1. Clause 5 already requires the agency to have regard to assessment of quality when making its funding decisions. I made it clear from the time of our initial consultation paper that I intended Her Majesty's inspectorate to be the main source of such assessments. But there will be other sources of quality assessment, such as the Higher Education Funding Council.

Amendment No. 1 reflects the position on the face of the Bill. It adds a reference to any assessments of quality made by either of Her Majesty's chief inspectors of schools—in England or across Offa's Dyke in Wales—to which the agency must have regard. The amendment leaves intact as a second limb the reference to any other quality assessments to which the agency thinks that it would be appropriate to have regard or to which the Secretary of State requires it to have regard.

HMI assessments are, quite properly, set apart as the first and most essential evidence for the agency. The amendments tabled in Committee by my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth and his new clause today go further than that, as he has explained. His earlier amendments would have added the assessment of quality in initial teacher training to the general duties of HMI under the Education (Schools) Act 1992. That Act

[Mr. Patten]

mentions functions with respect to school teacher training as being among those which may be assigned to HMI. However, we could not at that time include those functions within the full framework of the Act because of its limited scope.

It was suggested by my hon. Friend in his notable speech—which both sides of the House listened to with great care and attention—that it would be timely to put teacher training inspection on a firmer footing. I have much sympathy with that view. However, for all the reasons that I set out at the start of my remarks, it is essential that we secure equal inspection treatment for schools and higher education so that all providers of teacher training and teacher education can be assessed on exactly the same basis.

In effect, for many years HMI has had the de facto right of entry to inspect teacher training in universities. The holder of my office would not otherwise have approved the course. That was achieved by agreement with the institutions. As my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State and my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary stressed during the passage of both parts of the Bill, we set store by academic freedom—of course we do—and we have no wish to intervene under statute except where necessary—of course we have not. We want to leave as much freedom as possible to higher education institutions.

In reflecting on the new clause, I have given careful consideration to all the options. My hon. Friend said that it was a probing new clause, so I ask him to give careful thought to the following way of proceeding. While not quite as straightforward as amending the Bill, nor as satisfactory in terms of putting HMI's own duties in this area on a par with its duties in respect of schools, I assure my hon. Friend that I intend to secure exactly what he wishes by another route. In other words, I intend to ensure that HMI carries out its important role by means of terms and conditions of grant. Put simply, but not crudely, the bottom line will be no inspection, no funding. That will achieve the end that my hon. Friend wants.

I can tell the House tonight that I propose to make it a condition of my grant to the Teacher Training Agency—*[Interruption.]* I hope that one day the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) will regret the fact that she has never apologised for the disagreeable personal attack on the distinguished high master of Manchester grammar school, who is assuming the chairmanship of the agency. It was a disgraceful attack on one of the best head teachers not only in this country but in the world.

It will be a condition of my grant to the agency under clause 7 that, in turn, it should impose as a condition of its grant to all higher education institutions under clause 5 a requirement that they must allow HMI unrestricted right to inspect activities on which the agency's funds are spent. I believe that that will meet the need to secure for OFSTED the unequivocal right of access to universities and colleges, but it does not raise any theoretical issues of academic freedom. It ensures that high quality can be rewarded while ensuring that action can be taken where less than satisfactory courses are found.

I hope that that proposal meets with a general welcome and that, in the light of this explanation of our further intentions, the House will join me in welcoming amendment No. 1. I hope that my hon. Friend will feel able to withdraw new clause 2.

Ms Estelle Morris: I want to deal with some of the issues that have been raised and to speak in this important debate about monitoring standards. I do not wish in general to refer to what individual hon. Members have said, other than to say that I thought that the speech of the hon. Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) was very sad. It is dangerous when someone reaches the opinion that no one else is right and loses the knack of recognising the strengths in a whole range of views and opinions. My view on politics and education is that we should take the best of all the ideas. No one person has a monopoly on ideas. "Commissar Walden" spoke of thought police and gave the impression that, unless people agreed with him, they had nothing to offer.

Mr. Walden *rose—*

6.15 pm

Ms Morris: I shall not give way as I would be in terrible trouble with my regional Whip—

Mr. Walden: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I would not usually resort to this rather cumbersome way of intervening. The hon. Lady is so lacking in any sense of irony or humour that she took my remarks about thought police seriously.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. What is the point of order for the Chair?

Mr. Walden: The hon. Lady, having no sense of irony, is suffering under the misconception that I was advocating thought police, when in fact I said that I was against that—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is not a point of order for the Chair. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Ms Morris) is responsible for her own speech.

Ms Morris: I have never thought of the hon. Member for Buckingham as someone who could teach humour, let alone irony.

It does the Secretary of State no good to pretend that the Conservative party is the only party interested in standards. No one would believe that. However, I believe that Conservatives do have a wish to raise and maintain standards, but they are wrong in the way that they have set about doing so. It does politics and education no good to reduce the debate and to accuse one's opponents of not caring about standards. None of us who has been involved in education has spent years working for and thinking about education, working with children and teachers, for any reason other than to raise standards. We may not always get it right, we may not always agree, but we share that aim. As soon as we take that as our common starting point, we will further the cause of raising standards of education.

Whatever new structure is introduced, monitoring and maintaining standards must be an integral part. Without that, we could fail to meet the original purpose of any legislation. Previously, OFSTED has had only an inspection and quality assessment role in so far as the Secretary of State has determined that, not by statute but by other means.

Therefore, I welcome two developments that the Bill will facilitate. First, following Opposition amendments in

the other place, there will be liaison between OFSTED and the Teacher Training Agency. Baroness Blatch introduced that amendment following pressure from the Opposition. Secondly, Government amendment No. 1 will ensure that HMI reports are consulted when funding decisions are made. I welcome that.

However, standards will be raised only if there are organised and thorough inspections after the accreditation of courses, rather than in order for a course to become accredited. There is little in the Bill about that. Baroness Blatch drew attention to OFSTED's role in inspecting and monitoring standards as courses continue, but prior to this evening the Secretary of State has been strangely silent on that matter.

Perhaps the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) had that in mind when he tabled new clause 2. I appreciate the worries about that, but I am worried that more than half of the lines deal with disciplining people who break the law. I suppose that, from the "cane 'em and hang 'em high" Member, that was only to be expected.

The Secretary of State has just announced that he would sooner tie the pressure to carry out OFSTED reports to funding than to statute. The Front-Bench Labour team will speak for itself, but I would prefer there to be a statutory function. I worry when one ties funding, which is crucial, to making people behave in a certain way. There is a need for strict criteria against which to distribute funds. That is different from saying, "You might meet the criteria, but you cannot have the funds because you have not had an inspection." I would prefer there to be a statutory duty.

I want to raise some important queries that have not yet been answered. We need a cycle of continuing inspections after accreditation. In school-centred courses, they should be separate from the four-yearly cycles of inspections. They have a separate purpose.

I am concerned about whether OFSTED has sufficient resources to carry out the extra tasks. As the Minister will know, the Higher Education Funding Council for England was concerned that evidence from OFSTED was not sufficiently comprehensive to enable reliable judgments to be made about the quality of initial teacher-training courses. There is now no incentive for the HEFCE to continue to give OFSTED the extra staffing and help to carry out inspections. What will happen if the HEFCE withdraws that support? Will the Government give an assurance that OFSTED will be given the resources that it needs to carry out extra inspections at the quality level that is required?

Understandably, the criteria for inspection of school-centred courses have not yet been released. Opposition Members seek an assurance that the criteria and the standards for those courses will be as rigorous as those for initial teacher training institutions.

Mr. Pawsey: Given the extremely helpful and categorical assurances of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State that, if there is no inspection, there is no funding, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 4

QUALIFYING ACTIVITIES AND ELIGIBLE INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): I beg to move amendment No. 16, in page 3, line 15, at end insert

'except that in the case of training specialist teachers of pupils with special educational needs eligibility for funding shall be limited to institutions of higher education offering courses in collaboration with relevant schools and services.'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to discuss also the following amendments: No. 17, in clause 5, page 4, line 13, at end insert

'and to the quality of provision by such institution of training to equip teachers to meet the requirements of the Code of Practice on the identification and assessment of special educational needs.'.

No. 19, in page 4, line 13, at end insert

'and to the quality of provision by such institution of training to enable teachers to meet the requirements of section 241 of the Education Act 1993 (sex education).'.

Mr. Griffiths: I can be brief in discussing amendments Nos. 16, 17 and 19. I hope that our debate will be brief and will achieve a consensus, which such debates normally do.

Amendment No. 16 has been tabled principally to elicit from the Minister an assurance that under the Bill the Government have no intention of going beyond initial teacher training in terms of providing school-centred courses. Opposition Members and those people involved in special education are concerned that the Bill could be used to allow schools on their own to provide the more detailed postgraduate and specialist training of teachers of children with severe learning difficulties, hearing impairment and visual impairment. We want to ensure that there is no question that such specialist courses could be left to school-centred training and that, as is essential, institutions of higher education will be involved.

I hope that the Government will be prepared to accept either amendment No. 17 or the spirit of the issues that I wish to raise. During the debate on new clause 2, the hon. Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) referred to the politicisation of education and how he would like such politicisation to be removed, even though he then made a highly political speech. In our desire to have the requirements of the code of practice enshrined in the Bill, we are promoting what has probably been the Government's most successful effort at achieving a consensus among all those people involved in education and the truly bipartisan approach which, sadly, the debate on education has so far been lacking.

The code of practice represents a revolution in education practice. What may have been the aspirations of all those involved in education and schools have, under the code of practice, become specific requirements. It would be fair to say that the code institutes a revolution in the skills expected of teachers. It makes new and specific demands on all teachers, so it is important that initial teacher education should take account of the code, which was not in existence when the Bill was drafted.

The code of practice demands that teachers are not just competent professionals, but classroom superstars. In footballing terms, they are goalkeepers, defenders, midfield players and strikers all in one. That is what the code demands. Already, very limited time is available in initial teacher education to meet all the demands that the code places on teachers. There is a need, therefore, for all initial teacher education courses to have at their heart the requirements of the code of practice.

The code of practice puts in question whether school-centred initial teacher training can be carried out without the partnership of an institution of higher education. Any hon. Member who considers the

[Mr. Griffiths]

requirements in the code from paragraph 2.70 to paragraph 2.84 will be convinced that it is vital that the Bill requires teachers to have knowledge and understanding of the factors determining a pupil's educational achievement and personal development, including the educational, psychological, medical and social services assessments and reports. I hope that the Minister will respond positively to that.

In principle, we accept amendment No. 19 because we believe that training teachers for sex education should be a vital part of their education, given the levels of sensitivity and skill required to engage children in ways that are appropriate to their understanding and development and in a positive moral framework. We hope that the Government will accept the spirit of the amendments and perhaps even embrace them in the Bill.

Mr. Alan Howarth: I should like to say a few words about amendments Nos. 16 and 17. I have considerable sympathy with their purpose, which is, as I understand it, to ensure that higher education is appropriately involved in the training of teachers of children with special educational needs. I associate myself with the sentiments expressed by the hon. Members for Birmingham, Yardley (Ms Morris) and for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) that it is a sad thing if hon. Members assume that because ideas come from the other side they must be nonsense and mischievously intended to boot.

There is a major training task implied by the new code of practice. It is an excellent document, but it makes it clear that all teachers must be involved in the delivery of education for special needs if the necessary whole-school approach is to be achieved. In addition, there will be a need for more specialised training through in-service education and training, ranging from the wide range of skills and knowledge required of the special educational needs co-ordinators to the more sharply focused needs of, say, specialist teachers of severely dyslexic children.

6.30 pm

I believe that all teacher training institutions should be required to effect a proper introduction to special educational needs for all their initial teacher trainees. That simple principle should be more than a matter for guidance. Guidance can then establish the nature of the contribution made.

On the general question of the respective roles of schools and higher education institutions in initial teacher training, at the risk of banality I must say that it seems to me that we need an effective partnership between the two. Admittedly, the partnerships that we have are not always effective, but there are a great many courses in which they are, so I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends will not throw any babies out with the bath water.

The Government should ensure that there is partnership, spell out what is required of the partners and take steps, through funding and quality control, to ensure that the requirements are met. Otherwise, I fear that financial and time pressures on schools will lead all too many to economise on their training, and as a result they will fall short of the Government's admirable aspirations as set out in the code.

There is some truth in the view that higher education institutions have tended to deskill schools and teachers in terms of the school's role in preparing new teachers for their professional careers. Schools should certainly do much more than simply help out the training institutions through teaching practice. Over several years that view has clearly gained much ground, and schools are now widely seen as having an essential role and as sharing the ownership of the process. We now need to ensure that all courses of initial teacher training embody that principle and carry it out.

The contribution of institutions of higher education should be to provide a close awareness of research, practice and policy both in this country and abroad. The multidisciplinary staffs of higher education institutions should be able to add depth and width to professional training, which schools alone could not furnish. I know that some of my hon. Friends are worried about educational theory, and no doubt a certain amount of it has been nonsensical from time to time. However, good educational theory is not disconnected from the real world of teaching and learning, but is a clarification of the principles of good teaching and learning and provides a considered framework for teacher education.

If there is a view that specialised training in special educational needs—for example, training teachers to teach sight-impaired or hearing-impaired children—could function properly without central, substantial and guaranteed contributions from institutions of higher education, that view is unrealistic. I do not think that the process can be divorced from the research and theoretical knowledge that it is not realistic or appropriate to expect schools of themselves to have.

Ring-fenced funding will be needed to preserve the capacity of education departments in institutions of higher education to continue to provide that training. If that is not put in place, there is a real danger that vital centres of expertise will wither. I am not arguing for a monopoly for institutions of higher education; I believe that local education authorities, charitable foundations, research foundations and private sector providers can all contribute. Nor do I suggest that there should not be stringent quality control, but I hope that Ministers will be able to assure me that it is no part of their intention to provide any opportunity for the removal of the contribution that institutions of higher education can make to the training of teachers who will teach children with special educational needs.

I ask the House to consider my amendment No. 19, to clause 5, in connection with the welcome amendment to clause 1 tabled by my right hon. and noble Friends in another place, whereby the Teacher Training Agency is to ensure that teachers are

"well fitted and trained to promote the spiritual, moral, social . . . development of pupils and to prepare pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life."

My amendment supplements that general statement with some specificity in one important area. It would require the Teacher Training Agency, in disbursing funds, to have regard to the need for teachers to receive training in sex education. That could be taken to be implicit in the more general wording of clause 1 as amended, but I am not aware of the Government's having committed themselves to ensuring that teachers, especially student teachers, receive such training.

The importance of teachers being appropriately trained in sex education is highlighted in Julia Hirst's research entitled "Not in Front of the Grown-Ups—A Study of the

Social and Sexual Lives of 15 and 16 Year Olds", recently published by the health research institute of Sheffield Hallam university. I suggest that Ministers and other hon. Members concerned for the well-being of our young people should read and reflect on the report with the greatest care. Its findings are sad, and are a reproach to us, but it also offers better ways forward. Certainly it highlights the need for better sex education and for training to teach the subject.

The report demonstrates the vulnerability of the 15 and 16-year-olds surveyed to HIV infection, ill health and pregnancy through unsafe sex and alcohol and drug misuse. It paints a picture of confused and unsure young people having sex, often unprotected, as a commonplace conclusion to an evening's drinking. The summary of findings says that Ms Hirst found that the majority of the group that she surveyed

"lead secret lives of which their parents are unaware . . . For the majority, socialising involves sex and drinking alcohol . . . They are having unsafe sex without any real acknowledgement of the consequences. They are non-monogamous and share partners . . . the majority of their sexual activity occurred outdoors, usually in a local park . . . Most sexual activity occurs under the influence of alcohol . . . Few group members have clear knowledge of HIV or AIDS and make no distinction between the two. They are considerably misinformed on unsafe behaviours. All appear complacent about their risk-taking, believing that HIV has little to do with them."

The young people demonstrated a poignant indifference to the risks that they were taking. One of them said:

"We don't really think about it. We have a joke about who's catching it, and all that. Why worry? If you get it, you're dead, aren't you?""

The research describes an incredibly dangerous situation. Those young people feel that they cannot find advice or support from their parents or their teachers, although they desperately want to be able to do so.

Julia Hirst stresses the fact that

"The group are unanimously dissatisfied with the sex education they receive at school and home . . . They are afraid to ask questions and perceive adults as disapproving and unhelpful. The embarrassment of adults is perceived by them as the main factor in demotivating parents and teachers from addressing the issues more realistically".

I do not say that the experiences of those young people are universal or normal. I am not asking the House to get the issue out of proportion—certainly it would be good if for once the tabloids were to refrain from exploiting a sad story of unhappiness—but I fear that what Julia Hirst found is all too typical of the experience of too many of our young people.

The report reconfirms the case—irresistibly, to my mind—for sex education within the national curriculum. Children want it. If sex education is marginalised, even as a compulsory subject, it is much more likely to be inadequately taught.

Mr. Don Foster: I have much sympathy with many of the hon. Gentleman's remarks. Does he agree that, in view of the sort of comments that he is making, a system in which parents may allow their children to opt out of sex education lessons is inappropriate?

Mr. Howarth: I very much agree with the hon. Gentleman. I argued that case a year ago when the House took the unfortunate decision that it did. Far from parents being able to opt out of sex education as a separate subject outside the national curriculum, it ought to be integrated into a number of areas of study within the national curriculum—including, obviously, science, English, and personal and social education.

It is plainly essential—indeed, it is a matter of life or death—that education about HIV and AIDS is reliably and responsibly provided. The findings of Julia Hirst's research support the view that sex education should begin early and be developed through the spiral curriculum. The research reinforces the view that the better the sex education and the earlier it begins, the higher the age at which teenagers will first have sex. I stress that good sex education is not, of course, merely about mechanics, but teaches the importance of good relationships, respect, responsibility and love.

I hope that the Department for Education and the Department of Health will absorb the findings of the research and will act with determination and in close co-operation over them as, of course, I hope that they will do with the findings of the Alan Guttmacher Institute quoted by Miss Hirst. As my hon. Friends know, it studied teenage pregnancy in 37 countries and found that the countries

"with the lower rates of pregnancy were those countries with a high degree of acceptance of teenage sexuality, good-quality education about sexual matters and high-quality, user-friendly clinical services for young people."

Those factors apply all too seldom in Britain. It is the opposite of coincidence that, in Britain, we have the highest teenage pregnancy rate in Europe.

All this implies large and difficult responsibilities for teachers, who deserve and need better support and training than we have so far given them.

As I have said, it is a year since we debated the issue in the House and I am more than ever saddened and dismayed at the decision to take teaching about HIV and AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases out of the national curriculum and to restrict sex education in the national curriculum to the physiological aspects of puberty and reproduction, divorced from consideration of values. With the present levels of support and all the competing pressures on teachers, I find it hard to be optimistic about the scope and quality of sex education outside the national curriculum.

I was pleased, at any rate, that the guidance in circular 5/94 made clear the need for skilled and sensitive teaching of sex education appropriate for different ages. But those high expectations of teachers have not yet been matched, to my knowledge, by a commitment to provide them with the training that they will need if they are to meet them. My understanding is that the Government expect sex education to be taught by experienced teachers, who may or may not receive in-service training for it. I fear that that approach under-estimates the needs. It matters very much that all teachers receive good, appropriate training in sex education during their initial training.

A survey in 1992 found that two thirds of local education authorities identified teachers' lack of confidence in teaching sex education as the main barrier to effective provision. Training would build their confidence. The National Foundation for Educational Research's 1993 research for the Health Education Authority found that schools are having difficulty in recruiting specialist teachers of personal and social education. The foundation also found that, where INSET funding was not specifically allocated to health or sex education, it was unlikely that

[Mr. Howarth]

money would be spent in those areas because of the demand for INSET funding for training in national curriculum subjects.

The Government have made it clear in their circular, and I acknowledge with pleasure, that the scope of in-service training eligible for funding through GEST—grants for education support and training—includes training in sex education. Unless my right hon. Friend can assure me otherwise, I do not think that the Department has provided any concomitant increase in the funding available for this training and no GEST funding is specifically ring-fenced for it. I wish it would be. But, for the reasons that I have given, even then it would not be sufficient.

The report of the working party of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists on unplanned pregnancy in 1991 stated:

"Attitudes in schools to sex education would be improved if initial teacher training courses had health education as a compulsory component. That would include relationships, sexuality and contraception."

I am sure that that was right. I am sure that more needs to be done to provide well-balanced and comprehensive support for teachers in training in this area so that they can help the kind of children described in Julia Hirst's research, and so, indeed, that they can help all our children, for whom this aspect of their lives is so very important.

6.45 pm

Mr. Robin Squire: This has been a fairly short and concise debate on at least two important issues. I welcome the way in which the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) moved his amendment and, obviously, I listened with care to my long-term hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth). Clearly, we shall think long on many of his comments, to the extent that I shall not respond to them separately in my—I trust—equally concise response. I hope to be able to reassure the hon. Member for Bridgend on his key amendment No. 16, but for reasons that I shall briefly explain, I consider all three amendments unnecessary.

Amendment No. 16 covers the funding of courses for specialist teachers of special educational needs. I made it clear that that is not an initial teacher training issue. Government policy is that all teachers should train for and work in ordinary schools and classes in the first instance and that specialist training, of course, comes later. I assume that the amendment is intended to refer to long in-service courses for those intending to teach in special schools and those are currently funded by GEST provision. However, we have said that we shall consider the case made by special needs groups for asking the Teacher Training Agency to fund such courses in future.

There has been no decision as yet. Agencies will certainly have the power to fund such courses under the provisions of the Bill, but there is nothing in the Bill which alters the power to provide such courses. There are no new powers for schools to offer in-service training under clause 12. That is limited specifically to initial training. Providing one-year full-time INSET courses, like one-year full-time initial training courses, would require new powers which schools do not have. They will not receive those powers in this Bill. I hope that, on that specific point, the hon. Gentleman is reassured.

Amendments Nos. 17 and 19 do not have the same practical drawback, but raise an important issue of principle. We see a fundamental distinction between matters of general principle covering the agency's work to be set out on the face of the Bill and the specific content of courses, which is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's criteria. Not mentioning detailed content issues on the face of the Bill—whether national curriculum, special needs code of practice, sex education or behaviour and discipline—does not imply in any way that they are unimportant issues.

I very much take the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon, in particular, about the importance of sex education, but detailed requirements are set out in published criteria and may be adjusted as necessary from time to time and used as a test against which quality judgments can be made. Quality must then, of course, feed into funding, as set out in clause 5.

Mr. Win Griffiths: Under those criteria, will there be the requirement to have regard to the code of practice in approving any course?

Mr. Squire: I can certainly reassure the hon. Gentleman that—subject to consultation, of course, which will go out on the draft criteria—we would expect to take into account the code of practice to which he has rightly referred.

Clause 1 refers to course content. It ensures that the agency directs its efforts towards fitting teachers to carry forward the central aims of education. The words are fairly well known to hon. Members, especially those who served on the Committee. We were happy to add that reference in another place to set the agency's work in context. It would not be right to weight it towards one area of education only, however important that area may be. All ITT courses must equip newly qualified teachers with the necessary foundation to develop skills in SEN issues. That is made clear in current DFE circulars which set out my right hon. Friend's criteria. Such criteria have been and will, in future, be subject to consultation. They currently include references to special needs, which have been generally welcomed.

Of course, the House listened with interest to the issues raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon on amendment No. 19, which stands in his name. Some of the matters that he raised undoubtedly struck chords with my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Government Front Bench. He reiterated some matters that he first raised a year ago, and he knows that there is a division of opinion between us on some of them. Teachers must be able to teach in accordance with statutory requirements that govern their subjects. That goes for sex education as for all other subjects. I submit again that it would not be right to bring one item of content of training, however important it is—the House is united on the importance of good sex education—into prominence in the Bill, with the implication that other areas of training are less important.

I welcome the opportunity provided by the amendments for a brief and non-partisan debate on issues of common concern. I hope that in the light of my comments the hon. Member for Bridgend will feel able to seek leave to withdraw the amendment.

Mr. Win Griffiths: I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. Bryan Davies (Oldham, Central and Royton): I beg to move amendment No. 3, in page 3, line 19, leave out from 'school' to end of line 21 and insert

'in partnership with an appropriate institution of higher education,'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to discuss also the following amendments: No. 5, in clause 6, page 4, leave out lines 24 to 26 and insert

'course validated by an appropriate institution of higher education and provided by a school or schools or by a partnership or association of such schools or by a body established by such a school or institutions consisting wholly of such schools.'.

No. 6, in clause 12, page 6, line 24, leave out '—(a)'.

No. 7, in page 6, line 24, leave out from 'teachers' to end of line 27 and insert

'in partnership with, and validated by, an institution of higher education.'.

No. 10, in clause 14, page 8, line 3, at end insert

'to ensure that all courses which involve schools in the initial training of school teachers shall be validated by an appropriate institution of higher education.".'.

No. 14, in schedule 2, page 22, line 9, leave out 'a funding agency under Part 1 of the Education Act 1994 or the governing body of an institution receiving financial support under that Part' and insert 'the Teacher Training Agency.'.

No. 15, in page 22, line 12, leave out from '(2)' to end of line 18 and insert 'after paragraph (a) insert—

"(aa) with respect to studies relating to the Teacher Training Agency, the agency.".'.

Mr. Davies: The amendments seek to ensure that postgraduate courses of initial teacher education are provided in partnership with, and validated by, an institution of higher education. They must, therefore, go to the heart of the Bill.

I remind the House of the Minister's words in Committee. He said:

"there is . . . the need for a structured consideration of pedagogy and the theory of education. That is not an issue."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee E*, 14 June, c. 261.]

I agree with the Minister. We cannot prepare people for entry into a profession without giving them a theoretical understanding of the nature of the tasks that they will have to perform. That should be common currency in the Chamber.

The real issue that divides the two sides of the Chamber is whether institutions of higher education are to be essential partners in the framing, delivery and validation of courses. As my hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) said, there are divided counsels within the Government on these issues.

The Bill seeks to remove the necessary partnership of higher education in ITT courses. In Northern Ireland, however, the Minister for education, speaking admittedly at the Old Inn at Crawfordsburn on 1 June, but doubtless quite sober and not in his cups, said that he thought that the planning and implementation of initial teacher training in Northern Ireland will necessitate the strongest possible partnership between the ITT providers and schools. It is clear that he recognised that there is an essential link.

Yet Ministers at Westminster are seeking to sustain an argument that the higher education contribution is not necessary. On Second Reading and in Committee the Government have sought to discredit the principle of a higher education involvement in ITT courses. They argued that Opposition amendments—they were accepted in another place—were technically flawed. Accordingly, in Committee, they removed them from the Bill, apparently on that basis alone. There was no substantive argument advanced that the quality of initial teacher education would be improved by removing the involvement of HE. That is no surprise, because such an argument would not stand up to scrutiny.

The Government are saying now that the accreditation of courses of initial teacher education by the new quango known as the Teacher Training Agency will be enough to ensure that they are of sufficient quality. Validation by HE institutions has gone. It has been erased from the Government's political vocabulary. An essential quality assurance mechanism has therefore been removed. Everything will now depend upon the schools where the school-centred courses operate.

The Secretary of State should have said to his hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden), when he was challenged about the theoretical issues at stake and the quality of teacher education, "I deny your premise that these issues are theoretical. I deny that we need to have a debate about the nature of the education that we provide for our children. I do so because I know what is right. I will ensure that the present practitioners are vested with the necessary power and that higher education should have no contribution and no standing." That would have been a franker response, but it would have been a denial of the thoughtful contribution of the hon. Member for Buckingham. Instead, the right hon. Gentleman blustered about the way in which he was bringing inspectors into this area of education.

The Government, logically, are now saying that it is solely for the schools to come to a decision on the validation of courses. At the same time, the pilot schemes —they were designed to underpin the proposed legislation —contain elements of validation by HE institutions. Four of the five consortia have returned to higher education for support and validation. It is clear that the teaching profession regards that as a valuable contribution.

What other grounds exist for promoting school-centred initial teacher education if it is not to improve quality? It can hardly be argued that there will be cost savings, because the Secretary of State has given repeated assurances that there will be adequate resources for the schools to undertake ITT work. That is necessary against the background of anxiety among parents, children at school and governing bodies that an additional burden is being placed on them without the necessary resources to fulfil their obligations.

There are certain contributions made by universities that schools will be unable to replicate. I have in mind the support services that benefit university students. Those benefits will not be available to students undergoing ITT within schools. Presumably the schools will have to buy in those benefits. Where is economy of scale in that concept?

Let us consider the design of ITT courses. Ministers must be worried about at least one instance of plagiarism of an existing course in higher education by a consortium. That reflects the limitations faced by practising teachers in developing themselves the standards to which higher education has been accustomed.

Does the Bill promote choice and diversity, as the Secretary of State and other Ministers have claimed? Unfortunately not. Schools may decide to run courses in the short term—probably on the offer of substantial cash —only to find that they cannot cope. They will then

[Mr. Davies]

withdraw. It is abundantly clear that the Government's measures are causing university education departments to consider their position. In due course, they will no doubt wither on the vine. That may be the Government's intention. Nothing is explicit, but that may be the hidden agenda.

It is clear, however, that HE departments concerned with teacher education will be cut off from the HE funding councils. They will not be in the same bidding ring as other university departments. They may find that judgments will be made. At least one university has already decided, admittedly on the basis of a course about which there were many doubts, that it intends to pull out of teacher training. It has made that clear.

In due course, the result will be more limited choice, not extended choice. The courses available for students who wish to become teachers will increasingly be available only in schools. Recent research at Warwick university has made it clear that in the secondary sector teachers do not have the time to engage in the colossal burden of work that the Government have decided will fall on them.

It is clear that the Government are asking hard-pressed teachers—we all know of the increasing demands that are made of them through the national curriculum—to become trainers in full of the next generation of teachers. That may well be a burden too far. Without a shadow of a doubt, children will suffer if schools have to teach teachers, and governing bodies of schools are likely to express their reservations and anxieties about those developments.

For every instance in Committee when Ministers and Conservative Back Benchers produced Central Office handouts of anecdotes about what was wrong with teacher education in the universities, we already have comparable anecdotal evidence of what is wrong with school-based courses.

7 pm

Hearsay will not do. However, the House is not being allowed the benefit of the fulfilment of an experiment to examine what has happened in the development of such courses. The House is being asked to legislate on the basis of a half-rushed-through operation, which is far from finished.

The Minister must recognise the Opposition's anxieties about the international validity of these courses. We are now in the European Community in a professional sense. In every respect, we will see increased mobility of labour. If teachers are to carry qualifications which are provided not by a recognised university, but by a consortium of schools, from a school which no one elsewhere has heard of, how will they compete with graduates from other universities in other countries for jobs that they expect to secure?

The Government should think yet again and recognise the validity of the amendments. They must accept what was said in the other place, what was moved and passed in the other place and what has been expressed continually in Committee and in the House today: only a partnership between schools and higher education can provide the essential qualifications which our teachers need and our students deserve.

Mr. Boswell: Try as he might, the hon. Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Davies) served up old hat and arguments which were much rehearsed in Committee and in another place. He added very little to that old hat, except perhaps some new trimmings which were as objectionable as those that preceded them and which, in certain cases, were even perverse.

For example, the hon. Member did not have the heart to refer to the amendments relating to the Audit Commission which would have reversed the trend of the argument that the Opposition deployed at an earlier stage of the Bill's proceedings.

However, we can at least be grateful that the Opposition have added a little variety. In particular, they have added the magical ingredient of the word "appropriate" in several of the amendments. That, in itself, exemplifies some of the difficulties of the Opposition's approach. It is interesting to wonder what "appropriate" means. Is it for the school to decide an appropriate partnership? Will it be for the courts to decide?

Mr. Don Foster: Given that the Minister is having difficulty understanding the meaning of "appropriate", could he perhaps define the meaning of "appropriate" in clause 6(1)(a) which refers to the need for

"establishing and maintaining in relation to courses for initial training of school teachers an appropriate balance between school-centred courses and other courses;".

What is "appropriate" in that context?

Mr. Boswell: In that case, it will depend on the decisions of the Teacher Training Agency.

The other points of substance raised by the hon. Member for Oldham, Central and Royton related to anecdotes about plagiarisation. I am sure that the TTA and accredited courses will pick that up. They also related to the international validity of courses.

I remind the House that the accreditation of such courses, if they are school-centred, operates on precisely the same basis as those that are higher education institution led. The accreditation process, the quality criteria and competencies derived from the Secretary of State's criteria will be exactly the same. There is no reason why they should not be equally acceptable. Given the quality of delivery in school-centred initial teacher training so far, there is every reason to believe that they will be in excellent demand.

I should like to consider the substance of the Opposition's case for one last time. As the hon. Member for Oldham, Central and Royton said, that case centres on amendment No. 3, which provides that schools can be funded only if they operate in partnership with a higher education institution.

Perhaps at this point I can deal with the situation in Northern Ireland. Leaving aside the perfectly reasonable point that it is for the constituent parts of the United Kingdom to determine exactly how to run their own separate education systems, I should record for the benefit of the House that I am advised that, at the moment, higher education is the sole provider of initial teacher training in Northern Ireland. As it has not even embarked on partnership schemes, it is perhaps a little behind our practice in England where partnerships are already a reality. For higher education in Northern Ireland to call for partnerships is to invite its provisions to move towards the position we already enjoy.

The Government simply cannot accept the Opposition's view that prescribing in law that a partnership between schools and higher education is essential would be the right

way forward. That would place schools in a subordinate relationship. It would not provide them with an equal and influential part in provision.

Validation is a simpler concept than partnership. However, we would not have thought so because it took the Opposition rather a long time to discover what it means and to realise that that was what they were talking about, rather than accreditation. However, I do not want to chop words with the Opposition at this stage.

Imposing validation requirements would be just as unacceptable as imposing partnership requirements. The essential requirement is to have accreditation. That is what will deliver quality in school-centred courses as it will equally, and on all fours, deliver it in higher education-based courses. Validation will add no essential ingredient. I will disabuse the hon. Member for Oldham, Central and Royton about his reference to a hidden agenda. The only disguised purpose of validation would be to allow higher education institutions a power to refuse to co-operate. It would therefore keep them in control and, in effect, would abort or frustrate the wishes of school-centred consortiums to move forward.

That brings me to the central issue of quality. The agency will be a funding body. It will exercise its direction and control through funding. In doing so, it will operate according to the objectives set out in clause 1 which I hope are uncontentious. It will have regard to the criteria set out by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the kind of teachers we wish to come out of initial teacher training and teacher education.

Directly as a result of that and in the light of those considerations, the agency will accredit those who provide training in HE and school-centred courses. In doing that, and recalling the extremely helpful debate that we had earlier, the agency will be informed by impartial inspection advice from the Office for Standards in Education about quality. That advice will underpin its funding decisions. It will, therefore, be a vital new guardian of standards in both HE and school-centred courses. Right across the piece, our determination is to achieve quality.

In inviting the Opposition to consider whether they wish to press the amendments, I said earlier that I felt their underlying concern must be one for continuing higher education provision. The hon. Member for Oldham, Central and Royton went on in a rather windy way to talk about our hidden agenda. As the Minister responsible for further and higher education, I believe that the Opposition do not need to fear for the future of higher education institutions.

Although the hon. Member for Oldham, Central and Royton did not recognise this fact, more than two thirds of students in teacher education are now on undergraduate BEd courses. The hon. Gentleman will know that they cannot become school-centred under the Bill.

Equally, the Bill does not prevent or preclude universities and colleges of education from offering postgraduate training. Equally, it does not make any schools run training courses; it does not prescribe that they may not involve higher education in the training courses that they and their consortia put together. Clearly, as we emphasised many times in Committee, it will be desirable for them to consider whether to do so, and they will often wish to do so, but it should be a decision for them, just as it should be a decision by the agency, whether to accredit what they do.

We must emphasise, because it is central to our intentions to secure quality in teacher education and to the principles of diversity in choice, that those are and should remain entirely voluntary decisions. We believe in giving schools more freedom to put together those consortia and to provide those courses. It is, frankly, the Opposition who want to fetter them, and if they persist in pressing their amendments, I shall have to invite my hon. Friends to reject them.

Mr. Bryan Davies: In view of that wholly unsatisfactory reply, we intend to press the amendment to a vote.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 255, Noes 295.

Division No. 287] **[7.10 pm**

AYES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Cabom, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chidgey, David
Chisholm, Malcolm
Church, Judith
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hodge, Margaret
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*

Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Helen *(Sheff'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
MacShane, Denis
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Timms, Stephen
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Alan Meale and
Mr. Peter Kilfoyle.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliffe)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, Sir John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maginnis, Ken
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony

Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Salmond, Alex
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soley, Clive
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trimble, David
Trotter, Neville
Tyler, Paul
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope.

Question accordingly negatived.

Clause 12

POWER OF SCHOOLS TO PROVIDE COURSES OF INITIAL TEACHER TRAINING

Mrs. Ann Taylor: I beg to move amendment No. 22, in page 6, line 27, at end insert—

'(1A) A governing body exercising, or proposing to exercise, any power conferred by subsection (1) above shall, if the number of persons attending any course will exceed, or is in its opinion likely to exceed, such percentage of the school teachers of the schools concerned in the provision of the course as the Secretary of State may by order prescribe, take such steps as are reasonably practicable so to notify—

(a) the parents of registered pupils at the school,

(b) the applicants for the relevant course; and

(c) such other persons as the Secretary of State may by order specify.'.

The amendment relates to an important issue which caused an interesting debate in Committee. The amendment that we have tabled is somewhat different from the one which was discussed in Committee. It provides for information to be given to all parents and prospective students, and paragraph (c) provides for information to be given to

"such other persons as the Secretary of State may . . . specify".

We would not normally include such a paragraph in an amendment, but we have done so in the hope that we can at last appeal to the Secretary of State for Education, or, indeed, on this occasion the Minister, in the absence yet again of the Secretary of State. I should have thought that the right hon. Gentleman would be interested in providing information to parents and would perhaps attend this debate.

We have raised the issue of information again because we found it difficult to comprehend the Government's attitude when we debated it in Committee. We think that it is important that Ministers reconsider their position on the vital issue of the information which parents need about important developments in the schools. Undoubtedly, if a school is to undertake school-centred initial teacher training, the impact that that will have on the school is of sufficient importance for the parents of any child in the school to be told of that development. I cannot understand why Ministers rejected that whole concept when it was debated in Committee.

One reason why I was amazed by the Government's attitude is that, two days before we debated the amendment in Committee, the so-called parents charter was published —a publication which cost £3 million of taxpayers' money and was sent to every home in the country. It provoked a great deal of indignation. I received letters such as this one, which says:

"I thought you would like to know that I have received two copies (so far!) of the 'Parents charter'.

It's all utter nonsense and a complete waste of money anyway. I am 71 years, with children of 45 and 42!

I shall be returning both to Mr. Patten, and asking him why so much money is, once again, being wasted."

Mr. Don Foster: Is the hon. Lady aware that the parents charter not only caused much annoyance, as she has rightly described, and cost some £3 million but was factually inaccurate?

Mrs. Taylor: I have had correspondence complaining about factual inaccuracies, not least the inaccuracy that parents must send their children to school. In fact, there are provisions for children to be taught at home in certain circumstances.

Mr. Robin Squire: At the risk of going far wider than the amendment, may I put on record the fact that, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made clear, the admirable document thus distributed was not intended as a full summary of legal rights in legal terminology. It was written in an accessible way, which most people welcomed. If people want legal advice, they get it. They would not rely on a booklet of that sort.

7.30 pm

Mrs. Taylor: The Minister had a broad smile on his face when he tried that explanation. If the document was not intended to give extensive information, his intervention

[Mrs. Taylor]

was a confession that it was nothing more than an expensive public relations exercise. Perhaps that is not surprising from a Department that now spends £90 for every £1 that it spent in 1979 on self-publicity. Such publicity is one of the greatest growth areas in public expenditure, as far as the Government are concerned.

Like many of my colleagues, I have received numerous letters about the parents charter. It was supposed to contain information for parents. At the time, the Secretary of State issued a press release and made statements about the importance of information to parents, yet when we discussed our modest amendment in Committee two days later, Conservative Members were at great pains to talk us down—it was a painful and peculiar argument. When they did not succeed in doing so, they voted down the constructive amendment that we had tabled.

Then and now, the simple purpose behind our amendments seems to have escaped Conservative Members. In Committee, they seemed unable to decide whether the amendments would enforce on schools some new bureaucratic provision—perhaps the arguments will be used again this evening—or whether they were simply unnecessary because parents would find out about what was happening in schools anyway. The Minister may be indicating which it is, but it is not satisfactory for parents to learn by osmosis about what is going on in schools.

It is a significant step for a school to embark on teacher training as well as teaching children. I would not be happy if such a development took place at my children's schools and I would certainly not be happy if it took place without my knowledge. Parents have an absolute right to that type of information.

The Minister is doing something that Members on both sides of the House said was not the way forward: he is rejecting the amendment simply because it was tabled by the Opposition, as he did in Committee. Why else would Ministers, who had talked of the importance of information, put down the idea of giving information to parents? The amendment is not burdensome; it is very practical. As has been suggested, the information could have been extended to all partnership schools. As we said in Committee, we are willing to take that on board.

Mr. Robin Squire: If, as the hon. Lady reiterates, she would like the provision to be extended to all schools, why is that not reflected in the amendment?

Mrs. Taylor: This amendment is broader and allows the Secretary of State to make provision for that extension. I should have thought that the junior Minister, who is replying to this debate, would have said that the provisions in paragraph (a) would allow all parents of any pupils involved to be told.

If the Minister is saying that there is a technical deficiency and that he will embrace the spirit of the amendment, which is the same as the spirit of the amendment that he turned down in Committee, we may be making some progress. We offered the Minister that option in Committee, but he rejected it.

I had hoped that Ministers would look again at the reports of our debates in Committee, not least because I know that the two junior Ministers present are more reasonable than some of their colleagues in the Department. Obviously, that description does not extend to their being allowed to make their own decisions. They have to follow the briefs determined by others, which is rather disappointing.

If we are to agree that parents should have as much information about their children's education as possible, what was wrong with the amendment that we tabled in Committee? We have tried to adopt the spirit of that amendment here and I hope that the Minister will have a more constructive attitude this evening.

We included paragraph (b) in the amendment, not merely to keep it in order and give it a different dimension so that we could debate it, but so that we could ask about the provisions for ensuring that prospective students get sufficient information about the number of other students in a school and the full arrangements there, not least because parents can become worried when there are many student teachers in a school at any one time. Most parents do not mind the presence of the occasional student—they welcome it and that is how partnerships have developed. Students have a right to know all the information and that is why we have included that paragraph.

Parental concern will only increase if information is denied. It is not adequate to say that parents will find out anyway, either from parent-teacher organisations or from parent governors. Their methods of reporting back are not always sophisticated or well developed. It is not good enough just to say that that will happen and that parents will find out. Parents have a right to know what is going on. I want that right to be extended so that they are consulted before courses take place. Forward-looking schools will try to consult parents and to discuss those issues with them before they embark on courses. That would be good practice on the part of the school, and it ought not to divide us.

I hope that the Minister will not use his prejudices and the fact that the amendment has come from the Opposition to talk it down. Our attitude to providing information to parents ought to be based on the principle that local parents need local information. The provision of such information would be one key plank of the local information that parents should be entitled to, and I commend the amendment to the House.

Mr. Mike Hall (Warrington, South): Following on from what my hon Friend the Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) said, the principle of the amendment is that parents have the right to know. If the Government accept the amendment, they will be instructing school governing bodies to inform parents of changes that will take place in their schools if they become a centre for initial teacher training for postgraduates. That principle is right and proper, and I hope that the Minister will accept its strength. I hope that he will also accept that, if the amendment is enshrined in the Bill, it will strengthen the information available to parents.

In Committee, there were no objections, in principle, to the aim of the amendment that we tabled. When the Minister summed up in that debate, he merely pointed out what he thought were the practical objections. I hope that he has had time to reflect on the fact that the principle is the right one. If we need support for the principle, we need look no further than his noble Friend Baroness Blatch, who said:

"I do not think that any school would embark on a school-centred scheme unless it were able to convince and in due course demonstrate to local parents that the effect was beneficial to their pupils."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 14 March

1994, Vol. 553, c. 36.]

Clearly, that is the right state of affairs. Schools should be able to convince parents of pupils at the school that if they embark on the course it will be good for the school, good for the education that children receive there and good for the students who participate in that form of initial teacher training. I do not feel that there is anything in principle to which the Government could object, and there is a great deal in principle that they should accept.

If initial teacher training based in schools is good for the students, that is another mechanism by which the Government can promote the benefits of school-based initial teacher training. What better way could there be than to say to parents that the school wants to be involved in the scheme and these are the benefits of it? It is an ideal mechanism to amplify the benefits of the training.

If schools want to become part of consortia delivering initial teacher training in schools for postgraduate students, that will involve a fundamental change to the school itself. The students will be in school for 24 weeks a year and will be teaching a range of pupils throughout the national curriculum. In itself, that is a fundamental change.

Parents need to know throughout their children's school career whether they will be subjected to a large percentage of teaching by student teachers. It may well be good, indifferent or awful teaching, because that is the benefit of initial teacher training exercises. The students learn the practicalities of teaching and the skills which go with that. Sometimes they will fail, and sometimes they will succeed. But parents need to know that that is an on-going feature of life at the school.

The Government should accept the amendment because they should recognise that there will be a fundamental change in the schools themselves. Teachers in those schools will have another job to do. Not only will teachers have to teach; they will have to become mentors for the students in the schools. One of the benefits of the scheme, we are told, is that good teachers pass on their skills to the students in a practical way. The good teachers may be taken out of the classroom and made student mentors, and they will be taken away from the job that they are good at. Parents need to know that that is a potential for the school if it contemplates that change.

7.45 pm

If I understand the process right, teachers—in addition to their teaching commitments in schools—will have to devote about 40 hours per student extra time for those students to receive the benefit of their mentors. Amendment No. 22 is absolutely essential so that parents can be told what is going on in schools. Clearly, parents have a right to know and to be informed about major changes in schools. I cannot contemplate many changes in the systems and structures of schools more major than that they become schools where initial teacher training for postgraduate students takes place.

In Committee, the Minister argued that the Opposition's request would be unduly bureaucratic. The hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) put it another way and, in a Freudian slip, said that it might be unduly democratic. We think that it was a Freudian slip—we are not sure. There may be other Freudian analyses one could place on what the hon. Gentleman said. He was probably saying the truth, but it was a subliminal intervention. *[Interruption.]* I shall make no mention of the parentage of my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Pope). He was acutely embarrassed by the suggestion that his father might be the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth.

I do not think that the measure would be unduly bureaucratic. A requirement to inform parents of a fundamental change does not involve teachers in any bureaucracy—it involves the school's administration in informing parents. The Government cannot hide behind that argument any more. I hope that, when the Minister responds to the debate, he will not refer to what have been termed previously "unduly bureaucratic" problems with the amendment.

We were also told in Committee that the measure may be unduly costly. I am not sure what cost will be involved in informing parents of a change to the situation in schools. I do not think that there is any dispute about the fact that this is a fundamental change, and I do not think that the cost of a postage stamp on a letter to parents to say that the change will take place is over-burdensome. It would be an important step in the right direction.

Another argument against the amendment is that school-centred initial teacher training would be set aside from the school partnership for teacher training. There would be two different aspects—one provided by consortia, and one provided in partnership with institutes of higher education. Clearly that distinction no longer applies to the way in which amendment No. 22 is worded. All schools contemplating any change in that way will be obliged to tell parents about it. That is another practical argument which has been removed from the armoury that the Minister tried to deploy in Committee.

We were then told, interestingly, that parents were already involved in decision-making in governing bodies through parent governors. We have been told that it would be up to parent governors themselves to consult parents about whether they needed to know about any change. I do not think that that is good enough.

I send my son to a school in which consortia are involved in the provision of initial teacher training for postgraduate students. I was not informed by the parent governor that that would take place, nor was I informed by the governing body or by the school hierarchy. I was informed by my wife, who teaches at the school. I had privileged information. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Clappison) makes a comment about that from a sedentary position.

Other parents who send their children to the school do not know that that is going on, and they have a right to know. I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would be the first to his feet to defend the rights of parents. I know what is going on because my wife teaches at the school. I am quite sure that other parents do not know. We just cannot rely on parent governors to consult their electorate on that issue.

We have been told that the governing body has a range of important decisions to take, of which this is only one. The decision on whether a school is to get involved in the initial teacher training of postgraduate students is important, and parents ought to know. We were told by the Minister that that suggestion flies in the face of reason. What is unreasonable about asking school governors and governing bodies to inform parents that a change is taking place in the school? There are many reasons for arguing that the Minister was wrong to say that the amendment flies in the face of reason.

The final argument left in the Minister's armoury was that the measure was a vendetta against one sort of teacher training. Frankly, that is nonsense. The amendment takes cognisance of the fact that the Minister would like to ensure that all schools involved in the scheme are treated in the same way. The amendment attempts to be even-handed.

It is straightforward, simple, right and proper that parents should be consulted about changes in schools. The amendment gives fact to that desire and principle. I hope that, on this occasion, we do not have matters of practicality placed before the interests of parents. We should give them the right to know what goes on in schools to which they send their children.

Mr. Pickthall: There are rumours that members of the family of my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Pope) have been seen wandering the corridors of the Palace looking for the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey). Judging by the latter's absence, they perhaps found him.

We had some interesting debates in Committee about the nature of and the right to information. One in particular dealt with the Government's refusal to countenance the Teacher Training Agency passing relevant information to those bodies which might be subject to its decisions. One expected that they would do it, but the Government refused to enshrine that in the Bill.

The reasons for the amendment have been outlined by my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Hall), so I shall be fairly brief. The amendment hovers around the impact that school-centred initial teacher training will have on pupils and parents in the schools where it applies. The hon. Member for Blackpool, South (Mr. Hawkins) said in his pious way, in an intervention, that the most important part of the education system was the pupils and their parents. We are glad that he has discovered that, but it surely follows that those are the people who should have the relevant information—pupils when it would be useful to them, of course, but parents in particular, especially those in the process of choosing schools for their children. The nature of those schools could change significantly in the near future.

The reason why parents need that information—and, I believe, would demand it—is that student teachers present problems, under any system. They add a great deal to schools because they are fresh and new and may have more adventurous ideas than teachers who have been at the same school for some time; but they are bound to disrupt the flow of school work to some extent. That is true of schools with only one or two student teachers, and it will be even more true of schools that take on more of them for longer.

One of the most useful functions of the higher education sector, which has been derided by some Conservative Members and praised by others, including the Ministers —I give them credit for that—has been its hard work in trying to alleviate the problem of disruption caused by student teachers. As I said in Committee, a teacher at my children's school who had the misfortune to have three students teaching his class in rapid succession was subsequently unable to co-ordinate a proper display for the parents' open evening. That caused some consternation among parents who wanted to know how their children had been affected by the presence of student teachers. As it happened, the students appear to have been competent, and no harm was done.

Inevitably, teachers—from top to bottom—are distracted to some extent by the presence of students for whom they must be responsible, however seriously they may or may not take that responsibility. Parents need to know the position. One of the factors that make them accept the fact that, for a time, their children will be taught by students is the link with higher education and the knowledge that an attempt has been made to make the children's experience reasonably good.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House have repeatedly supported the idea of partnerships. The evidence from such partnerships shows that schools fear over-exposure of their pupils to student teachers; parents deserve to be able to make a rational judgment about that in advance.

Although parents are probably the most important recipients of the information that the amendment demands, it also mentions

"the applicants for the relevant course".

As my hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) pointed out, they too are important. Prospective student teachers should be told as much as possible about the quality of the course, its record of success—if it has got that far—and the employment prospects that a consortium course would provide. Paragraph (c) would allow the Secretary of State, by order, to specify other recipients of information, which I think should include local education authorities.

The organisation of schooling is a complex affair in any area. Despite the general tenor of the education reforms that have taken place in the past 10 years, schools are still interdependent and local authorities must still balance one against another in many respects. In the event of significant changes that could affect the uptake of places, for example, a local authority's relations with schools other than those in the consortium could be disrupted.

The amendment would also allow information to be passed, as of right, by governing bodies to the higher education institutions that had formerly provided schools with trainee teachers. That could have a significant effect if a consortium were fairly large and, say, 20 students were removed from the ambit of the local college or university. That is the equivalent of one member of staff, or perhaps more. Whatever view may be taken about that particular debate, the higher education institution concerned should be given the relevant information, as should other schools in the area.

As I have said, schools are not isolated entities. They have links of many kinds with other schools in their areas —not just the links between primary and secondary schools, but those among clusters of schools. The arrival of a SCITT consortium could change all that.

The amendment is eminently sensible. It requests the free passage of information to the people who are most likely to be affected by the results of the decisions involved, and I should have thought that any Government with the remotest belief in the usefulness of a right to information could not do other than accept it. My hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Hall) listed the opposing arguments advanced in Committee, and effectively demolished each of them. On reflection, I feel that a very poor argument was put up against a simple and straightforward proposition.

Mr. Robin Squire: Coming to this discussion for the second time, I shall endeavour—in the light of strictures,

not least those of the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Pickthall)—to advance an even stronger argument, and persuade the House to continue its support for my original line.

The hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) and her team have made a number of attempts, in the form of amendments, to return to the gist of an amendment that was voted down in Committee. I shall not rehearse the details; as hon. Members have recognised, the same principle is involved. We are now debating only one amendment, which seeks to ensure that, when schools are heavily involved in SCITT, information about that is made available to parents and others.

Mr. Win Griffiths: Simple.

8 pm

Mr. Squire: As the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) says, it is simple. But, as I shall seek to point out, a number of issues lie behind that simple concept.

First, do the existing channels of information for parents and others—never stronger than at present owing to the Government's reforms—set an adequate framework to ensure that parents and others have the information about school-centred training which they need? We believe that they do.

Mr. Hall *rose—*

Mr. Squire: If the hon. Gentleman bears with me for a few moments longer, I shall seek to develop that argument further.

Secondly, if more information proves to be required, do we need primary legislation of this rather odd sort to ensure that it is provided? I submit that we do not. And thirdly —as we have asked the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) every time she raises this point—why does she see an unmet need for information about school-centred training but has made no attempt to secure information flows about school-based training? I am sure that she does not seek to make life more difficult for schools that choose to offer their own courses.

Hon. Members who were not on the Standing Committee—one or two are now in the Chamber—may need reminding that, on any reasonable projection, the number of schools and teachers involved in school-centred initial teacher training for the foreseeable future will be but a fraction of the schools and teacher-students involved in school-based training.

Mr. Hall: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Squire: I shall give way to the hon. Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Hall) in a moment. As he said in his speech, there is concern about the impact that teacher training would have on schools. If that concern exists, why does not the amendment address the majority instead of just the minority?

Mr. Hall: The amendment takes account of the precise point that the Minister has just made. It refers to schools in general. If that is the only difference between us, he should table an amendment to cover that point. Paragraph (c) of the amendment covers that by dealing with what the Secretary of State may deem appropriate under the clause.

Mr. Squire: I like the hon. Gentleman—I hope that that does not cause him significant difficulties back home—but he cannot get away with that. The amendment refers to clause 12, which deals specifically with school-centred initial teacher training. Many responsibilities are put on Governments, most of them quite rightly, but it is not a Government's responsibility to assist Opposition Members in putting their amendments in order or redrafting them as they say they wish them to be. The Opposition are entitled to table what they wish, but they must then be judged on the basis of their amendments.

Mr. Pickthall: Even accepting what the Minister has just said, he must recognise that we are discussing a matter of concentration and quality. He is absolutely right to say that parents of pupils in schools that already have an extension of school-based teacher education are entitled to information on that, but the SCITT schools involve a different concentration of student activity. That is what we have been concerned about throughout most of this afternoon's debate. Does the Minister recognise that there is a qualitative difference between the two?

Mr. Squire: On the evidence of my contact with both sorts of course, any significant difference lies with whether the school is involved in training, not between school-based and school-centred training. Of course there are differences but the difference which the amendment deals with is more than the difference between whether or not a school is involved. The hon. Gentleman does not have to agree with me in that respect, but I assure him that, on the evidence of my visits and those of others, it is true. The school-centred aspect is not significant; there are differences, small as they are.

On the adequacy of current information arrangements for parents, parent-governors in all schools have an open line to those who elected them. Each year, the governing body as a whole must report in writing to parents and hold an open meeting to allow face-to-face discussion. The effectiveness of teaching and learning in schools will be reported on publicly every four years via OFSTED inspections. A prospectus is issued each year setting out what a school offers its pupils, which, as well as meeting statutory requirements is, in practice, likely to stress any distinctive features of the school, for obvious reasons.

Given all of that, how could a school keep the size and nature of its commitment to teacher training a secret? Those running school-centred schemes will not want to do so. They are proud of their commitment to becoming "teaching schools" and publicise it locally not only to show that they have been selected as potential providers of high-quality training, but to encourage local applicants to their courses. School-centred training has absolutely no incentive to hide its light under a bushel.

If, despite all that I have said, a school appeared to be less than enthusiastic about publicising its involvement and parents failed to have the necessary information, that could be tackled under existing legislation. For instance, we could use the regulation-making powers that govern the content of prospectuses and annual reports if that should ever prove necessary. Moreover, the agency could use its powers under clause 6 to ensure that information about courses that it funds is made available to those who need it.

We would never make regulations in the simplistic terms suggested in the amendment. The number of students as a percentage of the number of teachers across a consortium says nothing about the degree of teachers' involvement in or pupils' exposure to students in any one

[Mr. Squire]

school. The hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Mr. Jamieson), who was in the Chamber earlier, is an ex-maths teacher. If he were here now, he would confirm that point.

Were we to go down the route of using regulations or conditions of grant, we should certainly want to treat all forms of teacher training on all fours. For completeness, I should mention how prospective students are to receive information about courses. They, too, will have access to prospectuses, the contents of which may be influenced by the agency under clause 6. Those requirements will bite on all providers of courses—higher education and schools—and allow us to ensure that students have all the information that they need to choose courses.

I could say more, but I am conscious that the House wants to make progress. I have demonstrated that the amendment is, in practice, unnecessary. I shall leave aside certain mechanical restraints. Despite our differences over other aspects of the Bill, I urge the hon. Member for Dewsbury on reflection to withdraw the amendment on the basis that what it seeks to secure will normally happen. In the event of it not happening, adequate alternative avenues exist. If she insists on pushing the amendment to a vote, I must ask the House to resist it.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: May I say just a few words in response to the Minister's arguments? This evening he has struggled even more desperately than he did in Committee to defend the indefensible. We know that he is a reasonable man and that his heart is not in such arguments.

First, the Minister said that providing such information to parents was a simple concept. When we tabled the original amendment in Committee, we thought that that was so and that, on that basis and in view of all that Ministers had said in the parents charter and elsewhere, this might be the one amendment which Ministers would accept. They have struggled to find arguments against it.

The Minister says that channels already exist. My hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Hall) demonstrated that there are significant inadequacies. The Minister attempted to create a smokescreen by creating a division between school-centred initial teacher training courses and school-based teacher education. I conceded earlier this evening, as I did in Committee, that I would prefer all parents in those circumstances to find out what is happening in their schools.

The difference between school-centred and school-based ITT is significant and parents should understand its full implications. It is not simply that the funding of a school may be affected by any such arrangement but that, if a school embarks on school-centred ITT, it will have significant additional responsibilities for the education of teachers as well as their training and organisational matters, perhaps including co-operation with other schools. Those strains on already heavily stretched administrative services in schools could be significant. How can a governing body guarantee that parents are told at the right time?

It does no one any good to raise petty objections to this fundamental amendment. Sufficient mechanisms may be in place for informing students; sufficient mechanisms are certainly not in place for informing parents.

The Minister implied that the Secretary of State could use other powers or that the Teacher Training Agency could use its powers. I believe that the House should express its will tonight, and we should say that parents should be informed.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 221, Noes 268.

Division No. 288] **[8.09 pm**

AYES

Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chidgey, David
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clelland, David
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Dowd, Jim
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hodge, Margaret
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
MacShane, Denis
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*

Martlew, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Timms, Stephen
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Alan Meale and
Mr. John Spellar.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, Sir John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maginnis, Ken
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stephen, Michael

Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Timothy Wood and
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope.

Question accordingly negatived.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Before we move to amendment No. 27, I have to say that I understand that there was a slight technical hitch earlier in that a small Government amendment, amendment No. 1, which should have been moved formally, was not. With the concurrence of the House, I shall put that now.

Clause 5

GRANTS, LOANS AND OTHER PAYMENTS

Amendment made: No. 1, in page 4, line 11, after 'institution', insert '—

(i) made by either of Her Majesty's Chief Inspectors of Schools, or

(ii)'.—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

Clause 22

ORDERS AND DIRECTIONS

Mr. Don Foster: I beg to move amendment No. 27, in page 13, line 36, leave out 'or more frequently'.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss also the following amendments: No. 28, in page 14, line 7, leave out 'or more frequently'.

No. 29, in page 14, line 18, leave out 'or more frequently'.

Mr. Foster: With this group of amendments we move on from part I of the Bill to part II. Part I was characterised by legislation hastily put together with a considerable lack of consultation and an unwillingness by the Government to listen to the wide range of views and expressions of concern put to them. There is always an exception to the rule and part II of the Bill is that exception.

Following the ebullient remarks of the Secretary of State at the Tory party conference and the original proposals for part II, the Government have expressed a willingness to listen to the widespread concerns and anxieties put to them. As a result they were willing significantly to reduce the size and complexity of part II, notwithstanding some of the worries expressed, even by Conservative Members, not least the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) and some of his colleagues.

The amendment arises because the Government, having sensibly listened to the views of many people who are concerned about part II, added a number of bits and pieces to that slimmed-down part of the Bill in Committee. They have tacked on a number of matters that seem incredibly petty. The legislation has sprouted a range of bureaucratic amendments in Committee. It seems ironic that those additions were made in Committee at the very time that we were debating in the House the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill, the purpose of which was to set business free from wasteful and time-consuming bureaucracy. It is sad that the reverse of that has happened as a result of the amendments tabled to part II.

My amendments refer to just one part of the additional bureaucracy that has been tacked on, particularly in terms of the requirement in the legislation for reports to be brought forward possibly more frequently than once a year. Such a requirement is out of all proportion. If annual reports are all that is required from large commercial companies, it seems peculiar to make it a statutory requirement for a small part of one cost centre out of many in each university to report more frequently.

It would be largely impossible to produce union accounts more frequently than once a year without extra cost and bureaucracy. Similarly, more frequent information about affiliations—possibly leading to balloting more than once a year on the continuation of affiliations—would be time-consuming and expensive, and would almost certainly lead to a low turn-out and lack of student interest. It would be a shame to include what are, after all, nit-picking requirements that will serve no useful purpose, but could lead to significantly increased costs at the expense of other more valuable student activities. It is difficult to understand the Government's apparent obsession with wanting to determine in such detail how universities should conduct their internal affairs.

Only today the National Union of Students, in conjunction with the National Westminster bank, has produced a survey, which reveals that nearly 40 per cent. of students in higher education institutions face hardship and poverty. The Government would be far better off tackling the real difficulties faced in higher education at present rather than wasting their time with tokenist bits of legislation to deal with a problem that does not exist.

There has been a great welcome on both sides of the House and, more importantly, outside the House for the Government's willingness to listen to the many criticisms about their earlier intentions in respect of student unions. It is a pity that, having done that, the Government have tacked on a number of unnecessary bits of bureaucracy. I hope that the amendments will be accepted, thereby slightly reducing the number of unnecessary additions.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): The amendment reflects the concern of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals. The committee did not have the courtesy to send me a copy of its brief for the Report stage of the Bill, but I have seen a copy of it and I know that the committee has expressed concerns.

The provisions mentioned by the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) relate to the financial report, the report listing affiliations to external organisations and the frequency with which current lists of affiliations can be submitted for approval to members. The Bill does not state that those events must take place more than once a year. It simply provides the option so that if the institutions, the students union or the members decide for some reason that they want to report more than once a year, the Bill allows that possibility.

The letter sent by the chairman of the CVCP to my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Further and Higher Education complains about the level of detail being inserted into the Bill, particularly into clause 22. The hon. Member for Bath has reflected that concern. The model is not the model of voluntary student union membership that many hon. Members—and, indeed, I think, the Government—would have preferred. But it is the one that the CVCP, through its disproportionate representation in the House of Lords, has managed to insert into the Bill.

Hon. Members want to ensure that the model will fulfil the objectives that we seek. The overriding objective of the Bill and Conservative Members is to introduce the idea of voluntary membership of student unions. Another clear and important objective is to stop the abuses that have occurred over the years.

8.30 pm

Subsection (2)(j), (k) and (l) of clause 22, which the CVCP describes as unnecessarily repetitious, actually makes the activities of student unions more transparent. The majority of students might actually get to know what the student union is doing in their name. For example, in one term Essex university students union affiliated or sent donations to the campaign against racist laws, the baby milk action campaign, the campaign against the war in the Gulf, the campaign against oppression in Iraq and the national abortion campaign. If more students had known about that sort of nonsense, they might have acted to stop it.

In December 1993, Swansea university students union passed a motion to affiliate to the national abortion campaign. In the same year, Lancaster university spent £100 affiliating to the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. Again, students and the governing bodies should have every opportunity to get to know about that sort of behaviour. What beggars belief is that in most cases the money that is being used to affiliate or give donations to such organisations comes from the public purse; it is provided by the taxpayer. That is iniquitous.

Perhaps the most blatant example of political campaigning on taxpayers' funds comes from the National Union of Students itself. As many hon. Members know, at the last general election the NUS set up a campaign called Target 70. The aim was to target 70 key marginal seats with the clear intention of unseating Conservative candidates.

Mr. Alan Duncan (Rutland and Melton): It failed.

Mr. Riddick: I have to tell my hon. Friend that after the election the then president-elect of the NUS, Ms Lorna Fitzsimons, boasted of victories in Birmingham and Cambridge. It is important to ensure that that sort of campaign never happens again. The NUS, which is currently trying to promote itself as a moderate and sensible organisation, is actually still involved in that sort of left-wing nonsense.

The chairman of the CVCP wrote to my hon. Friend the Minister saying:

"As we have already said to your office we consider these amendments to be a long way from the spirit in which the Bill left the House of Lords."

He was referring to a number of amendments passed in Committee. The CVCP should recognise the fact that the Bill that left the House of Lords was a long way from the spirit of the Bill that the Government wanted, which the 50 Members of Parliament who were present during my Adjournment debate two years ago wanted, and which the 200 Members of Parliament who signed an early-day motion calling for voluntary membership four years ago wanted.

The CVCP and their Lordships should be aware of the fact that many Members of this House who do not have a vested interest are unhappy with the way in which their Lordships have changed the Bill. If, in practice, this model of student union does not provide genuine voluntary membership and genuine freedom of association, the CVCP and their Lordships will be responsible. If the abuses by student unions and the misuse of public funds continue, the CVCP and their Lordships will be responsible. They should not complain too much if this House tries to tighten up the provisions of clause 22.

If the Bill fails, at some stage in the future Parliament will have to consider withdrawing public financing from student unions. In the meantime, I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will recommend rejection of the amendments.

Mr. Boswell: My hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) has, not for the first time, spoken with great passion of his concerns for and experience of student unions. I assure him that I shall not recommend acceptance of the amendments tabled by the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster).

My hon. Friend, in his perceptive way, spotted the underlying flaw in the amendments. He quoted from a letter I received from the chairman of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals, Dr. Ken Edwards. In fact, the concern that he expressed in that letter is mirrored in the amendments. It is based on a misconception, as I shall explain in a moment.

First, I must make it clear for the record that the provision to allow information to be issued more than once a year was not added in Committee. That flexibility was present when the Bill came to this House from another place and had been considered there. Therefore, we have added nothing new in that respect.

My hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley raised wider concerns. We have sought to introduce a Bill under the constraints within which we operate, in a way that embodies the firm principles set out by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in his statement to the House 12 months ago. We strongly believe that the amendments made in Committee—a number of them in response to concerns expressed by my hon. Friend—have strengthened and improved the Bill. They will not involve any excess of or increase in bureaucracy.

The hon. Member for Bath referred to the tangential matter of the hardship survey published by the NUS and others today. I remind him that the authoritative survey carried out every three years by our Department, with the co-operation of the NUS, was last published in December and, not to put it too highly, its findings and the drop-out rate, which has been broadly stable, are not consistent with the assertion in the new survey that there is widespread hardship and a greater propensity to drop out. That needs to be put on the record because we continue to provide uninterrupted funds, which we believe are sufficient for the purpose.

The effect of the amendments, if not the intention of the hon. Member for Bath, would be to restrict to an annual

[Mr. Boswell]

basis the publication of student union financial reports, details of external union affiliations and approval of the current list of affiliations by union members. That would be restrictive and there would be no advantage in it. The existing provisions in the Bill, which were inherited from another place, give governing bodies the choice of when to publish financial reports of student unions and details of their external affiliations and when to submit current lists of external affiliations for approval of union members, provided that it is done at least once a year. There are special provisions for fresh affiliations, which were discussed during an earlier stage of the Bill.

There is one practical difficulty with the amendments, which is germane to the reason we wish to reject them. If an institution and a union wished to alter their accounting period by having a short catch-up period—so that they could alter their reporting year end in the way that a company can from, say, the end of the fiscal year in April to the end of the academic year in July—they could not do so because, under the amendments, there would be some rather wooden provision requiring them to continue for a whole year.

We envisage the annual publication requirement as the minimum necessary, but the actual frequency of reporting should be a matter for local determination. To put it another way—and those hon. Members who served on the Committee will remember my reference to modal verbs—the issue is whether the particular conjunction is disjunctive or conjunctive.

Mr. Don Foster: I am grateful to the Minister for giving way because it may help to save time. Will he give an assurance that the Government will at no stage place a requirement on institutions to provide a report more than once a year?

Mr. Boswell: I was asked to give an assurance that there would be no such power, and I give that assurance. I also give the assurance that there will be no pressure. It is entirely a matter for the institution. Our proposals provide the necessary and maximum flexibility in the requirement that there should be an annual publication. It is up to institutions whether they wish to report more frequently in the light of local circumstances. Student attendance may differ from the conventional academic year and it might be appropriate, therefore, to report in a different cycle. Whatever the hon. Gentleman's intentions, which I appreciate were honourable, the effect of his amendments would be not to reduce, but to increase bureaucracy and not to increase but to reduce flexibility. I hope that he will feel able to withdraw them in the light of my assurances.

Mr. Foster: I am delighted by the assurances that have been given. I would like to take issue with the Minister's comments about the two surveys to which he referred, but I am sure that you, Madam Deputy Speaker, would rule that out of order. I welcome those assurances and I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 22

REQUIREMENTS TO BE OBSERVED IN RELATION TO STUDENTS' UNIONS

Mr. Duncan: I beg to move amendment No. 23, in page 14, line 35, at end insert—

'(2A) The union should return to students who are not or have ceased to be members any fees or grants paid by them or on their behalf or by the institution, in proportion to the part of the academic year for which the student is not a member.'.

The choice that the Government have extended to so many areas of life has not been extended to students. Student unions remain a closed shop—a fact that has been adequately debated in Committee—and the opt-out that has been granted to students is inadequate. The absence of choice is an insult to students and it would be compounded if this little, simple amendment were not passed today.

At the beginning of any academic year, a grant is made per capita to the student union, but if, in the exercise of his opt-out, a student were to withdraw his support for the student union, there is no mechanism for the return of any part of his subscription to the source from which it came. If the student were to cease to be a student, he still would not receive such a rebate. Once the subscription is made to the student union, it is there for the whole academic year, regardless of whether the student wants to opt out of membership of the student union or leaves the university altogether. That is inequitable.

This simple straightforward amendment would provide a pro rata rebate for the period in which the student did not wish to be a member of the student union or did not attend the university and it would remedy the situation. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister, who is a sensible Oxford man, will accept the amendment.

Mr. Enright: Is it not interesting that the Secretary of State, whom we all saw preening himself on television declaiming to the Conservative party conference what he would do about student unions, has not been present for a single part of the debate on the National Union of Students? That is shoddy and disgraceful. I do not just keep my thoughts to myself but say them openly.

The amendment moved by the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan) should be withdrawn at once. It is a disgrace. One needs to tidy up institutions from time to time and no institution is perfect, but it is wrong to suggest that the things that the NUS has done wrong are of such an order that a Bill is required to crush it—I pray to the Lord that it will be turned down.

What lies behind the hostility of the hon. Members for Rutland and Melton and for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) is worrying. I have already examined in Committee the problems of the hon. Member for Colne Valley. He used to like people when he came here—it says so in his *Who's Who* entry—but he does not like people any more; he has taken that out of his entry.

8.45 pm

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. May I inquire what relevance that has to the amendment?

Mr. Enright: I am attempting to look into the psychology of hon. Members who would table such petty amendments to what is already a rather petty Bill. I am trying to suggest that their motives are unworthy and not consistent with the aims of hon. Members.

The hon. Member for Colne Valley is a strong and unashamed supporter of the Economic League, yet he and the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton talk about choice. Choice for students—

Mr. Duncan: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I think that I can deal with this without further assistance. The purpose of the debate is to discuss the merits or otherwise of the amendment or amendments under consideration. I do not believe that an investigation of the psychology of hon. Members who may have tabled the amendments falls within that category.

Mr. Enright: I am saying that—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I know what the hon. Gentleman is saying; I am suggesting that it is not relevant.

Mr. Enright: I am talking about choice, which the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton mentioned in moving his amendment. What is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. I, for example, had no choice about the fact that the insurance company to which I was signed up contributed to the Economic League. To suggest, therefore, that students have some choice is wrong.

What is even worse is that the amendment should be proposed at a time when, as the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) suggested, students are genuinely suffering. Students in my constituency need the NUS and the solidarity—I use that word unashamedly—of that organisation to get by. The National Westminster bank has shown that one in three students is thinking of leaving. That is certainly true in my area. As hon. Members know, as from next September, 30 per cent. of the grant will be cut from students—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry, but the hon. Gentleman is not in order. Unless he comes to order soon, I shall have to ask him to resume his seat.

Mr. Enright: I am suggesting that unless we have the solidarity of the NUS, which the amendment seeks to destroy in pettifogging fashion, a number of my constituents will suffer severely. I should like to outline those difficulties to show how they suffer. If, Madam Deputy Speaker, you rule that that is out of order, I shall sit down, but that is the purport of what I am trying to do.

The people in my constituency cannot be supported by their parents. One in three of the men are out of work and are seeking work.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry, but that goes far beyond the scope of the amendment. We are dealing with fairly narrow points. This is one single amendment and I fear that it will not bear the amount of weight that the hon. Gentleman seeks to put on it. I now call Mr. Graham Riddick.

Mr. Riddick: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I shall attempt to speak to the amendment. The hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright), with whom I have always got on perfectly well, has not done himself any favours this evening. I suppose that it was mildly amusing when he ran through my history and my curriculum vitae in Committee, but it is not very funny the second time round.

The hon. Gentleman was talking about the National Union of Students, but I do not believe that my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan) so much as mentioned that body once during his speech. In fact, the amendment does not affect the National Union of Students to any great extent. Neither my hon. Friend nor I say that students should not be allowed to belong to the NUS. If they want to belong, of course they can. That is what we stand for; we believe in choice. The hon. Member for Hemsworth was somewhat off beam, but perhaps he is a bit off form today; perhaps this is a bad day for him. We shall put his performance down to that.

Hon. Members who served on the Standing Committee will remember that I initiated a debate on the practicality of the students' new-found freedom to choose whether to belong to a student union. I am pleased that the Bill introduces the element of choice to student unions, so that students who do not wish to belong can choose not to do so.

In my view it has always been nonsensical that young people who wish to study at institutions of higher education have had to belong to student unions, especially as some of those unions have done and said the most ridiculous and extreme things in the name of all students—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not fall into the same trap as another hon. Member did. He, too, must address himself to amendment No. 23.

Mr. Riddick: I am grateful to you, Madam Deputy Speaker. The point is that I want the principle of voluntary membership of student unions to be absolutely genuine.

The original Bill, which gave students the opportunity to opt into student union membership, provided genuine choice, but sadly the House of Lords had other ideas. Because we now have a different approach to the Bill, I shall argue that there is a case for allowing students to have a rebate of fees. That is what the amendment is about. We must ensure that the principle of voluntary membership is meaningful, and that students have a genuine choice. Under the current provisions of the Bill, they may not have such a choice.

My hon. Friend the Minister will remember that we had a debate about whether students who have opted out should continue to have access to the facilities provided by student unions. He could not accept my amendment, which would have set that principle in tablets of stone.

Mr. Gunnell: The hon. Gentleman has already commented on the view of the clause taken by the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals. Does he not agree that the amendment would add yet more detail to what is already an extremely detailed clause? It is already 124 lines long, even before we add the amendment and lengthen it even further. The CVCP described the clause as otiose and unworkable. Does the hon. Gentleman not think that paying back subscriptions halfway through the year would add more unworkable detail? Does he not agree with the CVCP that there is already an awful lot of administration involved in universities, without adding further administrative details in a clause that does nothing worth while?

Mr. Riddick: I should have thought that it had become clear that I do not altogether agree with the approach of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals. The amendment is fairly small, and I think that it would fit into the Bill rather well, actually.

[Mr. Riddick]

I was about to argue that if the Bill does not say that all students will have access to the facilities of the student union even if they opt out, the amendment offers an alternative approach, whereby any student who opts out would receive a proportion of the money paid by his institution to the union on his behalf. At the moment the problem is that, when a student opts out, he not only opts out of what he probably wanted to opt out of—the political campaigning activities of the union—but forfeits his right to use the student union facilities.

Mr. Don Foster: Following the logic of his argument, does the hon. Gentleman agree that a student who opts out of attending lectures should be entitled to a fee rebate for the lecture course, and that a student who opts out of using the library should get a rebate, too?

Mr. Riddick: I suppose that that is the sort of stupid intervention that one would expect from the Liberal Democrats.

The sums paid by institutions to student unions vary significantly from institution to institution. If the money were paid to the student who opted out that would provide a tangible gain for him. Indeed, a fees rebate would mean that a student's choice whether to leave the student union would be based on a reasoned judgment of whether he could get better value from other student bodies or outside bodies, as well as on issues of conscience. Certainly it would give the student unions a real incentive to retain student membership—and they could do that by providing good-quality services and by being more responsible and representative.

Therefore, if students opt out of student union membership, either they should receive the proportion of the fee paid to the union by the institution on their behalf, or alternatively, if the money continues to be paid to the union, they should be permitted continued access to the union facilities.

If the Minister cannot accept the amendment I hope that he will spell out clearly the fact that the Government expect student unions to allow students who opt out of union membership to continue to use the facilities. Indeed, we made some good progress on that point in Committee, because several Labour Members went so far as to agree with that. It is important that my hon. Friend the Minister, and perhaps the Opposition spokesman, will reinforce that point again. The amendment is about giving genuine choice to students, and I hope that my hon. Friend will give a positive response.

Mr. Bryan Davies: That it should come to this: that the carnivores of the Conservative right wing should be reduced to tabling an amendment as meek and mild as this, trying to attack student unions on the basis of some concept about rebates.

I may add that Conservative Members should show a little delicacy when talking about the openness with which funds are used by significant bodies. We are all too well aware of the fact that they are members of an association, a political party, that is staggeringly coy about donations, whether given or received. One would have thought that there would have been an element of delicacy in the drafting of such an amendment.

There are several real anxieties about the amendment, and I shall put them in straightforward terms to the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan). First, I know that he is thinking of the model of the large, aggressive, politically challenging major university union, immensely damaging to Conservative interests and campaigning on education issues. But the reason why such a union may operate against Conservative interests is contained in the policies that the hon. Gentleman has supported and the Government have carried out.

I remind the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton that there are other student unions as well. For example, in further education colleges the contributions per student may be about £1.20 per year. Is the hon. Gentleman saying that we should put into legislation a requirement that when a student leaves a college for some reason, or withdraws from the student union, or does not participate as fully as he wishes, he will be able to claim back a fraction of that £1.20? Is he saying that the institution would have to set up some machinery whereby that fraction of £1.20 should be refunded? Of course not. It is ludicrous nonsense and it reflects the fact that some Conservative Members are more concerned with indulging their ideological predispositions than with looking at the reality of education.

What kind of organisations do Conservative Members belong to or can they reflect upon which can budget easily on the basis of people being able to withdraw their subscriptions over part of a year? It would be extremely difficult for most organisations to cope with that if they were anything like significant employers. Many student unions have quite large turnovers and employ professional staff. How would they cope if there were a withdrawal of a substantial amount of resources midway through the year?

It should be recognised that, of course, the student union grant is a block grant for all facilities. Although the student may wish to withdraw himself from certain functions of the student union, the amendment's intentions would be extremely difficult to implement when that student still had access to services provided by the student union, such as heating and lighting of a building, health and safety provisions, insurance, and so on. How would it be possible for an institution to prevent some students from benefiting in part from some of the generalised services, while seeking to refund them for services which they no longer accept?

I shall address the following point to the Minister as well. I have no doubt that the model that the Government have in mind in this aspect of the Bill is a group of people of political principle who decide that the student union has pursued an action which they no longer wish to support and the Government deem that such groups ought to have the democratic right to withdraw. We all respect such a model because it has a democratic concept behind it.

The worry is that, apart from people withdrawing from the student union on such political grounds, we may see minority groups of students withdrawing for a whole range of different reasons. Obviously, there are many ethnic minorities in our student bodies. They may want to withdraw from the student union on the grounds that it provides certain facilities which they would like to see provided in a slightly different way. They might want more no-smoking areas or areas where people could be quiet, or provision to be made for a particular diet in the refectory. If the student union fails to provide such facilities, the Bill puts an obligation on the institution to make good any deficit.

9 pm

I ask the Minister to consider that point seriously, because there are anxieties that higher education institutions will have burdens placed on them as a result of opting out by students, which have not been envisaged up to now—certainly not in the arguments put forward by the Minister. That shows how difficult this part of the Bill is. Therefore, if the Minister accepts the complicating, unhelpful amendment moved by the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton and, somewhat predictably, supported by the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick), he will be piling additional burdens on an area of the Bill that I and many people involved in education to a much greater extent than I am already foresee leading to untold trouble for our institutions in ways that the Government have not recognised.

Mr. Boswell: This has been an interesting debate, which has enabled us to clarify a number of issues of principle and of detailed application of the proposed legislation. I should let the House know at the outset that I do not propose to advise my hon. Friends to accept the amendment of my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan), although I understand the spirit and sentiment in which he has moved it. I shall outline the ways in which we are addressing his concerns and those of my hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) in a moment.

I shall deal first with the comments made by Opposition Members. Frankly, the hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright) was somewhat below his best. He was particularly ungracious in his remarks about the Secretary of State and somewhat hysterical in his remarks about the general position of students.

No one is pretending that everything in the garden is lovely for students or that they have ample and huge funds. Of course that is not the case. Nevertheless, the real value of the package available to them is maintained year by year in terms of what they have to spend while they are students. Moreover, when one measures the drop-out rate on an objective basis, one sees that it is not generally increasing. I should add that for the past four years we have included the access funds as well. That is immensely useful in meeting the concerns of students who are in difficulties. The funds are administered by the institutions.

The hon. Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Davies) gave tongue to his concerns and, understandably, expressed his personal anxieties about the amendment. He talked about the various types of provision and the wide range of facilities offered by student unions from the large, professionally staffed ones to those that are run on a shoestring, perhaps in further education colleges. The hon. Gentleman could have given the example of an Oxford or Cambridge junior common room. We acknowledge that there is a wide range of provision.

The hon. Member for Oldham, Central and Royton invented, perhaps, a Government model and suggested that we saw a group of politically motivated persons, or people not necessarily motivated by any other sentiment than dissatisfaction with their union, exercising their right of choice and opting out. The hon. Gentleman argued against that and said that there could be a series of principled withdrawals to force changes of provision or to avail those concerned of the provisions of the clause.

The anti-discrimination or unfair disadvantage provisions that we debated in Committee are exactly what they are set out to be. They are directed to institutions or unions which set things up in a way that creates an unfair disadvantage for students. These provisions enable a group of students to claim that they are being unfairly disadvantaged. They do not prescribe that there should be exact equivalence. The hon. Member for Oldham, Central and Royton knows that elsewhere in the Bill we have provided that institutions are required to give details of the services that they offer, both through the student union channel and outside it. It should be possible, therefore, to make an informed choice.

I have followed some of the speculation that has ensued and I seek to convince the House that it is somewhat alarmist. I assure the hon. Gentleman, if I did not make it clear earlier, that we have received a number of comments from the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals. It is my intention to reply to the committee's letter and my reply will be on the record by the time those in another place complete their consideration of the Bill.

I assure my hon. Friends that I understand the sentiments underlying the amendment to which they spoke. It is important in principle that students who choose not to belong to a union should not have to pay for services that they do not receive. They should not have to pay for the cake, as it were, and not receive the biscuit.

The Government have given an undertaking that public funding from which institutions provide services to students will not be altered or reduced on account of the reforms set out in the Bill. Institutions need that funding to maintain services for opted-out students.

It might be for the convenience of the House if I mention briefly the various channels—the audit trail, as it were—along which public money flows and makes its way through the system. The moneys come from the Government to the funding council. They move from the funding council to the institution and onwards to the student union. At no stage is there an earmarked amount of Government funds for the student union. Nor is such funding contingent on a particular level of union membership.

When we reach the levels of the institution and the student union, there is an intermingling of private sources of funds, which must be taken into account. As has been said, an institution may typically give a block grant to a student union without earmarking it, for example, as £X to the rugby club, £Y for the debating society, and so forth. It is a highly unhypothecated system and we would not seek to intervene in the process.

Having said that, however, I agree with my hon. Friends that the right to choose whether to belong to a student union is central to our student union reforms. It was on the front of the statement by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State a year ago. It requires—and we are determined to ensure that it achieves—a real choice. Indeed, that is exactly the point in respect of which my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton led his amendment. It is no good just talking about the voluntary principle: there must be a real exercise of choice. That must mean that those who decide not to join the union must not face such a loss or disadvantage as to render it a hollow option. We therefore amended the Bill to ensure that there would be no unfair disadvantage as a result of making that choice.

There are bound to be differences between union and non-union members. For example, students who opt out cannot expect to take part in elections. We explored that point in Committee. Opting out cannot be cost-free.

[Mr. Boswell]

However, students should be able to weigh up the advantages and disadvantages of membership, with due transparency, knowing what they will get and without fear of discrimination or loss of access to important services.

We have already discussed with the representative bodies the importance of ensuring that services remain available to non-members. To underpin that, we have confirmed that institutional budgets will not be reduced on account of the number of students opting out. We have also discussed with those representative bodies the principle —and this relates closely to the amendment—of fair treatment of self-financing students who opt out, and the institutions understand that point.

Where self-financing students opt out, but continue to receive services through the union, institutions will need to decide whether a reduced fee, in proportion to any reduction in services, would be fair and appropriate. We do not think that it is appropriate to require the diversion of money used at present to provide services for all in the way that my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton suggests. We believe that that is too prescriptive. It is also a little too negative.

From the discussions that we have had and the assurances that we have received, we expect that institutions will wish to continue to provide services for all students, including those who opt out. They may be provided in several ways, either separately or on an agency arrangement through the student union. However, we expect institutions to continue to provide those services and they will therefore need to retain the funds in their hands to ensure that those services are maintained.

We believe in a real principle of choice and I am at one with my hon. Friends in that regard. That is extremely important. We believe in non-discrimination and fairness in the way matters operate. We believe in transparency so that people know where they are. We understand from the institutions their readiness to continue to provide services for all students, with the qualifications that I have given, but on the basis of non-discrimination or unfair disadvantage.

Mr. Bryan Davies: May we be clear about this? I understand that where it can be readily identified that funds have been reserved because students have opted out, a deduction can be made from the contribution to the student union. However, there will clearly be a loss of economies of scale. It will be extremely difficult to quantify and to separate certain services in those terms. Will institutions therefore be able to look to the Government for supplementary resources to take account of the fact that the grant saved will be insufficient to make up for the deficit in facilities that will occur?

Mr. Boswell: I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's seductive premise, nor his conclusion. In most cases, as I have already said, institutions wish to continue the services. We have received that set of assurances from the institutions, so the point about economies of scale would probably not arise in practice. On the hon. Gentleman's conceptual point, I have already made it clear that this is not hypothecated money. Any particular needs of institutions at any one time will be considered on their merits by the respective funding councils in the light of the resources that we make available to that funding council. I can give the hon. Gentleman no clearer assurance than that.

We expect the services to continue. We believe in the principle of a free, real and transparent choice. For those reasons, although I fully understand the spirit in which my hon. Friend moved the amendment, I invite him to withdraw it, as we are not able to accept it.

Mr. Duncan: In view of my hon. Friend's comments, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Order for Third Reading read.

9.14 pm

Mr. Boswell: I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

I commend the Bill to the House for its very clear merits. Part I establishes a specialist agency to facilitate teacher training, with very clear and commendable objectives, which are set out in clause 1, to contribute to raising the standards of teaching, to promote teaching as a career, to improve the quality and efficiency of all routes into the teaching profession, and to secure the involvement of schools in all courses and programmes for the initial training of school teachers.

Only those blinded by prejudice or, perhaps, crippled by excess conservatism, could suggest that such a body will be anything other than a force for good in such an important sector. We believe unashamedly in the concept of a specialist, dedicated body with a specific remit to raise quality and standards in teacher training, and we will deliver it through the Bill.

On Second Reading, the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) said that the Opposition would focus on school-centred training in later debates. My word, in that respect alone she was certainly right. Most effort in Committee was spent by the Opposition on a stubborn defence of the right of universities to hold the ring on teacher training—in effect, to decide whom to let in as competitors to their own provision. We tried hard to convince the Opposition that our purpose was to provide a measure of choice and diversity. We did not seek to subvert higher education provision of teacher education. We seek to provide an alternative which will be judged on its merits and will be accredited by the same body.

This House has made very clear on Second Reading, in Committee and today its views about our concept. It has endorsed the principles of choice and diversity within a framework of high quality, as now reflected in the Bill. It could not accept the unclear words that were added to the Bill in another place, and it also chose not to accept any of the many alternatives that were offered by Opposition Members with the same purpose of, in effect, compelling the participation of higher education in school-centred initial teacher training. We have no objection to its involvement; but we do not compel it to take place. That has been the substance of the matter, although it was only briefly touched upon.

Inevitably, the Committee stage, which was good-natured, highlighted a number of different and interesting perspectives on the provision of teacher education. Many of us will have enjoyed hon. Members' contributions, and I hope that we have learnt something from them. On the

whole, it has been a valuable and good-natured series of discussions, even if we were unshakeable, as we felt we should be, on the main principle which I have discussed.

In the relatively long hours of a Committee stage, it is usually possible to find out a number of points about the Opposition's policies. As you will know, Madam Deputy Speaker, it is not possible at the Dispatch Box to question the Opposition about the conduct of their policies from time to time. I was slightly disappointed with the responses of the hon. Member for Dewsbury and her hon. Friends. In spite of our questioning, we did not hear whether she supported the boycott of tests by one out of six teacher unions. We were hoping to hear about that but we did not. Can the hon. Lady tell us now?

Mrs. Ann Taylor: Can the Minister tell us where that is in the Bill?

Mr. Boswell: A lot of parents will want to know what the hon. Lady and her party think about it.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The Minister, like other hon. Members, must adhere to the proper rules. The rule is that on Third Reading one debates what is in the Bill.

Mr. Boswell: Indeed. I was extremely interested in a number of other issues that were not raised in Committee, such as grant-maintained schools and specialised teacher assistance, which come within the concerns of quality and choice in teacher training.

It is interesting—and I give due credit to Opposition Members—that the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) did not turn up during our considerations today, despite his emphasis on education. He expressed a certain interest in teacher assistance, which I thought was coming at least a little bit our way on that matter. I shall be strictly fair to the hon. Gentleman. We agreed on one point which was entirely germane to the Bill, and it came out clearly from it. He said that he welcomed the proposal—as I do—by the National Union of Students to seek charitable status. I hope that that proposal—painfully slow as it always is, because it must be painstaking—will proceed. That will be a positive gain from the Bill, as will the detailed provisions of the student union clauses we have been discussing.

For the most part, I felt that on the central issue of teacher training, we all aspire to securing quality, but we must find practical means and effective delivery to ensure that we get it. The hon. Lady and her colleagues showed only the splendour of unreconstructedness.

Part II of the Bill secures much greater accountability in the working of student unions and real choice about whether they can join, should join or choose to join those bodies. Those sound principles are not the subject of dispute. The Bill includes a good and workable method of putting them into practice, precisely in line with the objectives and principles that my right hon. Friend set out last year.

In part II, we have a structure which was introduced with common consent in another place. It provides a framework of good practice for universities and colleges to implement without bureaucratic interference from the centre; and each in its own appropriate way. We have in this place made some improvements which are designed to ensure that the choice for students on whether to belong is real and, as promised before the Bill left another place, to enhance the information provisions to increase transparency.

Put simply, I believe that the Bill should pass into law as soon as possible to allow its full benefits of extending choice and raising quality to be realised. I hope that those in another place will be able swiftly to endorse the amendments that this House has made in the spirit of greater choice and accountability, in which they were clearly intended.

9.22 pm

Mrs. Ann Taylor: We should welcome back the late Secretary of State, who clearly could not be bothered to turn up for much of the debate. Perhaps that is not surprising because he does not know the Bill well, not having served on the Committee. It would have been interesting to hear his swansong this evening, but it was not to be.

I shall take up a point made by the Minister when he said that we concentrated most of our attention in Committee on part I of the Bill. That is true. I intend to concentrate most of my brief remarks this evening on part I as well, because I regard it as the most important part of the Bill and, in a sense, because I am charitable by nature and do not want to add to the humiliation of Ministers, especially when they have already been reminded of the rhetoric about student unions which has been used by the Secretary of State on other occasions. Perhaps the Secretary of State has suffered sufficient humiliation recently without our repeating some of his more extravagant statements from the Tory conference.

Unfortunately, the Secretary of State missed the comments of the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick), to whom I shall certainly give way.

Mr. Riddick: A significant number of teachers who are members of the National Union of Teachers will be directly affected by part I of the Bill. Will the hon. Lady join me in urging those NUT members to stop their boycott of tests?

Mrs. Taylor: Even the hon. Gentleman's intervention is too contrived to be in order on this occasion. Perhaps he would be interested in reminding his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State of what he said earlier, while his right hon. Friend was absent. The hon. Member was reminding us that part II of the Bill was a long way from "the spirit" of the original Bill. He said that by way of complaint. Opposition Members very much welcome that change in the Bill, however. This is one occasion on which the other place did a very good job of improving legislation that was seriously flawed.

In the very brief time that I wish to take, I shall remind the Minister of some of the questions that are still important and which he should be reminded of before the Bill is granted its final passage through this House.

First, I should repeat what Opposition Members said in the Standing Committees on other education Bills. It is wrong when quango after quango is appointed by the Secretary of State alone, and that situation cannot continue. I say that as a shadow Secretary of State, as one who would very much like to sit on the Government Benches, and as one who would not always want the Secretary of State's powers to be curtailed.

[Mrs. Taylor]

We really need a system that is not so open to political abuse. The system that we have suggested, in which members of national educational quangos would be approved by the Select Committee on Education, is one which a serious Government and people who are seriously interested in democracy ought to take further.

Secondly, on the pace of change, the Secretary of State once said that change in education should be evolutionary and not revolutionary. During the past two years, as far as I can see, he has done nothing to ensure that that is the case. We have had rapid change on rapid change, which is causing serious concerns in education, as is the fact that the Government are going ahead with this legislation before the results of the pilot scheme have been announced.

Other specific questions were not answered in Committee and were not touched on today, such as the European validity of the qualifications that prospective teachers will get from courses. That is an extremely important question and one which Ministers ought to be willing to answer, for the sake of the prospective students.

Also, the Minister never told us why the Government are taking these first steps to deprofessionalise teaching, when other Ministers are moving in the opposite direction, for example with nursing.

The central consideration must be quality—whether any of the measures in the Bill will improve, or have the potential to damage, the quality of teachers. Our concerns remain. They have not been dealt with adequately throughout our debates on the Bill.

The Minister said that we were stubborn in our defence of universities, but that is not the case. We are stubborn in our defence of the principle of partnership. Teachers should have both higher education and practical experience. In Committee, both Ministers frequently praised that partnership, and it should be an essential part of the provision. The principle of partnership should therefore be incorporated in the Bill.

Ministers have heard on other occasions the information about schemes that have been tried in the recent past. Mention was made this evening of the role of OFSTED. Ministers will recall the OFSTED report on the articled teacher scheme, which said that the degree of inconsistency in the scheme was more evident than in conventional postgraduate certificate of education courses.

That potential for inconsistency, a reduction in quality and a patchiness—with qualifications that do not mean what the students might think they mean—are at the heart of our concerns about the Bill. Ministers have said that we have not provided all of the solutions. Perhaps a Bill that starts off in a confrontational way without a proper consultation and which is rushed through is not one that is open to much constructive amendment. We did attempt constructive amendment, and we tried to concentrate on quality issues.

We tried to resolve the dilemma that Government Members often seem to face of not being quite sure whether they think most teachers are rubbish or are doing a good job. We saw that dilemma with the hon. Member for Blackpool, South (Mr. Hawkins), who was somewhat scathing in many of his comments.

From Second Reading onwards, we have suggested many of the issues that should be developed and looked at with regard to teacher education. The need for a core curriculum and the issue of special educational needs were discussed, and there should be—I think that there could be—cross-party agreement on what is needed for prospective teachers. We talked about the need for better induction, better support teachers and more in-service training.

Ministers seemed to have fixed minds from the start. We got the impression in Committee that the Ministers saw the merits of many of our arguments and, left to their own devices, might have been able to come up with some modest amendments which could have improved the Bill. The Bill could damage teacher education in this country seriously, and could thereby damage the educational opportunities for our children.

I end by reminding the House of what the Secretary of State said on another occasion. He said that if we legislate in haste, we can repent at leisure. The Secretary of State may have a lot of leisure for his repentance, but, in the meantime, our children's education could be damaged.

9.32 pm

Mr. David Jamieson (Plymouth, Devonport): The Bill came from the Lords to the House of Commons in a tattered state with bits taken off it. It staggered through Committee and tonight it has come to us for its final stages here. The two Ministers tonight—the Tweedledum and Tweedledee of the education world—have not only been singularly unconvincing but also singularly unconvinced in what they told the House.

I asked myself tonight whether I would buy a used car from either of the two Ministers. They wax lyrical about the vehicle of change which they have presented in the Bill, but I would not buy a Ford Anglia from those guys. They have sold us a horse and cart from the monitorial age, and we have teacher training which comes from the "learning at Nelly's knee" syndrome.

Like so many of the Government's education policies and so many other Tory policies, the measure was spawned by denigrating, destroying and undermining all that is good at the moment. The Government create a climate in which almost any change and policy put forward can be accepted. We know where the policies come from. They come from the Centre for Policy Studies and from the pen of Sheila Lawlor, and that is how the Bill has come to pass.

It was spawned in response to the sort of scare stories that we heard from the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady O. Maitland), whom I notice has been very much absent from this debate. Here we have a solution to the problem of teacher education that is still looking for the problem.

Where is the massive support for this proposal? I have travelled around the country with the Select Committee on Education, and one sight that I have not seen is parents marching with banners reading "We want more students clogging up our children's classes."

Let us consider one or two of the practicalities of the Bill. Opposition Members want broad-based teacher education: we believe that all teachers need practical experience, but that experience should be gained in several schools. Many students are currently trained in only one or two. We also believe that their education should be underpinned by theory, and placed in a context of knowledge.

A good teacher training course should include some element of the history of education, and provide knowledge of how children learn and an understanding of

the social context in which they live. Moreover—as the Secretary of State will doubtless agree—student teachers should learn about the national curriculum, testing and many of the other measures introduced by the Government.

How will the Teacher Training Agency and the new teacher training scheme work? The Select Committee—and no doubt other hon. Members who have visited schools around the country—encountered a common criticism. The expression that we heard so often from heads and governors was "innovation overload": because too many changes and new ideas had been imposed at the same time, teachers had been bogged down with paperwork and bureaucracy—ticking forms, filling in boxes and dealing with the shifting ground of an ever-changing national curriculum, sometimes with poor facilities. On top of that, they are having to write courses for teacher trainees.

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Jamieson: I would, but I do not wish to subject the House to the banalities that the hon. Gentleman's interventions usually contain.

If individual schools, or clusters of schools, are to take on groups of students, what is to be the critical mass? Will it be 10, 12 or 15 students? If the scheme is to be cost-effective, there must be a critical mass. I think that it must be between 10 and 15. Even in a large comprehensive with as many as 80 or 100 staff, the addition of 15 students would impose a considerable burden; most large schools would not take on more than three or four at any one time, because of the disruption involved. I need not remind the Minister that one of the reasons why Harrow school left the partnership scheme was the disruption that it anticipated.

If a large comprehensive will not be able to cope, how will a large primary school with perhaps 20 teachers cope? How will a small primary with six or seven teachers deal with perhaps a similar number of students at the same time? As with so many of the Government's Bills and policies, no consideration has been given to the way in which the proposals will work in the classroom.

I know what many parents will feel about the Bill. They want their children to be taught by well motivated, highly skilled teachers; they want those teachers to spend their time with the children in the classroom. What they do not want is for the school to be full of students so that teachers spend their time helping those students.

The most serious contradiction in the Bill is the fact that Tory Members have constantly criticised teacher training and trendy ideas during the 1960s and those teachers who, supposedly, conspired to lower standards, yet the Bill gives the job of training new teachers to the alleged villains of the piece.

The Bill is seriously flawed. It has little support in schools and no support among parents. The only glimmer of light in the gloom is that few schools will take it on because it is totally unworkable.

9.40 pm

Mr. Don Foster: The hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Mr. Jamieson) referred to the two Ministers on the Front Bench as Tweedledee and Tweedledum. I have a grudging affection for them—and for the Secretary of State, who may not be with us for much longer—but I thought that they looked more like the Flower Pot Men as they watched the Secretary of State wandering in and out of the Chamber. "Bill and Ben, the Flower Pot Men. Flubberdub. Where did the Little Weed go?"

The Bill is totally unnecessary and unwelcome. Nevertheless, our debate has brought some welcome developments. Members on both sides of the House have welcomed part II of the Bill, on which the Government have shown some willingness to listen to concerns expressed by people both inside and outside the House, despite the blandishments of the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick).

It was also interesting to hear the Secretary of State apparently welcome the idea of an outside, non-partisan body that would look into some education issues. I am sure that he will join me in welcoming the fact that the Education Commission has secured some additional funding to continue the excellent work that it was doing.

I also welcome the Government's admission that the parents charter was not all that it was cracked up to be. I particularly welcome the Minister's remark that one could not rely on a document like that.

The vast majority of the damage will be done by part I, which fails to recognise the real problems in the education service. The Government would have done far better to deal with those problems than the issues which they have dealt with in part I. Their energy would have been put to better use in looking at the underfunding of the education service and giving even more impetus to increasing significantly the level of nursery education available to three and four-year-olds. They should have dealt with the desperate need to establish a general teaching council to raise the professional status of teachers rather than to reduce it, as part I does.

Part I is also dangerous. For example, it introduces into our education service yet another unelected, remote, undemocratic quango. More than 55 per cent. of all central Government expenditure on education is now through quangos. People are concerned about the denial of the democratic principle by those quangos, not least when they see that their membership is solely in the hands of the Secretary of State, who will appoint between eight and 12 faceless men and women who will meet in secret and not be answerable to Parliament. They could certainly never claim to represent an independent or credible organisation.

The Secretary of State assured us that the Bill would not give him any additional powers. He continually tells us that he has moved power from the hub of the wheel to the rim of the wheel, yet, as recently as today, he demonstrated effectively the way in which the Bill gives him significantly increased power.

The Secretary of State was pleased to be able to announce as recently as today a new initiative in respect of OFSTED, whereby he would use his powers under clause 7 of the Bill to dictate that OFSTED should be allowed to visit organisations and institutions and that, if they did not let it in, no funds would be available. The clause provides:

> "The Secretary of State may make grants to the funding agencies of such amounts and subject to such terms and conditions as he may determine."

That two-line part of the clause shows the enormous power that the Secretary of State will gain from the Bill.

The Secretary of State also said, during his brief contribution, that he was perhaps sorry that he had not started reforms of teacher education sooner, but that one has to start somewhere. That belies all the changes that

[Mr. Don Foster]

have taken place in initial teacher education under the current Secretary of State and his predecessors in recent years, some of which I welcomed.

The Secretary of State rightly moved the initial teacher training so that more time has been spent in the classroom. Moves by the Secretary of State and the Conservative Government have ensured the establishment of worthwhile partnerships between schools and institutions of higher education. Those are welcome, but the proposals in the Bill, especially the drive towards school-centred initial teacher training, are, I believe, a move too far. That move will, in due course, remove opportunities for choice and diversity as more and more institutions drop out of providing initial teacher education.

The Secretary of State and his colleagues on the Government Bench have been able to provide no evidence of support for those proposals. They have been able to provide no evidence that the proposals will improve the quality of teacher training, and there has been no realisation by the Secretary of State or his colleagues of the distinction between training someone to join the profession of teaching and technician education.

The Bill—especially part I—will do a great disservice to the country's education service, and it will continue to lower the morale of the people working in the service. I very much hope that it will not be given a Third Reading.

9.47 pm

Mr. Gunnell: In the past two or three weeks, my constituents have reminded me of the only aspect of education about which there has been agreement across the House as far as the Bill is concerned—we are anxious about the quality of education.

Constituents have come to me, expressing a great deal of anxiety about the fact that their children had not been able to obtain, or they thought that their children would not be able to obtain, places in schools in Morley, which is half of my constituency, because so many people were coming in from outside the constituency—and indeed from outside Leeds—under the Greenwich judgments. Indeed, the authority originally allocated their children to schools that they felt were of lesser quality.

That brought it home to me that the three high schools in Morley are all schools where the quality of the education is good, and the quality is good because the head teachers and staff are good, as are the relationships that exist in the schools. Those are all schools that I have been in at the time that I was involved in teacher training, and they are all schools that have a great deal to commend them. It was not surprising, therefore, that my constituents felt aggrieved that their children were placed in schools that they considered to be of lesser quality.

It has been the view of the Government that they are bringing forward a Bill that improves the quality of education because it improves the quality of teaching. I find that they have not made their case.

The Bill has no merit from beginning to end. It is notable that my hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) has already gone on record as saying that she would get rid of the Teacher Training Agency if she were Secretary of State. That is a commitment that I very much hope and expect she will fulfil. It is the only fit thing to do.

The Bill is based on myths. We know what they are because those of us who served on the Committee were given the briefings that were given to Conservative Members. Each of those briefings starts with one of the myths.

The briefing for part I of the Bill talks of political correctness. It states that higher education institutions, particularly teacher training institutions, are more concerned with political correctness than education. We heard that in Committee, we heard it from the hon. Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste) and, of course, we heard it from the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick), who is very concerned about political correctness.

All the examples given—most of them from Lancaster—were to be found in the briefing given to Conservative Members. It was not quite respectable enough to have come from central office, but it came with some guarantee from the Ministers. It consisted of various myths about the worst things that were thought to happen in teacher training institutions.

With part II of the Bill came another book of myths of the dreadful things done by student unions. We heard that again today from the hon. Members for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan) and for Colne Valley. Once the hon. Member for Colne Valley sees the word "union" on a piece of paper, it affects him in a certain way. I wonder whether, if I look at the *Huddersfield District Chronicle*, I shall find that the hon. Gentleman has been attacking the Mothers Union or the Band of Hope Union. As soon as he sees anything about unions he responds in a particular way.

The fact that part II of the Bill exists is a tribute to the hon. Member for Colne Valley. The Lords made it clear that part II, as originally envisaged by the Government, was nonsense. Part II contains the longest clause in the Bill—a clause which does nothing and which the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals rightly said was otiose and unworkable. Otiose means idle—the clause is idle, as is that part of the Bill, because it does nothing and does not contain legislation of any value. All it does is make it possible for people who are not student union members to ensure that they can get their drinks at the union bar—that was always going to be the case. Part II is a complete waste of time. It is not particularly dangerous and only becomes so if many people opt out of unions and the unions find it hard to fulfil their welfare functions.

Part I is based on the myth that what happens in higher education is politically correct. Part I is dangerous. We must consider the likely consequences if the Teacher Training Agency remains in existence for very long. It will reduce the quality of teaching. Because of my own background I am particularly concerned about the quality of science teaching. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright) is concerned about the quality of chemistry students. I accept that sometimes chemists may have greater difficulty in coming to terms with the subject in which my hon. Friend the Member for Hemsworth specialises than he would in coming to terms with theirs.

We must be concerned about the quality of science teachers because we must be concerned about the number of science graduates—we know that there will be a shortage.

There are particular difficulties in training science graduates for work in secondary schools because there is disharmony between the concept of a university degree in science and what we now ask of science teachers in

secondary schools. The best students still very much aim for a single-subject honours degree. Fortunately, there are now some degrees that encompass two or even three subjects, but they are relatively few.

When the teacher with an honours degree in physics or chemistry goes to a secondary school, he will be expected to teach not just physics or chemistry but across the whole range of sciences. Quite rightly, we have moved towards integrated science to give students an understanding of the fundamental principles of science as a whole. That means that that teacher must have academic retraining or he will spend a great deal of time teaching a subject in which his academic background is weak.

The Secretary of State will know that many people recruited in times of teacher shortage do not have the academic background to teach science in secondary schools. That problem will be compounded by a system that takes the initial training of teachers away from higher education. University departments of education have a range of science expertise that can help individual students. They also have a range of equipment that simply is not available in individual schools.

I have visited many schools that are hesitant about laboratory work because of the cost of materials. Therefore, when training teachers they cannot encourage them to experiment. Everyone knows that, when conducting an experiment for the first time, we are likely not to have it right so it does not work. Any one in science teaching has had that experience. We have to learn to deal with that, but it is better to do so within a university setting than in a school in front of a class of 30 to 40 pupils. I believe that not just in science, but more widely, there will be a reduction in quality as a result of removing teacher training from higher education institutions.

A second factor is that, over time, many schools—my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Mr. Jamieson) cited Harrow—will drop out of initial teacher training. Ilkley grammar school has said that it can no longer take teacher training students because there is a fundamental conflict between its job of educating children and the job it is being increasingly asked to do of training teachers, even in partnership with higher education institutions.

That conflict means that schools that want to concentrate on pupils and on what happens in the classroom are increasingly reducing the amount of contact between student teachers and pupils. They feel that that is important if they are to maintain their positions in the league and their examination results. There will be a reduction in the number of schools involved in teacher training.

The future under the Bill and the Teacher Training Agency will be one of a diminishing number of higher education institutions and schools involved in teacher training. I agree with the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) that some of the measures that the Government have taken in previous years have led to more contact with schools and have been beneficial to the system, but the Bill's provisions in respect of the Teacher Training Agency will weaken teacher training.

The hon. Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) said earlier that he was concerned about intellectual rigour in education. It is a great pity that the Secretary of State for Education and his Ministers are not concerned about intellectual rigour in teacher training; they are, in fact, diminishing it. They believe that education theory can be taught by people who have retired from the—

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business),

That, at this day's sitting, the Education Bill [*Lords*] may be proceeded with, through opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

Question agreed to.

Question again proposed, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

Mr. Gunnell: I was coming to the end of my speech. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I thought that that might be popular.

As the hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) said, concern about intellectual rigour in education seemed to make the hon. Member for Buckingham melancholic. He might well be melancholic about the lack of intellectual rigour in the proposals, which are made on the basis of that what happens at the chalk face and what happens in the ivory cocoon are completely separate. We believe in a teacher training system where the practical experience in schools is fully consonant with a theoretical base in which there is an understanding of education.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I call Mr. Colin Pickthall. *[Interruption.]*

10.1 pm

Mr. Pickthall: Did Conservative Members think that they could get away that lightly?

The core of the impulse behind the Bill is the assumed inefficiency and political undesirability of teacher education in the higher education sector. The Government's target has shifted in the past few years. Formerly, they said that teachers were responsible for all the ills of society, for not providing sufficiently trained pupils to fulfil the needs of business and commerce or young people sufficiently trained to be quiet citizens. The changes made in successive Education Acts were accompanied by a barrage of scorn that Conservative Members directed at teachers. Unfortunately for the Government, the experience of the population vis-a-vis their schools did not coincide with that, and the Secretary of State for Education succeeded in uniting almost all sections of education in resisting the Government's general attitude towards teachers.

In the past year or two, therefore, the Government have shifted their target—it is now teacher educators in universities and colleges. Conservative Back Benchers, if not co-Ministers, as they refer to themselves, have poured contempt on those people who are involved in teacher education. That has been obvious tonight. The hon. Members for Ealing, South (Mr. Greenway) and for Blackpool, South (Mr. Hawkins) make blanket condemnations of teacher education in colleges and universities. Throughout Committee, their argument was based on a painfully compiled booklet that contains a mixture of anecdotes, apocryphal details, exaggerations and generalisations about the dealings of teacher education departments and faculties. It was somewhat equivalent to the urban myth that we have read about in the newspapers.

The Secretary of State—we quoted this many times—said clearly in public that the school-centred initial teacher training schemes are all about bypassing higher education,

[Mr. Pickthall]

although, if I may get in a plug, the college where I used to teach in my constituency is the only one in the country that was judged "excellent" for its PGCE courses last year.

Conservative Members still talk about teacher training colleges—they referred to them again today—but they have not existed for a decade and a half. A huge change has taken place in colleges and universities and—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I do not know what hon. Members on both sides of the House are talking about, but I do know that I cannot hear what the hon. Gentleman is saying. I hope that the House will settle down a little.

Mr. Pickthall: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

A huge change has taken place, and is still taking place, in partnerships between colleges and schools. Most people, including hon. Members on both sides of the House, agree that partnerships are the right way forward, and that despite their many problems they are producing, and will produce, the goods. That was, and is, the change.

The Minister has accused us of being "conservatives" in the matter, but we are not; we are living through and, I hope, helping with a crucial change. But leapfrogging over that change comes another change—the school-centred initial teacher training scheme. Throughout Committee stage and today, the Opposition have tried to explore what the education experience of a trainee teacher should be.

Certainly that experience should be practical and school-based to a large extent, but it should also be theoretical. Throughout our proceedings on the Bill, we have heard Conservative Members throwing out lampoons about theory in education. Students are required to know about the foundations of knowledge and skills, and how they are acquired. Of course, that involves some sociology and psychology; some legal knowledge—that can be a minefield—and knowledge of the structures of education systems and of comparative studies, as well as sex education, which the hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) discussed, special educational needs and a host of other things.

Training also involves constant discussion and collaboration with other students, which the Bill seeks at least to water down. It also involves subject knowledge, which higher education can provide and schools cannot, to the same level. Teacher education involves the use of libraries and technologies, which universities and colleges can provide. Most of all, it involves the neutral role of a tutor, who is not involved in the particular politics and circumstances of the school.

Tonight we have again tried to explore the reality of the impact of those changes on the schools that will be directly affected. In all cases, Ministers' replies to us have largely avoided the central issues that we have tried to raise. We have tried to build in safeguards with our amendments, and to alert parents to the tremendous changes that SCITT schools will undergo. Again, all that has fallen on stony ground. Any impartial observer would have thought that the vast number of amendments proposed in Committee by the Labour party and by the Liberal Democratic party spokesman, the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) were constructive, neutral and certainly free of ideology. Yet Ministers brushed them all aside.

Ministers have tried to assure us throughout the Bill's passage that higher education, including that part of higher education concerned with teacher education, is in no danger from the Bill. But they have only to listen to their own Back-Bench colleagues, especially the hon. Member for Ealing, North, to realise what their real intentions are.

In conclusion—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I shall go on for another 10 minutes in that case. In conclusion, I should like to make a small bet with the Minister; perhaps he will respond to it when he sums up. The chairman of the Teacher Training Agency has been announced, and I should like to make a small wager that the name of Sheila Lawlor will figure, at least on the short list, for the post of its chief executive. I believe that we all have a fairly clear idea of her views on higher education, teacher education and even nursery schools.

Finally, I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, South (Mr. Gunnell) that the Bill is intellectually disreputable and will do great damage to teacher education and to the future of our schools.

10.8 pm

Mr. Bryan Davies: It is not often that one has the pleasure of seeing the House fill with hon. Members in eager anticipation of one's contribution, so I feel it incumbent on me to sum up the major issues arising from the Bill in a conspicuous effort to persuade Conservative Members, even at this late stage, to realise that it would be folly to give a Third Reading to such a bedraggled measure.

For those hon. Members who have been so busy elsewhere that they have not been able fully to follow the detailed development of the measure, it may help to refresh their memories if I remind them that the Bill started life as a most aggressive measure from the Secretary of State, with which he meant to achieve two aims. First, he was to achieve a new dawn for teacher education and the training of teachers in this country and, secondly, he would demolish the student unions, especially the National Union of Students—a source of such grievance to certain members of the Conservative party, but not to those who take an interest in educational matters.

The Bill was introduced in the other place and it was dismantled—not by the Labour Opposition, although our case was presented by our colleagues with their usual forcefulness and accuracy, but, in fact, by Conservative Members; right-wing Conservative Members, who knew something about education and thought that the Bill was nonsense. They thought that it was such nonsense that the Minister in the other place had the good sense to take the Bill away for several months and cogitate on its problems in some hope that, when it eventually returned, it would have a safe passage through the House.

The reason why the Bill will continue to have difficulty—I hope that it will have difficulty this evening, too—is quite clear. First, it is not the case that anybody sets out to defend higher education as such. We all seek to defend quality performance by higher education, but, we are not prepared to tolerate—nor are those who thought about the issue in the other place—a significant erosion of teacher training on the basis of an experiment which is only part-way through and the results of which are unproven.

It seems reasonable, in education at least, that we should have some regard for scientific methodology and some respect for the fact that, if the Government are carrying out

an experiment in the consortia of schools which conduct teacher education, that experiment should run its course and a true evaluation should be made before legislation is passed. It is far from that. I appeal to reasonable Conservative Members to recognise that they are being asked to vote on giving the Bill a Third Reading when we have no evidence of the success of the experiment, except hearsay.

We know that the experiment will certainly lead to a considerable erosion of the quality of teacher education for the following reasons. The development of teacher education in schools will be fraught with difficulties. Conservative Members must know that schools are under strain. All Conservative Members with experience of governing bodies and of representations from parents will recognise that the convulsions which schools have undergone in recent years has put them under great pressure. If results are to be published and the Government's much-vaunted league tables are to be the measure of school performance, schools, rightly, will concentrate on those measures of success identified by the Government.

I ask Conservative Members whether they would, as members of a governing body, therefore take lightly an assumption that the school should devote significant resources to teacher education, to untrained students being before the classes in significant numbers to promote their education, but not, of course, being able to provide the same, experienced teaching to the students in their charge? Would they be certain that the resources were forthcoming in that scenario, when schools recognise that the pressure on resources at the present time is intense?

The experiment will erode teacher education, because, as the Government know, university departments of education—and especially university governing bodies and senates—will be watching the position with great concern. Those governing bodies now see that the work of university departments could be reduced because the governing bodies no longer control the resource flow to the departments, since it comes under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of State's quango — yet another of the unelected organisations set up by the Secretary of State to operate in education. Is it any wonder that there are great anxieties about the supply of teachers for the future, great worries about the strains and stresses on our schools and great concern about the quality of performance of the new scheme that the Government are thrusting upon us?

The second part of the Bill is now so truncated as to be scarcely worth Conservative Members bothering to participate in debates upon it. We had the rather undignified spectacle this evening of two or three Conservative Back-Bench Members, in place of the 50 or 60 hard ideologues of their party, out to wreck the National Union of Students, seeking to ensure that, if a student contracted out of his £1.20 a year payment to the union, he should receive a 40p rebate on the ground that he had not had full value for money. That was the absurdity to which we were reduced.

In effect, the Bill tells students—an increasingly large range of students with a significant number of votes, and an increasing number of part-time and mature students—and their representative institutions that the Government want to create the nanny state. It will place universities in a position in which they will have to supervise every move, every piece of expenditure and every action made and taken by students unions. We are talking of students who are supposed to be being educated for a democracy. As I have said, many of them are fully participating members of that democracy. I warn the Government that when students get the chance next time to participate fully in the democratic process, the Conservative party will get short shrift on the basis of the Bill.

Question put, That the Bill be now read the Third time:—

The House divided: Ayes 284, Noes 249.

Division No. 289] **[10.16 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, Sir John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*

Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McLaughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trimble, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Andrew Mackay and Mr. Bowen Wells.

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Cabom, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chidgey, David
Chisholm, Malcolm
Church, Judith
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hodge, Margaret
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hutton, John
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
MacShane, Denis
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mans, Keith
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew

Mitchell, Austin *(G. Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Timms, Stephen
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John Spellar and
Mr. Eric Illsley.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Bill read the Third time, and passed, with amendments.

Contracts

10.29 pm

The Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department (Mr. John M. Taylor): I beg to move,

That the draft Contracts (Applicable Law) Act 1990 (Amendment) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 24th May, be approved.

The purpose of the order is to make some minor modifications to the Contracts (Applicable Law) Act 1990 in order to reflect the accession of Spain and Portugal to the 1980 Rome convention on the law applicable to contractual obligations.

It may be helpful at the outset to say a few words by way of background about the 1980 Rome convention. It is a convention made between member states of the European Community, the purpose of which is to harmonise their private international law rules on contract. It lays down rules to determine which law is to apply to a contract that has connections with more than one country. It does not affect the substantive law of contract, but merely enables courts to decide which country's law governs a contract. That harmonisation is designed to make it easier for people to do business in the Community, as the rules on applicable law will no longer vary according to which member state's courts hear litigation in the field of contract law.

The convention was opened for signature in 1980. This country signed it in 1981 and ratified it in January 1991, having given effect to it in United Kingdom law by the Contracts (Applicable Law) Act 1990. The reason for the delay was the time taken to negotiate two protocols to the convention, which provide for the European Court of Justice to have jurisdiction in certain cases under the convention and which were signed in 1988. This country's ratification was the last needed to bring the convention into force on 1 April 1991. All nine member states at the date of the opening for signature of the convention have now ratified it.

Although the Rome convention is not strictly a piece of Community legislation, it is related to article 220 of the treaty of Rome—the treaty which established the European Economic Community. The purpose of that article is to ensure that member states enter into negotiations to secure the simplification and facilitation of recognition and enforcement of judgments in the Community and new member states undertake to accede to the conventions made thereunder, in particular the 1968 Brussels convention on jurisdiction, and the enforcement of judgments in civil and commercial matters. The Rome convention concerns a related area of private international law. Greece acceded to it by the Luxembourg convention of 1984. The United Kingdom ratified that latter convention, and it too is now in force.

The convention on the accession of Spain and Portugal was signed in Funchal on 18 May 1992—as a matter of fact, by me. It resembled that for Greece closely in text and is largely formal. It is to be found in the schedule to the draft order, article 9 of which will insert it as a new schedule to the Contracts (Applicable Law) Act 1990.

The changes to the 1990 Act contained in this draft order are minor and uncontroversial, and are necessary in order for this country to ratify the convention whereby Spain and Portugal have acceded to the 1980 Rome

[Mr. John M. Taylor]

convention. As such, the order facilitates a useful development in an important area of private international law and I commend it to the House.

10.33 pm

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): However minor and uncontroversial the order may or may not be, the manner in which it was moved by the Minister was indicative of a wider problem. Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you called the order for debate, the Minister was strangely absent from his place, showing his marked reluctance to come to the House to be accountable for the actions of the Lord Chancellor's Department and, for once, to be accountable for his own actions: we learned that he signed the relevant document himself.

Well, that is good news. For once, he can come to the House and be accountable for something that he has done, rather than something that the Lord Chancellor has done —or rather something that he has not done in fulfilling his duties. *[Interruption.]* I see that some hon. Members are anxious that we should get on. By the look of them, I think that this matter must have some vaguely European purpose because representatives of the two sides of the Conservative party are present in the Chamber. It is enough to make one wish to stay for the next business, rather than beating a hasty retreat.

Mr. Winston Churchill (Davyhulme): The hon. Gentleman is trying to stir up trouble again.

Mr. Boateng: I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman has not realised that it is part of the Opposition's job to stir up trouble. We do not have much difficulty with that lot on the Conservative Benches. Some of the usual suspects are here tonight. [HON. MEMBERS: "Where are the they?"] We do not have any usual suspects on the Opposition Benches —we are all one great big happy family.

I shall focus on the measure before the House because that is what you would wish me to do, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Article 1 of the Rome convention, to which the Minister referred, was given effect by the Contracts (Applicable Law) Act 1990, which gave rise to the amending order that was laid before the House. The article contains a number of exclusion areas, if I may use that phrase—areas that are excluded from the rules of the convention. We are anxious to ascertain tonight the Government's intentions in relation to those areas.

The areas excluded from the rules of the convention are: contractual obligations relating to wills and succession; rights in property arising out of a matrimonial relationship, and rights and duties arising out of a family relationship; obligations arising under bills of exchange, cheques and other negotiable instruments, to the extent that the obligations arise out of the instrument's negotiable character; questions governed by the law of companies and other bodies corporate or unincorporate; the constitutions of trusts and the relationship between settlors, trustees and beneficiaries; and, importantly, contracts of insurance that cover risks in the European Community. All those are excluded under article 1. We want to know the Government's attitude towards them.

Also, it is important that we know from the Minister what steps he and the Lord Chancellor's Department are taking to ensure that the Rome convention and its application, in the way he described tonight, enhance legal certainty in that area rather than create fresh uncertainty.

The purpose and intent of the convention, the 1990 Act and the amendment order are that there should be a degree of certainty within the European Economic Community —certainty which, by its existence, would facilitate the free movement and exchange of goods and services and in that way underpin the aims and purposes of the European Economic Community. We want to know what the Lord Chancellor's Department is doing to monitor that. We also want to hear from the Minister whether he is satisfied with its current application. The purpose of the Act and the order is that the parties to a contract should be free to choose which country's law shall govern it. That is an important principle, and it is one which has considerable implications for our courts.

The Royal Courts of Justice and the various divisions are groaning under a weight of work and litigation. Their resources and staff are often stretched to breaking point. Some steps have been taken—under pressure, it must be said, from this side of the House—to deal with the shortage of High Court judges, although there remains a problem with the recruitment of those judges. But there is a problem in terms of the framework and infrastructure of the justice system within the jurisdiction.

It is a popular jurisdiction, and one which many companies and bodies corporate and unincorporated seek to utilise for the purposes of litigation. We are anxious to ensure that the Government take steps to make sure that the cost of that litigation in utilising the legal infrastructure of the jurisdiction is not an undue burden. It must not constitute an unfair burden on the ordinary citizens of this country who choose to have recourse to our courts and who do not have the option for which the order provides. Many people who seek to institute litigation must choose whether or not they institute it here or in some other area of jurisdiction.

Spain and Portugal have been added to those countries which have acceded to the convention. Their accession has implications for our jurisdiction, and I hope that the Minister will be able to assist in that area. What steps is he taking to ensure that that does not constitute an unfair burden on the infrastructure of the courts?

We have in recent weeks written to the Minister on a number of occasions, and we have placed questions on the Order Paper which relate specifically to accommodation and infrastructure matters as far as the jurisdiction is concerned. On 26 May this year, we asked about the report which is being undertaken by those who are undertaking the fundamental review of the Department's spending. We asked that the report be published, and that any policy changes arising from that report be made known. It is obviously important to the consumer of legal services that we should know the implications of the fundamental review of the Department's spending.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. It is not appropriate to go into that matter in the sort of depth which the hon. Gentleman is seeking to do this evening.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Not at all.

Mr. Boateng: I am not anxious—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I heard a sedentary remark which was not appropriate.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I withdraw.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am most grateful.

Mr. Boateng: I would not for one moment ask the Minister to launch into an explanation now of his Department's fundamental review. That, as you have said, Mr. Deputy Speaker, would be improper. However, I do ask him to reconsider the decision not to publish the report.

The order clearly has implications for the review. If Spain and Portugal accede to the convention and litigants who might formerly have chosen either of those countries as the appropriate jurisdiction now use this one, we are entitled to know the spending implications and the implications for multi-party actions. Contracts and the performance of contracts are giving rise to increasing implications for a wide range of persons. They may not all be parties to the litigation, but they are certainly affected and influenced by the contracts.

On 21 June, we asked the Minister whether, in the light of the review that had been undertaken, he would publish his Department's findings on the rules governing multi-party actions. He refused to do that too, apparently because it was tied up with the fundamental review of legal spending with which we shall not be dealing tonight. We also asked—this, too, is highly relevant to the current position in the Royal Courts of Justice—[HON. MEMBERS: "The Lone Ranger!"] If I am the Lone Ranger, the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) certainly is not Tonto; we can be sure of that.

We are concerned about the implications for the Royal Courts of Justice, and the changes in the possible venue for litigation. Why is the Minister again not prepared to publish an apparently innocent review of court accommodation that his Department is undertaking? Why should we not all know about court accommodation? I see that the hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) is tickled pink by that suggestion—or, rather, tickled a still darker shade of blue.

I hope that the Minister will give us some answers. If we are given an assurance that in due course we shall receive still more detailed answers, perhaps the order will be approved; if not, we shall have to consider our position very carefully.

10.48 pm

Mr. John M. Taylor: If the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) considers his position with the current number of supporters behind him, I do not think that he will make much headway.

It was extremely precocious and completely out of order for me to attempt to assist you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I am bound to say that the hon. Gentleman surpassed himself in straying from the subject. The internal review of the Lord Chancellor's Department, to which he referred several times, has absolutely nothing to do with the international protocols of private international law. I will at least oblige him in regard to resource implications. It must be plain to any man or woman of good will that, if Spain and Portugal accede, our citizens may be inconvenienced in such litigation as they may unfortunately find themselves involved in concerning those jurisdictions.

The hon. Gentleman's comments on infrastructure seemed to stray from the motion, and I shall not follow him. However, it was relevant to question the convention's adherence to the principles, which he and I understand, of freedom of contract. I hope that he will be reassured that the convention's two basic principles accord with previous United Kingdom law, and its implementation has therefore led to few changes in our law.

First, the parties to a contract may choose which country's law is to apply to it. We regard that enshrining of freedom of choice as being central to the convention. Secondly, in the absence of such a choice, the contract is to be governed by the law of the country with which it is most closely connected; and the convention lays down various rebuttable presumptions for determining that connection. That is a very English-law approach to the problem.

The hon. Gentleman rightly referred to exclusions. Matters excluded from the scope of the convention include contracts more closely related to family law, trusts, wills and succession, certain insurance contracts and questions governed by company law. My litany will be the same as the hon. Gentleman's, albeit not in exactly in the same order. He asked what was the Government's position, and I shall tell him. Those exclusions were negotiated and agreed between the member states in 1980. The Government have no plans at present to reopen the question of those exclusions. Any alterations would, of course, have to be negotiated between all parties to the convention.

May I conclude by saying something about Gibraltar which may interest the House? The convention mentions European territories outside the United Kingdom

"for the international relations of which the United Kingdom is responsible".

Clearly, that means Gibraltar. I should like the House to know that shortly the Government intend to extend the Rome convention to Gibraltar under article 27 of the convention. We see no reason to delay extension until after the deletion of that article by the Contracts (Applicable Law) Act 1990 (Amendment) Order 1994. No legislation is needed in this country to effect such an extension because Gibraltar has already enacted the necessary legislation in its own legislature.

I hope that the House will welcome that. I also hope that it will welcome the accession of Spain and Portugal.

Mr. Boateng: With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Oh, how characteristically churlish.

Not surprisingly, we are not satisfied by the Minister's response. He has failed to answer questions about the fundamental review. We shall continue to push those questions and pursue and harry the Minister until he answers them. There will be many more interesting debates such as we have had under your chairmanship tonight, Mr. Deputy Speaker, until such time as those questions are answered.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Contracts (Applicable Law) Act 1990 (Amendment) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 24th May, be approved.

European Union (Accessions) Bill

Motion made,

That, in respect of the European Union (Accessions) Bill, notices of Amendments, new Clauses and new Schedules to be moved in Committee may be accepted by the Clerks at the Table before the Bill has been read a second time—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

Overseas Pensioners

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

10.53 pm

Mr. Winston Churchill (Davyhulme): The redress of grievance has been a time-honoured role of the House of Commons over the centuries, and remains as important today as it did in the days of monarchical despotism. It is for that reason that I wish to draw the House's attention to a serious injustice—indeed, the most serious injustice that I have come across in the 24 years I have been privileged to serve in this House.

It concerns the plight of Britain's expatriate pensioners, living in those countries where their pension was frozen at the date on which they left the United Kingdom, or when they first became eligible for a pension.

Ninety-five per cent. of Britain's retirement pensioners remain in this country for their retirement. Approximately 2 per cent. live in the European Union, the United States or that tiny handful of countries where they enjoy the uprating of pensions. The ambit of this Adjournment debate is therefore to focus on that 3 per cent. of British state pensioners who have contributed throughout their working lives to their retirement pension, but who are denied that retirement pension at present.

Of 676,000 British pensioners drawing their retirement pension abroad, more than half—about 381,000—have their pensions frozen. Although they have exported the costs of their health care and their old age, to the great relief of the British taxpayer, instead of receiving a bonus for so doing, they are, on the contrary, penalised—some very cruelly indeed.

There is no rhyme or logic to that discrimination. War pensions and war widows' pensions are payable anywhere in the world at the full current rate. State retirement pensions, on the other hand, to which individuals have contributed throughout their working lives, are frozen in certain foreign countries, although not in the European Union, the United States and a handful of other countries. Nor is there any logic in the selection of those countries.

Why, for example, are pensions frozen at the northern end of Lake Superior, in Canada, but not at the southern end, in the United States? Why are they frozen in Trinidad and Tobago but not in Jamaica or Barbados? Why are they frozen in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh but not in Iceland? Why are the pensions of the 14 British pensioners residing in retirement in the Falkland Islands frozen, when hundreds of millions of pounds of British taxpayers' money has been spent reclaiming those islands as British sovereign territory from the Argentines?

Why, above all, are the pensions of those people who have retired to the old dominions, who make up nine out of every 10 of those being discriminated against, singled out for especially unfavourable treatment when, prior to 1955, they had received privileged treatment for pension purposes, and rightly so? Up to that point, it was only in His Majesty's dominions overseas that retirement pensions were payable overseas at all.

The biggest groups affected are 160,000 British pensioners in Australia and 118,000 in Canada. It is no wonder that, in recent months, the Prime Ministers of both those Commonwealth countries have made vigorous representations to our Prime Minister, regarding the shameful way—there is no other word for it—in which the

British Government expect their pensioners to be given a free ride on the shoulders of the taxpayers of the old dominions.

For example, British pensioners in Canada are today receiving an average weekly pension of £17.86 per week —not even one third of the current United Kingdom pension to which they have contributed. One of them, a Mr. R.S. Totman, of Fort Saskatchewan, Alberta, is just one of many thousands who has written to me in recent months to protest. He writes:

"Living in Canada, as I do, and having left the United Kingdom in 1968, my pension is frozen at the princely sum of £4.50 per week. If I had moved to the country of one of our former enemies, such as Germany, I would receive the full current pension . . . twelve and a half times as much! . . . I urge your Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. John Major, to press for this reform and not to let Britons abroad suffer any longer."

The most poignant pleas for help come from British pensioners living in South Africa and Zimbabwe. Neither country has any social security net available to those in need. Mrs. Edna Thompson of Durban wrote to me last year saying:

"I am an 86-year-old widow living alone and along with many of my peers I am almost destitute. Please try to get the British Government to do what is right by us regarding equality of pensions for us overseas oldies—we would come back to UK to claim a living but haven't the fare. My pension is £24.30 every 28 days. I dread the winter as I cannot afford to use any heat. Please help us."

Mrs. Hannah Riddle wrote from Cape Town saying:

"I hear that you are trying to help people who get a very small old age pension who do not live in England to get same upgraded. My late husband paid into the fund all his working life in England. We went out to Rhodesia in 1951 and he continued to pay into same yearly, until the age of 65 . . . He got £6 a week but only lived to draw it for two years. I got £4 a week which is the sum I still receive. I am in my 90th year and find it hard to make ends meet these days. I wish you every success in your effort."

That lady and others like her are being cheated—there is no other word for it—by the Government of £53.60 per week of the pension to which they contributed. If we were talking about a private personal pension or a life insurance policy and the directors of the company tried to restrict the territorial area of payment, I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister would have a shrewd idea of where those directors would be languishing now. They would be in gaol, and rightly so.

More disturbingly, many of those facing the greatest hardship appear never to have been warned that by going abroad they would be depriving themselves of their entitlement to a full retirement pension at the current rate. Commander A.O. Johnson, retired from the Royal Navy, wrote to me from Noordhoek, South Africa and said:

"My wife and I have lived here since 1951. I am now 85 and she 77. We receive £6.75 for self and £4.15 (for her) a week frozen. In 1951, having received Admiralty permission to emigrate, I wrote to ask if I would get the pension. You will see the reply."

The reply from the Ministry of National Insurance, dated 21 July 1951, states:

"If you take up South African nationality at some future date your title to benefits under the National Insurance scheme will not be affected by this change . . . Retirement Pension, Widow's Benefit and Death Grant are . . . all payable in South Africa."

That reply was reinforced more than a decade later by the Ministry of Pensions and National Insurance in a letter of 12 July 1963, which stated:

"The Class Three contributions which you are paying maintain title to retirement pensions, death grant, widow's benefit and maternity benefit, all of which are payable abroad subject to territorial currency restrictions . . . If you regularly maintain contributing to British National Insurance you will be entitled to this standard rate of retirement pension when you attain age 65."

No mention was made in any of that correspondence of the fact that they would be depriving themselves of all future upratings by going to live abroad alongside their children.

Finally, I want to quote from a letter from Mr. R. O. Craske of Harare, Zimbabwe. He writes:

"May I quote the devastating and ludicrous situation of an old friend of ours who died recently at the age of 101 years with a British pension being paid to her at the rate of 50 pence per week, i.e. the rate of 10/-(ten shillings) which she was receiving when she came to this country before English decimalisation. In point of fact the cost of processing this payment absorbed the amount completely."

How tragic that this hero generation, who struggled through the great depression and gave their all for Britain in the second world war, should be so monstrously neglected and abandoned in their declining years. How shameful that their cries for help fall on the deaf ears or stony hearts of a Government in London who can readily find £4 million to finance the legal fees of an Iraqi millionaire business man, yet claim they cannot find £230 million to pay our pensioners the pension to which they contributed throughout their working lives.

My hon. Friend the Minister will no doubt tell us what an astronomical sum it is—but is it really? It represents less than 1 per cent. of the £36.6 billion by which the Government have so recklessly increased social security expenditure since 1979 in real terms. It is not even one third of 1 per cent. of the overall DSS budget of £87.1 billion.

I am grateful to Back-Bench colleagues on both sides of the House for the powerful support that they have lent to my all-party early-day motion No.205 entitled "Inequality of treatment of British state pensioners living abroad." So far, 282 colleagues from all quarters of the House have signified their support, representing fully half of all Members entitled to sign EDMs.

Furthermore, the Government have been forced to admit that they have overestimated the cost of paying full state pensions to those living abroad by more than £100 million a year. As recently as 1991, the Government put the cost at £337 million. That was revised downwards in 1992 to £275 million and this year to a mere £230 million —almost one third less than the 1991 figure, despite a growth of 8 per cent. in the number of pensioners living in those countries and increases in the value of pensions of 6 per cent. What is going on? What can be the explanation for that? What confidence can we have that the latest figures are accurate?

I am bound to say that I have no sympathy whatever for the suggestion that the Government should wriggle out of their obligations to these, the most deserving of all our pensioners. A month ago today, on the beaches of Normandy, I saw how deeply moved was our Prime Minister as more than 7,000 British Normandy veterans marched past Her Majesty on the sands of Arromanches. The British expatriate pensioners that this Government are so shamefully seeking to disown are of the very same hero generation.

I call upon the Government tonight and specifically upon our Prime Minister, in the name both of moral obligation and natural justice, to end that shameful discrimination between British pensioners dependent on where they chose to retire, and to bring the United Kingdom into line with such countries as France and Italy,

[Mr. Winston Churchill]

where state pensions, including increases, are paid regardless of the country of residence and without the necessity of any reciprocal social security agreement.

Would it not be a fine thing in this year, when we celebrate the 50th anniversary of D-day, to remember those who have borne the heat and burden of the day and acquit the debt of honour that we owe them by unfreezing all those frozen pensions?

11.8 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. William Hague): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) for raising this matter on the Adjournment. I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Dr. Spink), the hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) and our Whip, my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) for being here.

My hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme made his case very powerfully, as we would expect. As he knows, this issue has been discussed for many years and the House is well aware of his commitment to it. He has written often to my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Social Security and has tabled a number of questions and an early-day motion. I am also aware of the strength of feeling among many British pensioners overseas.

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): My hon. Friend the Minister mentioned the early-day motion; he will know that I do not sign early-day motions, although I support my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill). Does the Minister agree that the undertakings given by the Ministries of Pensions and of National Insurance, which were outlined so eloquently by my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme, should be honoured?

Mr. Hague: I note that my hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point registers his support for what my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme said, notwithstanding his reluctance to sign early-day motions. I shall be dealing with precisely the matter that he raised.

British pensions are paid anywhere in the world and we pay nearly 700,000 pensioners in more than 150 countries, but, as my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme said, more than half of them do not receive annual cost of living increases. That means that retired people who go to live in certain countries abroad will continue to receive their pensions at the rate payable when they left this country. Those who emigrated when younger get a pension payable at the rate in force when they reach retirement age. The expression that is commonly used, and which was used by my hon. Friend, is that pensions are frozen.

This policy has been followed by successive Governments ever since regulations were made in 1955, although my hon. Friend drew attention to advice given to individuals before those regulations—advice which clearly could not anticipate those regulations.

Mr. Churchill: It also happened afterwards, in 1963.

Mr. Hague: If my hon. Friend has a particular case in mind, I will of course consider it. The 1955 regulations, which provided for pensions to be paid abroad, did not provide for increases to be paid on top.

The principal difficulty in extending the payment of pension upratings abroad is the cost, as my hon. Friend anticipated. This year, the Government will spend some £800 million on pension payments to beneficiaries who live outside the United Kingdom. I know that my hon. Friend is only too well aware of the huge size of the social security budget and the need to ensure that it is sustainable and affordable in the future.

If all pensioners overseas were to be paid at the same level as pensioners in this country, that figure of £800 million would rise to about £1,030 million—an increase of nearly 30 per cent. or £230 million. That figure is no longer an estimate, in that it is based on the actual count of 85 per cent. of the pensioners overseas and what their entitlements would be. It is a huge amount of money and would have to be found from the existing social security budget paid to people who are resident in this country. The House knows that there are many worthwhile claims on that budget; we cannot meet them all at once.

The only circumstances in which overseas pensions are not frozen are where the pensioner is in the European Economic Area or where we have a reciprocal agreement with another country which provides specifically for upratings. We have some 30 such agreements, including those with member states of the European Economic Area, although most of the latter were in existence before our accession to the European Community. The costs of making any further agreements are a very important consideration, as I am sure my hon. Friend will recognise.

More than 80 per cent. of those pensioners who do not receive upratings live in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa. We have reciprocal agreements with Australia, Canada and New Zealand, but they do not provide for upratings. I know that my hon. Friend is particularly concerned with the situation of pensioners in these countries of the old Commonwealth, and he drew particular attention to them tonight. I should point out that to unfreeze pensions completely in those four countries alone would cost about £200 million, an increase of 25 per cent. on current expenditure on overseas pensions.

To pay future cost of living increases in these countries alone would cost some £10 million in 1994-95, rising each year until all pensioners in those countries were paid at the full United Kingdom rates, and eventually reaching the same cost of £200 million.

Mr. Churchill: Surely my hon. Friend appreciates that those are people who have contributed to their pension throughout their working lives. What right have this Government, or any Government, to cheat those people of more than £50 a week of the pension to which they have contributed?

Mr. Hague: I recognise my hon. Friend's point about the payment of national insurance contributions, and I shall talk about that in a couple of moments.

There are 160,000 retirement and widow pensioners in Australia who receive their United Kingdom pensions at frozen rates. Some 110,000 of them receive the means-tested Australian age pension. Pensioners with other resources, such as an occupational pension, will not qualify for the Australian age pension because of their income. Many of those who do qualify will have been able to use the reciprocal agreement which helps them satisfy

the Australian test of residence there. The United Kingdom pension is deducted from the Australian age pension and the balance is paid by the Australian Government.

To bring pensions paid in Australia up to the level of those in the United Kingdom would cost £105 million a year. From time to time, the Australian Government raise the issue with the United Kingdom Government, but we have had to make it clear that the cost would be prohibitive.

There are about 30,000 United Kingdom pensioners in New Zealand. If upratings were to be paid in Australia, New Zealand would undoubtedly seek equal treatment. Again, the stumbling block would be cost—some £20 million a year. We also have many pensioners in Canada —nearly 120,000. To increase all pensions in Canada to full United Kingdom rates would cost some £60 million a year.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme said, pensioners overseas have paid national insurance contributions. However, the money that an individual contributes to the national insurance fund is not, and never has been, earmarked for that person. Ever since it was established, the national insurance scheme has always worked on a pay-as-you-go basis. This year's contributions go to this year's pensioners. It has to be remembered that paying contributions does not give, and never has given, automatic entitlement to benefits.

The agreement between an individual and the state is that payment of contributions will give entitlement to benefit subject to certain conditions. For example, minimum pensionable age is currently set at 65 for men and 60 for women. Another condition is that retirement pension upratings are not generally payable abroad. That has been the position since 1955, and it has never been in any doubt under successive Governments of either party.

People who inquire about their pension position if they go to live overseas are informed of the policy. Public information about pension entitlements makes the position clear. For instance the current leaflet, "Social Security Abroad", explains that, for retirement pension, widow's pension and widowed mother's allowance, increases are not paid abroad unless very limited conditions are met.

The logic is that our social security system has been designed to provide for people in this country, and that annual upratings ensure that pensions are protected against price increases here. It is fair to point out that, since 1955, people affected would have known, or could have found out, that that would be the position—

Mr. Churchill: No, because they have been lied to by the Department.

Mr. Hague: —although I sympathise with the people whose cases have been described.

I shall now cover various other arguments that my hon. Friend has advanced. One is that the cost of pensions uprating should be offset by the saving to public services here—in particular to the national health service, which pensioners overseas do not use. I understand the argument, but we do not know what calls those people as individuals would have made on the NHS. Moreover, many went abroad long before reaching pension age, so, for many years, they did not contribute to health service costs. Also, of course, the pensioners concerned have gone abroad anyway, so to pay them unfrozen pensions would still be a major extra cost.

I assure my hon. Friend—although no doubt he is all too well aware of this already—that the issue is frequently brought to the Government's attention. We are familiar with the arguments in favour of a change of policy, and we are sympathetic, but we cannot disregard the huge cost involved.

Let me emphasise that we pay out more than £800 million a year to some 700,000 pensioners overseas, of whom about 300,000 get fully uprated pensions. However much we might like to do more, social security spending is running at more than £80 billion a year. Social security is the Government's largest expenditure programme. In the current year, it accounts for 28 per cent. of planned public expenditure and nearly 13 per cent. of the gross domestic product.

The Government are committed to an efficient, effective and affordable social security system that is appropriate to modern needs and protects the most vulnerable, but we have to ensure that spending on social security does not outstrip the nation's ability to pay for it.

My hon. Friend is a keen advocate of carefully controlling social security spending and he will know that my Department is conducting a fundamental review of spending. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has announced some specific proposals for reform over past years. Incapacity benefit, our vigorous efforts to combat fraud and the gradual equalisation of a state pension age at 65 are all designed to help restrain the growth in cost.

In the interests of restraining the growth in cost, and of ensuring that the social security system is affordable in future, the control of social security spending must be tight. It is always easy to say that desirable items of spending would represent only a small addition to the budget, but if every idea was regarded in that way and accepted on that basis, the social security budget would soon be vastly greater.

Control of spending must be tight. Payments to people resident overseas cannot be an exception to that. In such a climate, I must tell my hon. Friend that I am afraid that I cannot hold out any prospect of our being able to increase our expenditure by adding to spending on pensions overseas.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty minutes past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 7 July 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

LONDON DOCKLANDS DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION BILL [*Lords*] (*By Order*)

Order read for consideration of Bill, as amended.
To be considered on Thursday 14 July at Seven o'clock.

FEDERATION OF STREET TRADERS UNION (LONDON LOCAL AUTHORITIES ACT 1990) (AMENDMENT) BILL (*By Order*)

Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday 14 July.

LERWICK HARBOUR ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL

Mr. Secretary Lang presented a Bill to confirm a Provisional Order under section 7 of the Private Legislation Procedure (Scotland) Act 1936, relating to Lerwick harbour; And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be considered on Wednesday 13 July and to be printed. [Bill 143.]

Oral Answers to Questions

HOME DEPARTMENT

Illegal Drug Trading

1. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to improve the enforcement of the law with regard to illegal trading in class A drugs.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Michael Howard): Tackling the trade in hard drugs is a key priority for the police and customs. We do all that we can to support their efforts. The Government have a comprehensive strategy to reduce both the supply of and the demand for drugs.

Mr. Shaw: Will my right hon. and learned Friend congratulate those constituents of mine—and some of his—who work in the customs and in the police in our area to ensure that this country has much less drug trafficking than it might otherwise have? They are very successful and have had a number of catches recently. Will he also give every support to those involved in that work? Will he confirm that the Government want nothing to do with the trendy, lefty, liberal establishment which wants to legalise hard and soft drugs?

Mr. Howard: I agree with my hon. Friend, and I am delighted both to give him the confirmation which he sought and to congratulate his constituents and mine. Recently, there have been some notable major seizures by the customs—500 kg of cannabis on 16 January, 30 kg of cocaine on 2 March, 20 kg of cocaine on 10 April and 20 kg of heroin by the police last month. The whole House should join my hon. Friend in congratulating the police and customs on those successes.

Mr. Blair: While congratulating the police and customs, may I ask the Home Secretary to agree that it is also important to take measures to cut the demand for drugs, especially among young people? Does he agree that it is appalling that some of our young people are gaining access to drugs even within their school gates? Would not it be a better idea if, instead of spending millions fiddling about with police authorities, we were to spend that money on a decent drugs education programme for our young people?

Mr. Howard: We spend something like £500 million a year dealing with drugs on trying to reduce both the supply of, and the demand for, drugs. If the hon. Gentleman, who I know is pretty busy at the moment, were to find the time to talk to some of the Home Office drugs prevention initiative teams up and down the country which are doing tremendous work with parents, children and schools and on the streets reducing the demand for drugs, as I have, he would see that the Government are taking the problem extremely seriously and are taking effective action to counter it.

Maastricht Treaty

2. **Ms Quin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he next expects to meet his European Union counterparts to discuss areas of the Maastricht treaty which fall within his Department's remit.

Mr. Howard: The next meeting of Interior and Justice Ministers is expected to be an informal Council in Berlin on 7 and 8 September 1994.

Ms Quin: While I welcome the Franco-German initiative at Corfu to combat race discrimination, would not this be an excellent opportunity—given the fact that a new European Commission is to be appointed—to make sure that the need to combat racial discrimination in the enlarged market is included in the remit of one of the new Commissioners? That is something which Labour has urged.

What steps is the Home Secretary taking to make sure that Commonwealth passport holders who have permanent residence rights in the United Kingdom are given equal treatment in the European Union under freedom of movement and other European rules?

Mr. Howard: The Government welcomed the recent Franco-German initiative, and it is widely recognised that the way in which we deal with race relations in this country is something from which our partners in Europe could learn. We discuss these matters with them at every opportunity—in European Councils and other places. One of the things that we stress to them in those discussions is the need to give free access to their countries to Commonwealth citizens from this country.

Mr. Dykes: I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on his extremely interesting letter in *The Times*

today. Can he confirm, subsequent to that long-standing tradition in the Labour party, that he is getting wonderful support for the integrated formation of Europol policy?

Mr. Howard: The Labour party has been rather silent on Europol policy, but no doubt Opposition Members will rise to welcome it at an early opportunity. I look forward to the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) getting to his feet now and answering the point that I made in my letter to *The Times*.

Drink Driving

3. **Dr. Wright:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has to amend the law on drink driving.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Charles Wardle): None, Madam Speaker. Existing legislation provides for strong penalties against those who drink and drive. The Criminal Justice Act 1993 increased to 10 years' imprisonment the maximum penalty for those who cause death by drink driving.

Dr. Wright: Is the Minister aware that, as the law stands, the police have no power to require the taking of a sample in a hospital from a suspected drink driver? Can he imagine the distress and disbelief felt by the family of my constituents, Mr. and Mrs. Roberts, who were killed by a suspected drink driver? That person was taken to hospital and the police were unable to take a sample from him. Because no proper charges were brought, the man was able to walk away from court with his licence intact and with a fine of only £400. Is not that an outrageous anomaly? Why did the Government refuse my request to correct it during the passage of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill? Will the Minister undertake to do so now?

Mr. Wardle: As was explained during the passage of the Bill, such samples cannot be taken without the patient's consent and the doctors would not allow that. I have every sympathy for the difficulties experienced by his constituents, but that was explained to him during the passage of the Bill.

Mr. Congdon: Given the success in reducing drink driving, does my hon. Friend agree that the danger of introducing random testing is that it would alienate the law-abiding majority from the police?

Mr. Wardle: My hon. Friend is right to highlight the fact that we have had great success with our campaign against drink driving. That is evidenced by the most recent figures, which show that the number of fatalities has dropped by 60 per cent. since the campaign started in the early 1980s. My hon. Friend will appreciate that police officers have the right to conduct random checks of motor vehicles, but that they are not entitled to carry out random breath tests.

Mr. Miller: The Minister must be concerned about the number of incidents in which people have avoided prosecution, except on minor offences. For example, a brother of one of my constituents was killed in an accident, but the driver was charged only with leaving the scene of an accident. Will the Minister look carefully at the different ethical approaches adopted by other countries to see whether a solution can be found to the problem raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Dr. Wright)?

Mr. Wardle: The House has already heard that additional sentencing powers were provided in the Criminal Justice Act 1993. The hon. Member will be aware that, last year, 600,000 breath tests were conducted and 15 per cent. of those were positive, so the campaign is proving effective.

Lenient Sentences

4. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met the Attorney-General to discuss the policy of appeals against lenient sentences.

Mr. Howard: I meet my right hon. and learned Friend frequently to discuss matters of mutual interest. We share the same view of the importance of the power contained in section 35 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988.

Mr. Burns: When my right hon. and learned Friend next meets the Attorney-General, will he raise with him the concern that is felt about the baffling sentences that are all too often imposed on people convicted of killing other people, young children and the elderly in road accidents caused by reckless or drink driving and other reasons? It causes great anguish to families. Will my right hon. and learned Friend examine the sentences available on conviction of such crimes and consider extending the powers to refer lenient punishments to the Court of Appeal, as the law applies to other serious crimes?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend will have heard the Under-Secretary of State tell the House a moment or two ago that the maximum sentence for the offences of causing death by dangerous driving and by careless driving while under the influence of drink or drugs was increased in the Criminal Justice Act 1993 from five to 10 years. I confirm that the Attorney-General's power to refer lenient sentences to the Court of Appeal applies to both those offences.

Burglaries

5. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total number of burglaries (a) in 1979 and (b) in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Howard: In 1979, 544,037 burglaries were recorded by the police. In 1993, 1,369,998 burglaries were recorded.

Mr. Grocott: Does not that reflect an astronomical rise in serious crime under this Government? I remind the Secretary of State that in 1979 we had a Labour Government and by 1993 we had had 14 years of Tory rule. Will he answer two simple questions? First, why has crime rocketed under the Tories? Secondly, if he continues his present law and order policies, what is his latest estimate of the year in which crime under a Tory Government will be reduced to the level that it was under a Labour Government?

Mr. Howard: I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman's constituents would be more interested in the fact that in the last quarter of 1993, recorded burglaries in

West Mercia, which covers the hon. Gentleman's constituency, decreased by 7 per cent. If he wants to know why, he should take note of the comments of the chief constable of West Mercia, who said:

"The increasing tactic of police to target offenders coupled with the increased use of remands in custody over the past year, may well have combined to remove from circulation some 'bail bandits', people who commit offences repeatedly."

So I look forward to support from the hon. Gentleman for the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill, which deals even more effectively with the problem of bail bandits.

Sir Michael Neubert: Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that a significant number of those burglaries are carried out by relatively few persistent young offenders? Does he accept that long-suffering residents in my constituency and others would be happy to see such anti-social young people detained in secure units? Will he ensure that we have an opportunity to reverse their lordships' amendment at the earliest opportunity?

Mr. Howard: I entirely understand the concern that lies behind my hon. Friend's question and I hope that those Opposition Members who complain about crime will join me in regretting and deploring the fact that their colleagues in the other place voted to delay the time at which we shall be able to bring those secure training centres into effect. They bear the responsibility for that delay. We will, in due course, construct the secure training centres, which are so badly needed.

Ms Eagle: Instead of coming into the House and just reading the brief that he has been given, will the Home Secretary answer the questions and reassure my constituents who know that if they are burgled, it is rare that anyone will be caught and punished for the crime? What will he do to ensure that when people steal other people's belongings, they have a reasonable chance of being caught?

Mr. Howard: That is precisely what the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill is designed to achieve. If the hon. Lady and her party had not consistently tried to wreck and undermine it, it would probably be on the statute book by now.

Prison Building

6. **Lady Olga Maitland:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to build more prisons.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Peter Lloyd): Six new prisons are to be built under the private sector design, control and finance initiative announced on 2 September 1993. Sites for the first two have been identified at Fazakerley in Merseyside and at Bridgend in south Wales.

Lady Olga Maitland: May I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the excellent news on the prison building programme. Will he confirm the measures that he is planning to provide effective drug abuse treatment in prisons in the future, both in the maintained mainstream sector and the private sector?

Mr. Lloyd: My hon. Friend is right. That is an extremely important problem. Drugs do get into prisons, both public and private. They should not. We are seeking powers in the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill, as I think that my hon. Friend knows, so that prisoners can be required to be tested. That is the essential feature of the new strategy that we are developing, and of course it will include the private sector.

Mr. Hoyle: How can the Minister contemplate building any more private prisons when Derek Lewis, head of the Prison Service, has admitted to the Public Accounts Committee that the Wolds is costing £1 million more to run than it would cost if it were in the public sector, that it is costing £1.5 million more to pay Group 4 to manage the Wolds than was estimated, and that Group 4 has lost —a familiar word—control of certain sections of the Wolds prison? Will not even this Minister now admit that the time has come for the Prison Service to be administered by common sense rather than political prejudice?

Mr. Lloyd: The prejudice is all on the hon. Gentleman's part. All the points that he made and all the figures that he quoted were wrong. The Wolds is being run for £3 million less over five years than the benchmark of the Prison Service. The contract was awarded on that basis, and it will continue on that basis. There is no loss of control in the Wolds. The Wolds is pioneering new types of effective management. If the hon. Gentleman had read the chief inspector's report, he would have seen that the inspector found that the staff who run the Wolds were busy, hardworking and professional, and that their instinctive reaction was to solve problems rather than pass them on. That is the example that we want for the whole of the Prison Service.

Mr. David Martin: Will my right hon. Friend assure me that, when it comes to building new prisons for persistent juvenile offenders, he will insist that the will of this House should prevail, rather than that of the interfering busybodies down the Corridor— *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. I do not even have to ask the hon. Gentleman. I can see by his face what he is about to do.

Mr. Martin: Rather than that of those who sit from time to time in the other place, who are remote from the real worries of my constituents, and who, when they are there, represent no one but themselves.

Mr. Lloyd: I am sure that what my hon. Friend has said will be heard at the other end of this building, in another place. He can be quite sure that the question will return to the Chamber, so that the House may express its views on it again.

Ms Ruddock: Will the Minister confirm that, at the new Blakenhurst private prison, United Kingdom Detention Services refused to recognise trade unions, that assaults on staff are at least four times the norm, that there have been seven acts of concerted indiscipline, including one riot, and that eight warnings have been issued to the company, resulting in two default notices for failure to comply and a financial penalty of more than £40,000? Does the Minister really believe that that is a model for the prisons of the future?

Mr. Lloyd: The hon. Lady must know, if she looks across the Prison Service, that all prisons have their problems, especially when they are starting up. First, the impressive thing about Blakenhurst is how quickly its problems were brought under control. Secondly—I think

that the hon. Lady found it a fault, but my hon. Friends and the public at large would find it something quite different —when Blakenhurst failed in a certain degree in its contract, it lost money as a result. The Home Secretary has the leverage to obtain the type of Prison Service that he wants from the private sector which is, alas, absent in the public sector, occasionally to the detriment of the performance of the public sector.

Mrs. Browning: Will my hon. Friend note that there is still considerable concern about the number of mentally ill people in our mainstream prisons and about the frequent lack of specialist medical attention in prison hospital wings? Will he ensure that he looks carefully at providing secure accommodation for those people, but with adequate medical provision?

Mr. Lloyd: My hon. Friend is right to perceive that as an important problem, but the place for mentally disordered offenders is not prison, but the national health service outside. Over the past few years, each year a much larger number of such prisoners has been moved out into the health service. The only bar to the speedy movement in every part of the country is places within the health service. The Prison Service medical staff are alive to the problem and are constantly in touch with the health service about it.

Mr. Trimble: Can the Minister comment on the prison transfers currently taking place from England to Northern Ireland? Is not part of the problem the differences that exist in the prison regimes of England and Northern Ireland, in relation to both the conditions of custody and the release procedures? Would not those difficulties be minimised if there were roughly similar prison regimes in both jurisdictions?

Mr. Lloyd: If there were roughly similar regimes, there would not be a problem. I admire the way in which the hon. Gentleman has successfully asked his question under the heading of private prisons. The delay has not been in making arrangements, but in satisfying ourselves on the legal position of prisoners under the different regimes. We have come to a satisfactory conclusion on that, which is why appropriate transfers are taking place.

European Parliament

7. **Mrs. Anne Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to seek to change the electoral system for the election of UK Members to the European Parliament.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have no current plans to do so.

Mrs. Campbell: Does the Minister realise that if the United Kingdom had already adopted a more proportional system of electoral representation, the number of seats gained by the Conservatives in the recent UK elections would have risen from an utterly abysmal 18 to a merely awful 23? How many devastating election results will the Conservatives have to suffer before the Minister changes his mind?

Mr. Lloyd: The hon. Lady can probably see merit in the prison system— *[Interruption.]* I am still on the last question. The hon. Lady can probably see some merit in the present system as it looks as though it may have temporarily benefited her party. In the longer run, we should look at the basic merits of the system. Our single Member constituency, with its direct relationship with the electorate, is one on which we set great value. Our representation in the European Parliament consists of those candidates who received the highest number of votes in their constituencies. I do not complain about that, but I am certain that next time many more Conservative candidates will get a higher vote.

Mr. Garnier: Does my right hon. Friend accept that the only change that we need in the European parliamentary election system is to require Opposition parties to talk about European issues at European elections?

Mr. Lloyd: Yes, or talk about the real issues at any election.

Mr. Rooker: Does the Minister appreciate that, with the ever-closer union in Europe and the extra powers that have been given to the European Parliament—democratically elected though its Members are—more and more people will begin to question the disparity in numbers between Members from various countries in that Parliament. Luxembourg, whose population is less than half that of Birmingham, has six representatives. In addition, the different electoral systems throughout Europe, as well as within the United Kingdom, distort the European Parliament.

Mr. Lloyd: All countries have universal suffrage and all countries have slightly different ways of electing their European Members. Common rules need to be justified by common benefits. It is not obvious that any country would benefit from harmonising the electoral systems.

Crime Prevention (New Technology)

8. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what initiatives he has taken to maximise the use of new technology in crime prevention.

Mr. Howard: I attach particular importance to the use of new technology in the fight against crime. Recent initiatives include the successful promotion of closed circuit television as a crime control measure and close co-operation with the vehicle manufacturers to promote the use of effective car immobiliser systems. We are also pushing forward with a number of major new crime and technology initiatives to assist the police in combating crime.

Mr. Coombs: Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that closed circuit television surveillance schemes, many of which have been funded by the urban fund and by the safer cities campaign, have significantly helped to reduce crime in the precincts and car parks of our inner cities and towns? Does he agree that people want more cameras and less crime—not the other way round, as suggested by some civil liberties groups?

Mr. Howard: I entirely agree. My hon. Friend the Minister of State launched a new CCTV scheme in the centre of Liverpool just a couple of days ago. I think that CCTV can make a significant contribution to the fight against crime. We certainly want to encourage its spread.

Mr. Bennett: Although video cameras in shopping areas and housing estates can be a useful way to deter crime and catching criminals, will the Minister accept that

there is now a need for a code of practice governing who should have access to the cameras and the purposes to which they can put the information gained from them?

Mr. Howard: That matter is currently under consideration by the Association of Chief Police Officers, and I want to await the results of its deliberations before deciding whether any action needs to be taken. I am in no doubt at all of the contribution that CCTV can make to the fight against crime.

Mr. John Greenway: Will my right hon. and learned Friend take this opportunity to scotch the rumour in a recent issue of *Police Review* about plans to disband the national criminal intelligence service? Does he agree that the use by NCIS of information technology is probably the best weapon the police now have to fight international organised crime?

Mr. Howard: I certainly do. NCIS is seen across Europe as a model for how policing against major crime can most effectively be carried out. There is no question of disbanding it; I take this opportunity of paying tribute to its work.

Mr. Maclennan: Will the Home Secretary confer with his colleagues in the Department of Trade and Industry on the prevention of car crime through rendering illegal the re-chipping of mobile phones, which is increasingly an objective of the criminal?

Mr. Howard: We are looking at that matter. The National Board for Crime Prevention is conducting an investigation into it. It is not quite as simple as the hon. Gentleman suggests, but we are certainly examining it.

Pursuit Of Offenders

9. **Mr. Shersby:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in what circumstances it is permitted for individual police forces to exercise discretion not to post warrants for suspects and bail absconders on the national police computer unless the offences are particularly serious; what consideration he is giving to offenders being pursued by the police in areas other than those in which an alleged offence has been committed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: It is for chief officers to decide how to respond to individual cases, but there can be no question of offenders escaping justice simply by moving to a different area.

Mr. Shersby: I begin by wishing my right hon. and learned Friend a happy birthday. Is he aware of reports that some forces are finding it too expensive to pursue suspects who flee from their home area to another part of the country? Will he consider the possibility of the force in the area to which the suspect has gone dealing with the arrest warrant and the case being heard by a local magistrate in the area concerned?

Mr. Howard: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's good wishes. There certainly may be ways in which our present arrangements can be improved, but there can be no excuse for not pursuing offenders who seek to escape justice by moving to different areas. It is the job of the police to make sure that they do not escape justice and that justice is done.

Deregulation

10. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what initiatives are being taken to reduce the number of rules and regulations affecting the workings of his Department; and how many officials he employs currently working on deregulation initiatives.

Mr. Charles Wardle: We have reviewed 32 of the 71 regulations affecting business for which the Home Office is responsible, and reviews of the other regulations are in progress or due to start shortly. The Department's deregulation unit involves three officials directly and many others are involved in taking forward deregulation initiatives.

Mr. Steen: Is the Minister aware that officials in his and other Departments are blocking an attempt by Conservative Members to institute some sort of local appeal mechanism, so that over-zealous interpretations of rules and regulations can be dealt with uniformly and so that local businesses are not continually crippled by such over-zealous interpretation and the additional unit costs that regulations put on them? Why do not we behave like the French and do nothing at all?

Mr. Wardle: My hon. Friend knows that I am aware of his concerns because he has written to me about them. He is also aware that discretion for the matters that concern him lies with the local licensing justices, who have made it clear to my hon. Friend and his constituents that what is proposed might come up against the Sunday Observance Act 1780. He will be aware that in the deregulation Bill we have taken the initiative on children's certificates. We have also made it clear that my right hon. and learned Friend is reviewing other aspects of the licensing system; no doubt my hon. Friend's concerns will then be given due consideration.

Mr. Chisholm: Is one of the rules and regulations that no findings of the Home Office research department should be published if they contradict the views of the Home Secretary? What does the Minister have against evidence and facts?

Mr. Wardle: The hon. Gentleman no doubt saw a letter in *The Guardian* from the head of the research department at the Home Office making it clear that that report was utterly without foundation. I had hoped that the hon. Gentleman was about to stand up and applaud the Government for their various deregulation initiatives: first, with the Sunday Trading Bill, secondly, with the deregulation Bill and thirdly, with the further progress being made within the Home Department on a number of deregulation fronts.

Criminals (Profits From Publicity)

11. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the profits criminals make as a result of the publicity surrounding their case.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Maclean): The Government deplore any exploitation of criminal activities for financial gain. We have previously considered legal restraints on chequebook journalism, but there are insurmountable practical problems.

Mrs. Gorman: My hon. Friend should know that his answer will not go down very well with my law-abiding and tax-paying constituents in Billericay, who pay taxes to help victims through the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board. Does he agree that it is offensive when criminals pocket profits by telling tall tales to tabloids, thus gaining from their ill-gotten actions and badly written memoirs?

Mr. Maclean: We all deplore such instances. They are offensive, but we have considered carefully whether a law would be appropriate in this case. There would be tremendous difficulty in framing a law that would effectively deal with it. The utter condemnation of other newspapers when such isolated incidents happen is a good and effective policing mechanism.

May Report

12. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will publish Sir John May's report into the Guildford and Woolwich case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The report was published on 30 June.

Mr. Mullin: Did the Home Secretary notice that Sir John May asked that the independent review tribunal to deal with miscarriages of justice be introduced as a matter of urgency, and that the Lord Chief Justice made the same point in a speech last night? Can the Home Secretary give us a clear timetable for the introduction of such a tribunal? Will he also give an assurance that, when it is introduced, it will not be dependent solely on police officers to carry out investigations—a very important point?

Mr. Maclean: The Government have made it clear on a number of occasions that we are committed to the establishment of a criminal cases review body and we are currently considering responses to our discussion paper. Of course, I cannot presume the contents of the Gracious Speech.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Will my hon. Friend note the full co-operation of the Surrey police in the various inquiries and the way in which they have certainly gained local support and admiration? Will he also note that the people who perpetrated the outrage in Guildford have yet to be apprehended? Would not it be better if some Labour Members worried as much about that as about other aspects of the case?

Mr. Maclean: My hon. Friend makes an interesting point which will no doubt be heard by those Opposition Members. For my own part, I congratulate Sir John May; his report is rigorous and searching and all those who care about the quality of our criminal justice system have cause to welcome it.

Mr. Michael: But why has not the Home Secretary taken the opportunity to come to the Dispatch Box to support the view of the Labour party, the Royal Commission on criminal justice, Sir John May and now the Lord Chief Justice that the establishment of a body to investigate miscarriages of justice is now urgent and overdue? During its remaining time in another place, will the Home Secretary accept an amendment to the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill aimed at establishing such a body? If not, will the Minister today give a categorical promise of legislation in the next parliamentary Session —no later—to establish a body to investigate miscarriages of justice?

Mr. Maclean: The hon. Gentleman does not appear to have been listening to what I said. If he thinks that a simple amendment could deal with something as complex and important as the establishment of a criminal cases review authority, he clearly did not listen to the demolition of his arguments in Committee when he proposed a similar unworkable and simplistic system. As I have said, the Government are committed to the establishment of a criminal cases review authority and we are considering the responses that we had to the excellent discussion paper that we launched.

Mr. Brazier: In considering Sir John May's report and the findings of the royal commission, will my hon. Friend bear in mind the fact that with approximately only one crime in 30 resulting in a conviction, for millions of British people the principal source of miscarriages of justice is the courts' inability on many occasions to convict the guilty?

Mr. Maclean: Sir John makes it clear in his report that the definition of a miscarriage of justice is wider than some of the popular notions of it. My hon. Friend makes a valid point. Miscarriages of justice occur if an innocent person is found guilty, but it is equally important that we should have a system that ensures that those who are guilty are convicted.

Firearms Licensing

13. **Mrs. Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations he has received in connection with proposals to alter fees for the issue of firearms and shotgun licences; and when he expects to be able to make a decision.

Mr. Charles Wardle: We have received more than 550 letters from right hon. and hon. Members, and more than 370 from members of the public. We hope to be able to make an announcement on fees soon.

Mrs. Ewing: Does the Minister realise that the continuing uncertainty is causing deep-seated feelings among legitimate gun licence holders, particularly in rural constituencies such as my own, where farmers of necessity have to hold such licences? Therefore, will he give a clear date for the announcement?

Mr. Wardle: I understand what the hon. Lady says. She will be able to tell her constituents that the aim of the review has been to ensure that the fees reflect the true cost to the police of operating the system. However, as I have already said, the hon. Lady can expect a report shortly.

Mr. Lord: Does my hon. Friend recall that, some time ago, I introduced a private Member's Bill, which became the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1992, which gave the Home Secretary the power to increase the period covered by firearm and shotgun certificates? Many of us hope that those fees will not be raised, but if they have to be, will he ensure that the period covered by the certificates is also extended?

Mr. Wardle: I remember my hon. Friend's Bill. I seem to remember that it passed through the House shortly before the general election. My hon. Friend's contribution

on that occasion will have been noted. He is right to refer to an extension to the life of the certificate because that is one factor that has been considered. I have no doubt that he will look forward to the announcement of the results of that review shortly.

Mr. Martyn Jones: Will the Minister assuage the natural worries of legitimate firearms owners that they may be paying for inefficiencies in the police administration of the system by publishing the Ernst and Young report before he gives his report on the increase of the fees?

Mr. Wardle: The Ernst and Young report will be published at the same time as the fees are announced. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that the point that is of concern to him was also of concern to Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary, which said that in some forces the system was being operated inefficiently. We issued a best practice guidance in order to remedy those errors.

Lockerbie

14. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the responsibilities of the Home Office in relation to the Lockerbie crime involving the destruction of Pan Am 103; and if he will make a statement on the co-ordination between the specialist services of the Metropolitan police and Scottish police forces on the investigation and prosecution of those responsible.

Mr. Maclean: My Department has an interest in view of our overall responsibility for counter-terrorist policy in Great Britain. The Metropolitan police, the forensic explosives laboratory of the Defence Research Agency and many other police forces and agencies have provided assistance to the Dumfries and Galloway constabulary during the course of the investigation.

Mr. Dalyell: What is the state of the present police investigation into the case of Youssef Chaabane, who claimed in a Beirut court that he had been responsible for placing the bomb on Pan Am 103?

Mr. Maclean: I suggest that the hon. Gentleman, who takes a close interest in this matter, checks again on what happened in the Beirut court. Our understanding is that Chaabane mentioned the Lockerbie bombing only in an outburst. He claimed that, in the face of the interrogation to which he had been subjected in respect of other charges, he would have been willing to confess to anything—even the Lockerbie bombing. In his rigorous researches, the hon. Gentleman must not obscure the central issue, which is that the Libyan Government should fully comply with the United Nations Security Council resolutions without further prevarication, so that those who have been charged can stand trial.

PRIME MINISTER

Coastguard Service

Q1. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Prime Minister what assessment he has made of whether the reduction in resources available to the coastguard service will prejudice safety at sea.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): The chief executive of the Coastguard Agency has confirmed that the resources available this year will enable the agency to fulfil its objectives on search and rescue and on oil and chemical spills. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport has given the House an assurance that he will not allow the efficiency gain that he is seeking to prejudice safety at sea.

Mr. Kirkwood: Does the Prime Minister accept that the most efficient way to run the coastguard service would be to provide the existing complement of professional and auxiliary personnel—who know their own coastlines, seas and weather conditions—all the equipment, training and back-up that money can buy? Will the right hon. Gentleman give the House an assurance that he personally will refuse to sanction further efficiency savings in the coastguard service if there is any suggestion that they would prejudice safety at sea in future? After all, the Prime Minister himself may need the political equivalent of a breeches buoy before too long.

The Prime Minister: Of course we would not do anything to prejudice safety at sea, which is self-evidently of vital importance. It is right to seek efficiency gains where it is thought that they will be available. The agency's chief executive has joined other Department of Transport executive agencies in submitting proposals on how further efficiency gains may be made. I am sure that that is right. The greater the efficiency gain that can be made across the public service, the greater will be the saving to the taxpayer or the improvement in services elsewhere in the public service.

Mr. Harris: I welcome my right hon. Friend's answer and assurances, but would not it be quite wrong and unthinkable to apply to coastguard front-line services the 20 per cent. across-the-board cuts that are being considered for other aspects of the Department of Transport? That must be wrong and out of the question. Will my right hon. Friend ensure that that does not happen under any circumstances?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is running two things together. There is no presumption that the coastguard service must achieve a 20 per cent. reduction. What is sought is a 20 per cent. efficiency gain. I believe that that is achievable, and the chief executive is investigating how it may be achieved. As I said to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood), that will not be at the expense of the security and safety of people at sea.

Engagements

Q2. **Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 7 July.

The Prime Minister: This morning, I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Fatchett: Is the Prime Minister aware that Railtrack board members have introduced a new working practice whereby they are paid £500 additional bonus—three times the basic wage of signal staff—simply to attend Railtrack meetings? Will the Prime Minister join me in

agreeing that those additional payments are obscene? Will he take this opportunity to condemn Railtrack's board for making those additional payments?

The Prime Minister: I will certainly make inquiries about what the hon. Gentleman has alleged, and check whether it is true. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will also take the interests of the travelling public into account and condemn a strike for an 11 per cent. pay award, which far exceeds what is being paid to anyone else in the public sector. There is no justification for an award of that size at this time. I hope that negotiations will continue and that the strike will be swiftly settled.

Mr. John Greenway: Does my right hon. Friend agree that a new offence of racial harassment—as recommended by the Select Committee on Home Affairs—together with new measures to tackle the publication of racist material, will be major steps forward in the fight against racial attacks?

The Prime Minister: We abhor any crime in which any element of racial motivation is present. That is precisely why we have added to the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill a new offence to tackle that particular mischief. I believe that that is desirable, and will achieve widespread support among all shades of opinion.

Mrs. Beckett: On Tuesday, the Leader of the House rejected doctors' criticisms of the Government's health service changes; today, the health service ombudsman has published strong criticism from patients. Are they wrong, too?

The Prime Minister: Like the right hon. Lady, I have not yet had a chance to read the whole of the ombudsman's report. The ombudsman examines a minority of the cases referred to him, and does not comment on the generality of health service treatment. I understand that some of the reports that have been evident earlier today have been repudiated by the commissioner, but, as I said, like the right hon. Lady, I have not yet had a chance to read the full report.

Mrs. Beckett: But the Prime Minister must know, as I do, that it reveals a record number of complaints. Does he not recognise that the ombudsman, doctors, nurses, patients and Opposition Members are all saying the same thing—that the Government's health service changes are making matters worse? When will the Prime Minister drop them?

The Prime Minister: I think that the whole House will have noted that the right hon. Lady did not say that she had read the report about which she claims to be speaking so authoritatively. Of course we will take the Health Service Commissioner's report seriously: we are anxious to ensure that the health service continues to improve, and, according to the test set out by the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), it is. He said that the test of the reforms was whether more patients were treated. They are—1 million more every year.

Mrs. Beckett: Is the Prime Minister denying that the report shows a record number of complaints this year? Is he denying that? I doubt it very much. Only under the present Government would a record number of complaints be regarded as evidence of success. Does the Prime Minister recognise that the health service changes are hurting but certainly not working, and that, while he may sack the present Secretary of State for Health, he also needs to scrap the policies and start putting patients first?

The Prime Minister: The reforms are precisely about putting patients first. That is why the number of patients treated in hospital has grown by record amounts, the quality of care has improved immeasurably and the number of patients waiting, and almost all waiting times, have fallen. That is an improvement in care.

As for complaints, it was precisely with the aim of addressing the issues highlighted by the Health Service Commissioner that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State established a committee, under Professor Wilson, to carry out a thorough review of complaints procedure. That report was published for consultation in May. We anticipated concern about the matter, and have already put in hand measures to deal with it.

Miss Emma Nicholson: Does my right hon. Friend agree that bed space is no longer the determinant of a nation's health care policy, and that when a nation has many beds that is likely to be because epidemiology is not the advanced science that it is in the United Kingdom today?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is entirely right. The proper judgment of how well the health service is performing is based, first, on the number of people who are treated and, secondly, on how satisfactorily they are treated. On both those measures, the health service continues to improve.

UN Security Council

Q3. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Prime Minister whether he discussed the membership, structure and functions of the Security Council of the United Nations when he last met the leaders of the other member states of the European Union; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I did not discuss those matters when I last met European leaders in Corfu.

Dr. Godman: President Nelson Mandela said recently that Rwanda is a stern and severe rebuke to us all. That surely holds for the disgracefully inept and irresponsible Security Council. Does not the Prime Minister agree that there is an urgent need for the Council to solve the problems of financing and manning peacekeeping operations so that United Nations resolutions can more effectively and efficiently be implemented? Given the mess that the Security Council is in, financially and structurally, most UN resolutions are utterly unenforceable.

The Prime Minister: I share the horror and revulsion felt by many people, including the hon. Gentleman, about the terrible suffering in Rwanda. That is undoubtedly the case. I do not entirely share the hon. Gentleman's strictures about the Security Council. It is not practicable for the Security Council—it simply does not have the resources in terms of cash or money, nor is it likely to have in the short term—

Mr. Skinner: Cash or money?

The Prime Minister: It is not Britain that is behind in its payments to the UN. The hon. Gentleman, as usual, wishes to criticise this country, with a complete absence of the facts when he does so.

The Security Council has become increasingly effective over recent years, and many of the measures set down by it, many of the motions passed by it and many of the actions taken by it are far more effective than in previous years. It simply is not practicable for it to become the policeman of every part of the world.

Engagements

Q4. **Mr. Viggers:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 7 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Viggers: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the sweeping reforms that we carried out in the national health service in 1991 have inevitably led to controversy and criticism, both malevolent and constructive and positive? Is he aware that, unlike the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), who leads for the Opposition, I took the trouble to read the report of the health service ombudsman? I noted in particular paragraph 1, where he summarises the rest of the report, which I have also read, and refers to the number of complaints as being "remarkably small". Does my right hon. Friend agree that our reforms have been extremely successful, with more than 8 million people being treated in hospital this year? Will he join me in congratulating Portsmouth and South East Hampshire trust, which for the first time achieved the position whereby no one had to wait for more than a year for any operation?

The Prime Minister: I am delighted to hear about that improvement in waiting lists and about the remarkably small number of complaints. I am interested to see that the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) did not even get as far as the first paragraph in her studies. I share my hon. Friend's view that we have every reason to be proud of what the national health service has achieved. The Labour party takes and deserves the credit for having established the national health service—no one would deny it that—but in the 45 years since the health service was established, the Conservative party has been predominantly in government, and that party has put in the resources to build up the health service from its early beginnings to its present excellence.

Q5. **Mr. Khabra:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 7 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Khabra: Does the Prime Minister think it odd that a senior adviser to the Home Office on prison policy is also in the pay of Group 4, which is bidding to win contracts for building private prisons? Furthermore, does he agree that it is odd that an interest is definitely involved?

The Prime Minister: I understand that the chief inspector of prisons has satisfied himself that there is no impropriety in that appointment and I am happy to accept that advice.

Mr. Duncan Smith: Does my right hon. Friend agree that most of the public are concerned about people who commit crimes while out on bail? Will he strongly urge prosecutors to take up what we have given them—the right to appeal against bail being imposed on them?

The Prime Minister: I believe that the vast majority of the public will entirely agree with what my hon. Friend has said. There is an opportunity there to be taken. I very much hope that it will be taken.

Q6. **Mrs. Ewing:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 7 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply I gave some moments ago.

Mrs. Ewing: Will the Prime Minister simply confirm or deny the fact that a Cabinet Committee, which he chaired this morning, decided to recommend the closure of Rosyth naval base?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Lady will have to wait, as far as any aspect of the defence costs study is concerned, for the Cabinet to consider the matter itself and for a statement subsequently to be made. Until that time, I have nothing to say either in confirmation or denial.

Business of the House

3.30 pm

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): Will the Leader of the House state the business for next week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): The business for next week will be as follows:—

MONDAY 11 JULY—Second Reading of the European Union (Accessions) Bill.

Motion relating to Scottish Standing Orders.

TUESDAY 12 JULY—Opposition Day (18th allotted day) There will be a debate on "The Case for a Public Post Office" on an Opposition motion.

Debate on Procedure Committee reports and Catering Committee reports.

WEDNESDAY 13 JULY—Committee and remaining stages of the European Union (Accessions) Bill.

Debate on resolutions on Members' allowances and Members' interests.

THURSDAY 14 JULY—Motion on the Fishing Vessels (Decommissioning) Scheme.

The Chairman of Ways and Means has named opposed private business for consideration at Seven o'clock.

FRIDAY 15 JULY—Private Members' Bills.

MONDAY 18 JULY—Debate on the economy on a Government motion.

Motion on the Railways Pensions (Transfer and Miscellaneous Provisions) order.

At Ten o'clock, the House will be asked to agree the estimates and supplementary estimates for 1994-95. The House may also be asked to consider any Lords messages which may be received.

The House will also wish to know that European Standing Committee B will meet at 10.30 am to consider European Community documents as follows: Tuesday 12 July—document No. 11141/93 relating to consumer disputes. Wednesday 13 July—document No. 7390/92 relating to the development of the single market for postal services, and document No. 7133/93 relating to postal services.

[Tuesday 12 July:

European Standing Committee B—European Community document: 11141/93, Consumer Disputes. Relevant European Legislation Committee Report: HC 48-vi (1993-94), HC 48-xiv (1992-93), HC 48-xv (1993-94), HC 48-xxi (1993-94), HC 48-xxii (1993-94) and HC 48-xxiv (1993-94).

Debate on Procedure Committee Reports and Catering Committee Reports. Relevant Documents: The Procedure Committee Reports entitled "Printing of Private Members' Bills; Presentation of Private Members' Bills; and Timing of Divisions" (HC 880). The Catering Committee Reports entitled "Refreshment Provision for Line of Route Visitors" (HC 307) and "Refreshment Services for the House of Commons" (HC 75).

Wednesday 13 July:

European Standing Committee B—European Community documents: a) 7390/92 Postal Services, b) 7133/93 Postal Services. Relevant European Legislation Committee Reports: a) HC 79-vi (1992-93), HC 79-xxxvii (1992-93) b) HC 79-xxxvii (1992-93).

Debate on Resolutions on Members' Allowances and Members' Interests. Relevant Documents: The Report of Select Committee on Members' Interests entitled "Registration of Lloyd's Syndicates" (HC 353).

Monday 18 July:

Debate on the Economy. Relevant Document: "Summer Economic Forecast 1994".]

I was going to conclude by thanking the many hon. Members who have taken the trouble to keep me abreast of their family diaries for the forthcoming weeks and ask them to accept, by way of collective response, the announcement that it may be for the convenience of the House to know that, subject to the progress of business, it will be proposed that the House should rise for the summer Adjournment on Thursday 21 July until Monday 17 October.

Mr. Brown: I thank the Leader of the House for his statement, for the Opposition days, for finally telling us the date of the summer recess and, indeed, for granting us the summer economic debate, which I understand is intended to become a permanent part of the parliamentary calendar. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. May I have the attention of the House? I ask hon. Members to leave quickly and quietly.

Mr. Brown: I am sorry that deep divisions on the Conservative side over Europe have necessitated the last-minute rearrangement of business and important House of Commons matters having to be debated after Ten o'clock. I had hoped that in the new and more enlightened era which we hope the House is travelling towards, it would not be necessary to take business of that sort after Ten o'clock. Can the Leader of the House respond to that point?

Will the Leader of the House arrange for the House to have an opportunity to discuss the Consumers Association report on the post-privatisation profiteering of the water industry? In such a debate, we could discuss the massive salary gains that chief executives have made in the water industry and their share option schemes.

Lastly, will the Leader of the House arrange before the recess for a debate in Government time on the national health service, in particular on the role of medical advice in deciding whether frail, elderly patients are to be discharged from hospital? If it is the Government's view that those decisions should not be taken on a medical basis, but that other opinions should prevail, perhaps he could arrange for the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, rather than the Secretary of State for Health, to reply to the debate.

Mr. Newton: Apart from the initial thanks, which I accept with gratitude, that was a pretty mischievous set of questions, to which largely I need make no substantial response. Manifestly, I am not in a position to promise a great range of further debates, as I have just announced the date of the summer recess to, I gather, some enthusiasm on both sides of the House.

I can confirm that the summer economic debate that I have announced for Monday week is intended to be a precursor of a regular debate at about this time in future years, following the move to the unified Budget. While House of Commons matters such as those to which the hon. Gentleman referred have usually been debated late at

night, we should all like to move to a different position. That, of course, is the purpose of the discussions that he and I are having. We have made a great deal of progress towards the Jopling objectives in practice in recent months, but we shall not be able to achieve perfection until the hon. Gentleman and I can reach agreement.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Will my right hon. Friend accept congratulations from Conservative Members who were worried that we might have been bounced into one day on the accession treaty for enlargement?

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Speak for yourself.

Mr. Cash: I certainly will speak for myself, and for many others. We believe that it is an important step forward that we can have a proper discussion on this important matter. After all, originally the European Parliament was merely to be in association with the proposals for enlargement. Now it is to be in participation.

Mr. Newton: Unaccustomed as I am to congratulations from that quarter, I accept them with gratitude. It was certainly never the intention to bounce anyone into anything. I hope that we have shown that, just as we always respond to representations through the usual channels, we are also capable of responding to representations through unusual channels.

Sir David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): The Leader of the House knows, of course, that the Foreign Secretary has been in Geneva attempting to assist with others the securing of a peace plan for Bosnia. He also knows that the carnage continues and the refugee problems are growing in Rwanda. Will he assure the House that there will be an opportunity for the Foreign Secretary to report to the House on those matters before we rise for the summer recess so that we can press him on what has happened to the proposal for a rapid deployment force made to the Security Council by the Secretary-General of the United Nations some time ago? Such a force could have greatly helped, at any rate in the case of Rwanda.

Mr. Newton: I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will acknowledge that I have several times assured the House that if there were clearly a case for a statement to be made on developments in such matters, I would seek to arrange it. While I can give no undertakings at this moment, partly because I am not sure that at this moment there is a case for such a statement, my right hon. Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary will be here to answer questions next Wednesday.

Dr. John G. Blackburn (Dudley, West): Will my right hon. Friend take this opportunity to pay a warm and generous tribute to the outstanding work of the Select Committee on National Heritage, particularly for its report on the BBC? Will he give an assurance to the House that the White Paper on the BBC will be the subject of a full debate in the future?

Mr. Newton: I am sure that I would want to consider the request for a debate on the White Paper in due course at some appropriate time. I cannot give any undertaking at this moment and I certainly cannot do so before the recess. However, I note my hon. Friend's other remarks and I have also noted the tribute paid by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage to the Select Committee in his remarks yesterday afternoon.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Will the Leader of the House reconsider his statement? Now that there will be 88 days in which Parliament will not be in session, as a result of his announcement on the recess, will he take into account the fact that it is inconceivable, and would not be understood by people outside, especially the disabled, that there will not be the time to debate the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill and allow it to reach its final stages? There are 6.5 million disabled people out there —people who believe that they have every right to the same justice and opportunities as other individuals in society. Surely it is possible to find one extra day. Cut that recess from 88 days to 87 and let us give those people a chance like everyone else.

Mr. Newton: There are two points really. First, as I have said on a number of occasions, the time available for private Members' Bills is determined by the House, under an order passed at the beginning of the Session. There is a further day for private Members' Bills, which I announced —Friday 15 July.

More important, I remind the hon. Gentleman that my right hon. Friend—indeed, many of my right hon. Friends, including myself—are working vigorously towards a substantial statement of the proposals that the Government think workable and practicable to advance the interests of disabled people in a number of areas.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Does my right hon. Friend expect the House to complete consideration of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill before, or after, the recess?

Mr. Newton: I would not wish to encourage expectation that we shall be able to complete consideration of that Bill, which is still in another place, before the recess.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): The Leader of the House will know that in recent years, following reshuffles, some Ministers have taken senior positions on the boards of companies that were set up following the implementation of privatisation plans by their Departments. Can he give an assurance at the Dispatch Box next week that, when the next reshuffle takes place, no Minister who is in the Government will be allowed—for the rest of the life of this Parliament—to sit on the board of a company that he or she has been responsible for privatising during this Parliament?

Mr. Newton: I am obviously not going to get involved in any of the speculation underlying the hon. Gentleman's remarks. As to his question, I can safely assure him that all my colleagues—Ministers or otherwise—will always act in accordance with the guidance to Ministers and, indeed, considerations of general propriety.

Mr. Peter Luff (Worcester): Will my right hon. Friend find time for a debate before we rise for the recess on the Christian values underpinning British society? Does he agree that such a debate would provide an opportunity to demonstrate to the Bishop of Birmingham the fact that increasing the resources and efficiency of the health service, and the number of patients treated by it, is a

[Mr. Peter Luff]

profoundly Christian approach to that service, and contrasts sadly with the financial affairs of—and the numbers using—the Church of England?

Mr. Newton: Being ex officio a Church Commissioner, I had better be cautious about venturing into the latter part of the question. On the first part, yes, I certainly see our achievements in the health service, including those demonstrated by the figures that my right hon. Friend used at Prime Minister's Question Time, as illustrating a very caring approach, which is improving the amount of care that we offer through that service.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Should not there be a statement next week on the cross-ownership of the media? Do the Government think it right that Mr. Murdoch's pots of gold—acquired from television and in other ways—should be used to subsidise *The Times* and pose a threat to *The Independent* and *The Daily Telegraph*? Are the Government at least concerned that the quality press in this country may be in a very different position in 90 days or so? Ought there not to be an urgent statement on the Government's attitude to allowing a situation to develop in which Mr. Murdoch might have to choose between having television or broadsheet quality newspapers, which is the position in the United States?

Mr. Newton: Not for the first time, the hon. Gentleman raises an important and controversial subject, on which he would not expect me to make a statement now. The matter is fairly and squarely in the territory of the Secretary of State for National Heritage. As it happens, my right hon. Friend was here yesterday on matters not totally distant from those raised by the hon. Gentleman, and he will be here to answer questions on Monday.

Mr. Paul Channon (Southend, West): Is my right hon. Friend aware of the outdated and ridiculous rule that Select Committees cannot travel during prorogation? Does he accept that, while the rule still exists, it is extremely difficult for Select Committees to plan any proposed travel? While I know that he will not want to tell us the date of prorogation, may we at least be told when the Queen's Speech and the opening of Parliament will be announced, as that must be decided many months in advance?

Mr. Newton: I am not in a position either to give the date of prorogation or the date of the Queen's Speech at the moment. My right hon. Friend's is the second representation which I have received about the position of Select Committees during the period between the two, and I am looking into the matter to see whether there is anything that I can do to help.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Does the Leader of the House consider that, a year or so after the "Taking Stock" announcement and with the Conservative party getting anything between 2 and 12 per cent. in Scottish elections, the minor procedural measures that are to be debated on Monday have been overtaken by events? Does he really consider that, with the Rosyth naval base set for closure, tinkering with the Scottish Grand Committee will save Tory skins in Scotland?

Mr. Newton: I do not in any way think that the proposals for changes in the Scottish Standing Orders, which will be debated on Monday, have been overtaken by developments of any kind. They are a sensible improvement of the procedures of the House in relation to Scottish business, and I hope that the House will endorse them accordingly.

Sir Roger Moate (Faversham): Can my right hon. Friend find a way during business next week for the House to consider early-day motion 1411?

[*That this House recognises the importance of the fullest co-operation with the United States of America in matters of extradition; is concerned however that in the case of Sally Croft and Susan Hagan, the offence for which they have been charged is supposed to have taken place in Oregon in 1985, five years before the US Justice Department commenced proceedings in 1990; is further concerned that the supposed evidence was obtained entirely through plea-bargaining and is unreliable in a number of other respects; recognises that there are other exceptional features of this case; and therefore calls upon the present Home Secretary, in the interests of justice, to re-examine the case with a view to exercising his discretion to prevent the extradition of these two British subjects.*]

The motion stands in my name and the names of 71 other hon. Members from both sides of the House. It concerns the imminent extradition of two British subjects to face rather bizarre charges in the United States.

If time cannot be found to debate the matter, will my right hon. Friend find some way of drawing it to the attention of the Home Secretary? After all, it is a matter of political judgment and discretion, and the concerns are shared on both sides of the House. Will my right hon. Friend to try to get the Home Secretary to re-examine the case, so that the two ladies are not extradited before the House has had time to consider the full implications?

Mr. Newton: I can safely assure my hon. Friend that my right hon. and learned Friend is well aware of the points that he and others have made. I understand that the cases are the subject of further judicial review proceedings which are due to be heard on 26 July. My hon. Friend will understand that I certainly cannot comment further.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): Now that another reshuffle of Ministers seems to be on the way, may we have a statement next week about the latest reshuffle of ex-Ministers? Michael Fallon and Francis Maude have been appointed to the deregulation task force along with an administrator of the trust of the Sainsbury family, one of whose members is a Minister at the Department of Trade and Industry. Is not it absolutely deplorable that Ministers should use or abuse their patronage powers to set up a job creation scheme for their pals and former ministerial colleagues who were kicked out by the electorate at the general election?

Mr. Newton: I see nothing improper or in any way wrong in using the experience of people who, as it happens in this case, have been colleagues in the House and to make use of their experience to advance a sensible policy.

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): My right hon. Friend will have noticed the considerable interest displayed during Prime Minister's Question Time on the report submitted by the health service ombudsman. Given that great interest, will my right hon. Friend therefore

consider having an early debate to discuss the reports of the Health Service Commissioner and the Parliamentary Commissioner?

Mr. Newton: I am conscious of my hon. Friend's role as Chairman of the Select Committee, and of his concern that there should be a debate. In the light of the exchanges during Prime Minister's Question Time, I perhaps have some further encouragement in that direction, but I am afraid that I cannot at this stage give an undertaking.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): Will the right hon. Gentleman please assure the House that if the rail dispute is not settled before the House rises, we will have an opportunity to discuss the principles involved? On Tuesday, the chairman of Railtrack told the Employment Select Committee not only that the Government are 100 per cent. shareholders in Railtrack, but that the Secretary of State for Transport sets the parameters within which he must negotiate. In those circumstances, should the Secretary of State for Transport come not merely to the Employment Select Committee, as he will do next week, but to the House and answer to the entire country for the way in which the Government have caused the mishandling of this issue?

Mr. Newton: First, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport is frequently in the House. Secondly, I hope that the hon. and learned Gentleman will consider how far it is right to use his position as Chairman of the Select Committee in relation to this kind of controversy when negotiations are going on.

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): May I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to early-day motion 1442, which is in the names of my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-West (Mr. Butcher) and others, including myself?

[*That this House notes with sadness the failure of the Church of England in Birmingham to attract more than two per cent. of the city's population to its churches on a Sunday and that the management of the Birmingham Diocese has failed to reverse the decline of the church in Birmingham inner city; regrets that the church has been marginalised at a time when its influence in spiritual and moral matters is sorely needed; and concludes that the Bishop of Birmingham's authority to speak out on public issues would be greatly enhanced if, instead of supervising decline, he was able to demonstrate that by saving more souls and filling more churches he had restored the Anglican Church in Birmingham to its rightful place as a leading influence in the day-to-day lives of the citizens of Birmingham.*]

Would it be possible to have an urgent debate on this matter in the House soon, so that we can advise the Bishop of Birmingham on how best to be a bishop and to leave politics to people like us, who are elected to talk on the subject?

Mr. Newton: One of my hon. Friends has already referred to the bishop's remarks and I made some comment on that. Beyond that, as I have said on a number of earlier occasions, I would not wish to get involved too much in ecclesiastical affairs.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): If we are to break up in the week mentioned by the Leader of the House, why are we not breaking up on 22 July, so that at least on 21 July we could have Question Time and Prime Minister's Question Time? Is not it a fact that the Government are in such a sorry position that they simply do not want the newly elected Leader of the Opposition to be in a position to put questions? *[Interruption.]* No matter how much Tory Members heckle now, the public know how fearful the Government are of a newly elected Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Newton: In view of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's complete dominance at Question Time, I can only say that if the hon. Gentleman believes that, he will believe anything.

Mr. David Sumberg (Bury, South): May we have a debate next week on the workings of the legal aid system so that I can highlight the fact that a number of my constituents are having to pay a great deal of money back to the Legal Aid Board, while someone who is not even a British citizen is collecting more than £4 million to assist his case?

Mr. Newton: As it happens, I was asked a question about that, as my hon. Friend may recall, when I was answering for my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on Tuesday. I undertook to bring those concerns to the attention, once again, of my right hon. Friend the Lord Chancellor and that is being done.

Mr. Richard Burden (Birmingham, Northfield): Will the Leader of the House find time next week for a debate on lack of accountability in the water industry? Does he agree that the need for such a debate was emphasised this week by the revelation that a prominent Conservative party supporter and former chair of Severn Trent Water has just received a pay-off of £500,000? Does he agree that that is a matter of legitimate public concern, particularly when pensioners and low-income families find it so difficult to pay their water bills? Does he agree that we urgently need a debate on the lack of accountability in our water industry?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that pay and other forms of remuneration in the private sector, whether in the water industry or elsewhere, are matters for those companies and their shareholders. It is certainly our view, however, that the shareholders of the water companies should follow the lead that the Government have set for the public sector and exercise restraint in agreeing remuneration in any form for their directors and senior managers.

Mr. James Clappison (Hertsmere): Is my right hon. Friend aware of the widespread support for an annual summer debate on the economy? This year, can my right hon. Friend think of an appropriate title for that debate, which might tempt the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) to come to the House to explain his plans for improving the supply side of the economy? He could also explain how he reconciles those plans with the imposition of a minimum wage, imposition of the social chapter and the imposition of higher taxes on businesses as well as a massive hike in state spending. I can suggest a title that might fit the hon. Gentleman's plans; how about, " The white heat of technology—mark 2"?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend obviously has a good memory. He also has an irrepressible optimism because I

[Mr. Newton]

suspect that even if the hon. Member for Sedgefield took part in such a debate, we would get no clearer explanation inside the House than we have had outside it.

Mr. John Spellar (Warley, West): Will the Leader of the House accept that, given the considerable number of problems still to be discussed, the three months' recess will not be received with universal acclamation in the House or outside? May I draw his attention to the fact that the wheel clamping consultation was supposed to finish in May last year? Now it will not have an opportunity to be discussed further until October. Will he get on to the Home Office and try to get some urgency into that Department in order to resolve that disgraceful situation, as it is causing considerable misery around the country?

Mr. Newton: I will certainly bring to my right hon. and learned Friend's attention the fact that the hon. Gentleman has raised that matter again.

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): Will my right hon. Friend find time next week to discuss the single market and the impact that it is having on cheap beer imports into the country, which are running at 1 million pints a day? Last week, I went to Calais with other hon. Members and saw the amount of beer being imported, not just in Transits and ordinary cars but on HGV lorries. It is having a massive impact on the hundreds of thousands of jobs in pubs, clubs and the brewing industry in this country.

Mr. Newton: I believe that it will be within my hon. Friend's knowledge—I remember seeing details of a substantial court case during the week—that Her Majesty's Customs and Excise are vigorously pursuing cases where importation is clearly outside the rules.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): When can we debate the new guidelines issued by the Charity Commission, which prevent charities from lobbying hon. Members in the traditional way by stopping them writing pro forma letters to us? While other organisations lobby for less worthy causes and offer hon. Members sumptuous invitations to junkets, Calais and other exotic spots, worthy organisations that support good causes are being restricted in that unfair way.

Mr. Newton: Well, of course I will bring those observations to my right hon. Friend's attention, but it must be recognised that, alongside the advantages of charitable status, there must be rules about what is and is not proper under charitable status.

Dr. Liam Fox (Woodspring): Can my right hon. Friend find time for a debate on trade union and labour law reform? Given the transformation of our industrial relations landscape, with the timely reminder of the rail dispute, both sides of the House, particularly Opposition Front-Bench Members, would have a chance to say which part of the horrendous 1970 labour laws they would like to see revisited on the public.

Mr. Newton: I will certainly look for an opportunity to tease those matters out, but it is another area in which, however many questions are asked, we get few answers.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Will the Leader of the House arrange for the Secretary of State to make a statement explaining what remedies local communities have when community health trusts issue consultation documents prior to the establishment of secure units for mental hospital patients, which are deliberately designed to mislead and deceive those local communities about the nature of offenders who will be held in those secure units?

Mr. Newton: As the hon. Gentleman clearly has a particular case in mind and is effectively making an allegation of a public body "misleading" the public, his appropriate course would be to bring forward the evidence and ask my right hon. Friend to look at it.

Mr. Ian Bruce (South Dorset): Can my right hon. Friend tell us what the format of business will be on Wednesday 20 July? He will know that the tall ships race is to leave Weymouth harbour on that day, and many hon. Members with maritime and heritage interests or who just love seeing tall ships would love to be there between 11 am and 3 pm to see that wonderful sight, which is great for tourism, for Britain and, of course, for Dorset, and get back in good time to participate in the business of the House.

Mr. Newton: If, as my hon. Friend said, the race takes place between 11 am and 3 pm, he should at least be able to see the start of it and get back in time.

Mrs. Cheryl Gillan (Chesham and Amersham): Will my right hon. Friend look seriously at the timetable for the House and consider having a debate on the space industry? There has not been a debate in the House on the UK space industry since February 1988; nor has there been a debate since the European Space Agency ministerial meeting last year, which made important decisions on space. As the European Space Agency will be present at Farnborough this year—the first time for 15 years—the matter needs to be discussed in the House because our UK industries believe that our levels of funding are falling below those necessary to make our industries successful and competitive.

Mr. Newton: Perhaps I may take this opportunity once again to recognise the excellent interest that my hon. Friend takes in those matters, which are perhaps not always as widely discussed as we should like. That said, I cannot promise a debate, but I could perhaps encourage her to seek to be fortunate, for example, Madam Speaker, as regards your choices about the Adjournment debates that will preface the recess.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): May we have a debate next week on local government finance, so that the House might consider the position of the new Ealing Labour council, which is promising to increase council tax by about 10 per cent. next year, although it has inherited balances of £8 million from the outgoing Conservative administration, to which was bequeathed a deficit of £200 million by the previous Ealing Labour council?

Mr. Newton: Again, I cannot, I am afraid, promise a debate, but there are quite a lot of opportunities, what with the Adjournment motion itself and the Adjournment debates that normally come just before the recess, for such matters to be mentioned, and I might encourage my hon. Friend to try to elaborate those points on one of those occasions.

Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Cirencester and Tewkesbury): Can my right hon. Friend find time for a

debate to debate the outcome of the preparatory arrangements for the international conference on population and development in Cairo later this year? If he cannot find time for such a debate now, may I urge him to find an early slot, so that we can debate the outcome of that conference?

Mr. Newton: As I suspect my hon. Friend knows, he is the second of my hon. Friends to mention that matter in two or three weeks. I did undertake, although very much without commitment, to consider that point, and I repeat that comment to my hon. Friend.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): Can my right hon. Friend find time for a debate on waste and inefficiency in the public sector? It would be a suitable opportunity for me to bring to the attention of the House matters of concern to my constituents, who are worried about some items of waste that still exist in the public sector, and they want me to make that argument so that the message can be communicated that the Royal Marines School of Music in Deal provides good value, is welcome in the constituency and they want it to be kept, and that they want many other wasteful items in the public sector to be abolished.

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend's concern for the Royal Marines School of Music at Deal is well known. I do not think that I need actually tell my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence about it, but nevertheless I will.

Mr. Michael Bates (Langbaurgh): Has my right hon. Friend received any requests from the Labour party to have an early debate on early-day motion 527?

[*That this House deplores the actions of certain honourable Members in claiming that there has been impropriety of various kinds by elected members of Monklands District Council; is particularly concerned that these allegations, including that of financial irregularity and political corruption, have now been made by the honourable Member for Eastwood who is the Minister of the Crown responsible for local government in Scotland; requires all honourable Members making such allegations to furnish the facts to Strathclyde Police or other appropriate authority; and calls upon the Secretary of State for Scotland to cause a local enquiry to be undertaken in pursuance of the powers available to him under the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 and would regard failure to do so as indicating that there is no valid complaint against Monklands District Council and that the allegations amount to no more than a smear tactic which serves only to demean honourable Members and Ministers who stoop to such devices.*]

The motion concludes that there was no case for Monklands district council to answer against claims of corruption. Given that there has been a Damascus road conversion of, not least, the convenor of the Scottish parliamentary Labour party, the hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan (Mr. Wray), who now recognises that there is a case to answer, does not my right hon. Friend think that that matter should be mentioned at an early opportunity?

Mr. Newton: I was rather anticipating that it might be mentioned at an early opportunity by the newly elected hon. Member for Monklands, East (Mrs. Liddell).

Mr. Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford): Will my right hon. Friend find time for a debate on deregulation, with special emphasis on the right of small business men to appeal against unnecessary and unwarranted impositions of regulations on them? During the passage through this House of the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill, we were assured by the Minister and by the President of the Board of Trade that we would get something put into the Bill before it arrived back here, and as yet nothing has happened. Can we find time for such a debate, to spur them on?

Mr. Newton: I might be in some difficulty if I found time for such a debate while the Bill is still under consideration in another place, but I will certainly draw my hon. Friend's remarks to the attention of those who are concerned with that consideration.

Development Board for Rural Wales

4.3 pm

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. John Redwood): With permission, Madam Speaker, I should like to make a statement concerning the Development Board for Rural Wales and related issues concerning the Welsh Development Agency, the Cardiff Bay development corporation, the Land Authority for Wales and the Wales tourist board.

Some non-departmental public bodies in Wales have been criticised in recent years by the Public Accounts Committee and by Parliament for the way in which they have conducted public business. Those bodies have revealed a number of irregularities that should not have occurred. I, for my part, have sought to be open about the problems, to report to the House and to take sensible action for a better future.

I announced to the House on 14 March a review of the future of the DBRW. I have since consulted widely and considered carefully the representations received. I have now reached my conclusions and wish to tell them to the House before anyone else. I have certainly not made any indication of my intentions to journalists before making today's statement.

The DBRW was established in 1977. Over the past decade, there has been significant improvement in the economy of mid Wales. Unemployment has fallen and is significantly lower than that for Wales as a whole. The number of jobs has increased by 19 per cent. over the 10 years to 1991, compared with only 1 per cent. for Great Britain. The number of employees in manufacturing has increased by 16 per cent. compared with a fall of nearly a quarter for Great Britain as a whole. More people now move into the region than move out of it. Nevertheless, there are still the special problems that affect some rural districts. Some young people do not think that there is enough opportunity, and leave. Jobs continue to be lost from farms. There is worry about the future vitality of some smaller towns, villages and hamlets.

In my review, I have been anxious to promote four broad principles. I believe that local authorities should be important in deciding local issues and meeting many of the public needs of their communities, that agencies should concentrate their activities in areas where they can make an effective and distinctive contribution to regeneration and where the market needs help. I believe that agencies should see themselves as servants, not as masters, working on behalf of central and local government, and that our policies should be fair to the different communities of the whole of rural Wales. I intend to apply those principles to the different functions of the DBRW.

The House knows that the housing stock of the board will transfer in 1996, when we have completed the arrangements. Tenants are being consulted on whether they would prefer to become tenants of a local authority or a housing association. I think that those new landlords could offer a better solution for all involved.

The board makes a number of social and economic grants to local authorities and others, which are highly valued in the localities. I wish local authorities to have direct control over how that money is spent. I therefore intend from next year to transfer that responsibility to the local authorities involved. My current plan is to transfer £2.4 million—the present level of expenditure—but I wish to consult on that and on the best mechanism.

The DBRW and the Welsh Development Agency offer a range of grants to assist investment in the region by existing and new businesses. I believe that those functions, which deal mainly with very small businesses, could be better delivered by local authorities. The schemes that I have in mind would include the mid Wales development grant, rural buildings conversion grants, DRIVE grants and community enterprise projects. A total of £3 million is involved. I have also instructed my officials to discuss with the local authority associations the details of how to route money to the local authorities for those activities.

The board contributes to tourism marketing and development in mid Wales. The Wales tourist board has an all-Wales responsibility in that sector and, from 1995-96, it will take over the DBRW's tourism activities and expand its own marketing and other operations in the area by an amount equivalent to the DBRW's spend of £500,000.

Housing apart, the main amounts of money and the central tasks of the DBRW are in the spheres of property development and business services. Both are designed to help small and medium-sized businesses grow and to work with inward investors once they have decided on Wales for their commitment. There is a case for those activities to be done by the WDA everywhere. During consultation, I discovered that opinion was divided, but there is, naturally, considerable support in the DBRW district for the continuation of its special work. A total of £14 million is involved.

I have, therefore, decided that those main tasks will remain with the DBRW. Within this framework, the board's property development activities—making available serviced sites and premises for existing and new businesses in the area—will continue to form an important part of its role. Financial support for these operations will be fully maintained. I expect the board to liaise closely with the Welsh Development Agency, particularly to ensure a well co-ordinated approach to opportunities and developments along their respective boundaries.

In order to do this, I propose changes to the DBRW board which I hope the House will welcome. In order to ensure more co-ordination of effort between the WDA and DBRW, which many think desirable, I am appointing today Mr. David Rowe-Beddoe as the new chairman of the DBRW.

Because I wish to strengthen working between the DBRW and local authorities, I propose to appoint two extra councillors to the board, making a total of five. This will take the board to its permitted maximum of 13. I wish to see each of the five constituent historic shires represented at the earliest opportunity.

I do not think it helps Wales to be represented abroad by more than one agency with more than one story, or by a multitude of local authorities each vying with the other. There is a danger of losing the main message that "it is better made in Wales". While I normally favour competition, this is one case where concentration of effort and one song from one song sheet is better. The WDA will take a strong lead in this work.

The board will also continue its research and marketing activities in the United Kingdom, promoting its own services and the facilities available in the area. As now, the

DBRW will continue its support of the WDA in responding to the needs of potential inward investors in the area.

The board has long had an influential role in arranging provision of a wide range of services and advice to local businesses, especially small firms, through a strong network of business centres. These are run in conjunction with local authorities, training and enterprise councils and local enterprise agencies. I have recently issued a prospectus inviting proposals by the autumn for the co-ordination of business services in Wales. I expect the board, together with its partners, to be fully involved in responding to this invitation. I want a good-quality service to continue for the business community in mid Wales.

I have been impressed by the way Mr. Rowe-Beddoe and his new team have gone about honestly unearthing irregularities from the past at the WDA. We are all sad that there were any. We should now unite in wishing to see the good work of the WDA and DBRW continue.

Doubts have been raised about past land deals by the WDA in the Cynon valley. At my request, the new team at the agency has launched an inquiry. Doubts have been raised about the propriety of ministerial actions in approving certain loan and grant schemes. I can assure the House from the evidence I have seen that there is no question of Ministers setting out to break the law. I do not wish there to be any doubts about any scheme; I wish to ensure that there are no doubts about the way we proceed. My arrangements ensure that these schemes will in future be run by local authorities, which I hope the House will welcome, as I do, for the wider benefits that that will bring.

It will be for the new chairman and the board to assess the effects of my statement today and its impact on the board's running costs. I would hope that changes in employment will be achieved through natural wastage or voluntary redundancy, but I would obviously expect the overhead to reduce.

I believe that there is a role for non-departmental public bodies; but I want to see that role very clearly defined. I do not expect them to ignore the wishes of local authorities and local communities. I do expect them to work wherever possible in harmony and co-operation. I do not want them to become large property landlords. I have asked the development agencies and the Land Authority for Wales to dispose of fully let properties where the money can be reused for new projects, and of land holdings which can be used for economic development and housing.

The Cardiff Bay development corporation has now begun work on its major project: the construction of the barrage. This should be completed by 1998. All development corporations have finite lives. I expect that it will be possible to wind up the Cardiff Bay development corporation by the end of 1999, at which time responsibility for the further development of the area will pass back to the local authorities.

There is no reduction in my commitment to the well-being and regeneration of mid Wales or the rest of the country. Opposition Members should welcome the very positive message that I am sending today to local government in Wales—to play its part in promoting and assisting enterprise in Wales. I believe that with these arrangements, which will ensure the same level of funding for rural Wales, we will attract more business from abroad, reclaim more derelict land and help many more indigenous businesses to set up and expand. I commend these proposals to the House.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): May I first apologise to the House and to you, Madam Speaker, for the absence of my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) and for my presence, which is due to the pressing domestic personal difficulties of my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly, which I have explained to you, Madam Speaker, and to the Secretary of State.

The Secretary of State opened his remarks this afternoon by referring to the irregularities among quangos in Wales, but there was a certain amount of confusion in his statement as to whether he is shrinking the mid Wales development board back to its core functions because it is an economic success or because of its compliance and accountancy failures.

The confusion continues in respect of the transfer of grant-making powers to local authorities. If the Secretary of State is interested in clearing up the legal difficulties that were raised with him in early May by my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Jones), who did not receive a substantive reply for more than six weeks, it is a matter of some concern that he is now attempting to transfer that grant-making power to local authorities with the legal difficulties still unresolved. Can he, therefore, tell the House whether he plans primary legislation to clear up the unresolved difficulties that have occurred—probably over the past 12 years—particularly in respect of the legalities of making the mid Wales development grant? Before he transfers the grant-making power to the local authorities, will he confirm that he will ensure that there are no legal doubts about the powers to pay that grant?

The right hon. Gentleman also mentioned contempt of the House by way of briefing the press on the matter two days ago. I accept his statement today, but is it not a contempt of the House that the Welsh Office suspended payment of those grants by a letter to the Development Board for Rural Wales three weeks ago? Officials had been instructed to cease payments of the mid Wales development grant, the DRIVE grant and the conversion grants before the House had had any chance to discuss the scheme. That raises a question of contempt of the House which I hope the Secretary of State will answer.

There is some confusion in the Secretary of State's mind about whether he is penalising the Development Board for Rural Wales by truncating it because of its financing irregularities, thereby causing it to be taken over in part by the WDA by merging it at chairman level. Will Mr. David Rowe-Beddoe—fine figure though he is—be earning two salaries as chairman of the Development Board for Rural Wales and of the Welsh Development Agency?

As the Secretary of State referred to job losses, albeit achieved by voluntary methods possibly, what job losses does he anticipate will occur? Most important of all, is it really his intention in truncating the Development Board for Rural Wales that it should then wither on the vine, or does he intend it to have a stable function? Is it is not true that, in splitting the grant-making power from the business services, property development and factory letting power of the Development Board for Rural Wales—handing one to the local authorities and causing the core Development Board for Rural Wales to keep the others—business people thinking of moving into mid Wales will become extremely confused? Is that really his intention? If he means to penalise the Development Board for Rural Wales for being a bit naughty, is that not the equivalent of finding that Beethoven was drunk on the night he wrote the Emperor

[Mr. Rhodri Morgan]

concerto and, instead of telling him to stop drinking, telling him that he should never write a note of music again? The Secretary of State should be able to tell the House whether his real intention is that there should be a stable future for the Development Board for Rural Wales.

Regarding the right hon. Gentleman's wider remarks about quangos in Wales, we want to know in what direction he is seeking to move them. Is he democratising them and, if so, what about the education quangos and the housing quangos which have taken over from local authorities? Is he to return those education, housing and urban regeneration powers to the local authorities from which they have been progressively taken over the past 15 years?

Finally, the Secretary of State will be about as popular in mid Wales as a rugby league scout in a valleys rugby club, and, what is more, one who left his cheque book back in Wigan.

Mr. Redwood: I think that those remarks were prepared before the hon. Gentleman saw my statement. The proposals will be welcome in mid Wales. The councillors will be delighted and local people will be delighted that their elected representatives will be involved in some of the decisions and that the important work of the board will continue.

The answer to the hon. Gentleman's main question is easy. My prime reason for making the changes was that I wanted to review the body well before any legal doubts arose because I wished to develop the policies in a new direction. I have set out those principles clearly today and those are the principles which I had in my mind at the beginning of the review and which I have now made plain to the House.

I have no plans for primary legislation to deal with what the hon. Gentleman thinks are legal difficulties. Of course I will ensure that, in working out the scheme with local authorities, they have clear powers under legislation so that they can grant the moneys. That is essential. I do not wish them to get into any difficulties over legal doubts. We wish to ensure that all schemes are soundly based, and of course I shall take proper legal advice in establishing the schemes so that they are soundly based.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether Mr. Rowe-Beddoe will receive two salaries. He will be paid for the time that he works for the WDA and for the DBRW. He will receive a salary for each body which reflects the time that he works. When I have finalised the arrangements with him, I will ensure that I tell the hon. Gentleman the details in so far as it is proper for me to do so.

The hon. Gentleman should know that I expect Mr. Rowe-Beddoe to put in a reasonable number of hours for both bodies and it would be unreasonable not to remunerate him for doing that. He will be remunerated at the usual scale and there is no question of his working more than a normal week. With his great skill, he can do the job for both with an executive team supporting him who will, of course, carry out most of the day-to-day work.

The hon. Gentleman seemed at one point in his speech to be objecting to local authorities having such involvement. I had better disabuse the hon. Gentleman of that notion. They are already deeply involved because, for example, they happen to be the bodies that grant planning permission for many important projects. It does not add another complexity to have the local authorities involved, but I think that they will welcome having more involvement in the process, particularly with small businesses, which they know and should be able to assist in their areas in the proper way.

As to the general question of what directions I wish to set for the bodies in general, my statement today is primarily about the DBRW. I have ranged over several other bodies involved in economic development. I have made clear my principles and the way in which I wish those bodies to go. It is a way that Opposition Members should welcome, and the absence of any really good questions from them shows that they do in practice welcome it and that they are rather surprised by the direction in which the DBRW is going.

Mr. Rod Richards (Clwyd, North-West): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his statement today announcing the rationalisation of some of the functions of the DBRW, the WDA, the tourist board and local authorities which, as he has said, will lead to lower administrative costs. I also congratulate him on leaving the well-known windbag, the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan), with nothing to say. However, will my right hon. Friend confirm that the proposed headquarters of the WDA in St. Asaph business park in my constituency in north Wales will go ahead as planned?

Mr. Redwood: I have no announcement to make today on any changes, but I shall talk to the new chairman of the DBRW about his requirements both for the WDA and the DBRW and I will make sure that my hon. Friend's strong interest in the matter is known. Mr. Rowe-Beddoe will obviously see the exchanges.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): Will the Secretary of State dispel the ever-increasing impression that mid Wales is a distant country of which he knows little by telling the House, first, how many of the 126 employees of the DBRW in my constituency he expects to remain employed in the public sector and in the DBRW and, secondly, why he believes that the handing over of the mid Wales development grant and the social grants to local authorities will improve the already high quality of delivery of those grants?

Thirdly, will the right hon. Gentleman tell the House how on earth he can ensure that the Cardiff-based chairman of the WDA can exercise an independent role as chairman of an independent DBRW when inevitably there will be conflicting competitive interests?

Fourthly, will the Secretary of State answer the question of the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan)? Does the right hon. Gentleman expect the DBRW to wither on the vine, or is telling the House with his usual confidence that the board can be foreseen to have a long-term and important future in the economic generation of rural mid Wales?

Mr. Redwood: The hon. and learned Gentleman's first remarks did not do him credit. I know mid Wales extremely well. I visit it and talk to people there frequently, and a great deal of information comes into my office by virtue of the post that I hold. The employees' future is a matter for the chairman and the board to settle with the employees. I made it clear in my statement that I do not favour compulsory redundancies and do not believe that there should be any need for them.

Mr. Carlile: How many?

Mr. Redwood: I cannot say how many employees will be there in one or two years. I am asking the new chairman and the board to review that aspect in the light of the policy that I announced. I have not gone around Wales telling people about the policy before informing the House. Now is the time to work out the details by asking the people concerned—the chairman and the board—to say how many staff they need to perform certain functions, and how other functions that are best transferred to local authorities can be performed.

I am surprised that the hon. and learned Gentleman wants to do down local authorities in his area. When he returns there, he will find that local authorities welcome my announcement. I am sure that they will work closely with the board and the Welsh Office to ensure a smooth transfer of functions and duties for next year, when the system will be fully up and running.

I believe that Mr. Rowe-Beddoe, in chairing the two bodies, will be entirely fair in his dealings with rural and urban Wales. As chairman of the WDA, he already makes decisions about areas of Wales most eligible for projects that he is winning in his role as one of the Principality's principal salesmen abroad, in attracting inward investment. Many hon. Members who represent areas of Wales not covered by the DBRW will be reassured to know that there will be fair judgments between different parts of Wales and parts of rural Wales—some already covered by the WDA and some by the DBRW, where there are sometimes boundary issues between the two.

I have announced my DBRW policy. The question about withering on the vine was foolish, because I made a clear statement on the board's purposes and functions. That is where the matter rests.

Mr. Jonathan Evans (Brecon and Radnor): Is my right hon. Friend aware that, unlike the churlish remarks of the Opposition, his statement will receive a warm welcome in many parts of mid Wales—not least in my own constituency? Representations that I made to my right hon. Friend were geared to the idea that social development and other grants ought to be transferred to local authorities. Does not my right hon. Friend think it remarkable that there is so much objection from Opposition Members to local authorities and democratically elected councillors having more say?

As to my right hon. Friend's proposals for the development board's property assets, he will know that when that issue arose recently, I requested that if assets were to be disposed of, it should be done at market value to sitting tenants. Can my right hon. Friend confirm that will remain the board's policy?

Mr. Redwood: Yes, of course I favour sitting tenants having a fair opportunity to buy their properties at a sensible price. I wish to encourage that policy. I am grateful for my hon. Friend's support. He has read the mood of mid Wales correctly, in a way that Opposition Members have not. Like him, I am astounded at Labour's performance. We are always hearing from Labour that we do not give enough to, or believe enough in, local government. When I offer local government something, Labour Members say, "Don't give it to local government —it can't do the job."

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): The Secretary of State mentioned the unearthing of past irregularities in the WDA. Will he confirm whether any more are to come into the public domain, or do we know about them all—including the land deal to which the right hon. Gentleman referred? Am I to understand from an earlier answer that the Secretary of State can do all that he proposes by administrative fiat and that legislation is not required?

Mr. Redwood: My advice is that more than adequate powers exist among different public sector bodies, including local authorities, to do what is required. When we complete the detail, I will make clear how that is being done. As to irregularities, I cannot give the hon. Gentleman the categorical assurance that he seeks and that I should like to give. I can never be sure that all past irregularities have been found, but I hope that they have. I have asked people to search extremely assiduously so that I can inform the House. If any further irregularities come to light, I will report them as soon as I know of them. I have reported those that I know about.

Mr. Walter Sweeney (Vale of Glamorgan): May I say how much I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement? I am particularly pleased that my constituents will be given an opportunity to purchase their own properties, but I also welcome the transfer of grant-making powers to local authorities. I find it strange that Opposition Members have not been more welcoming, given the number of times that some of them have accused the Government of having centralising tendencies. Here we have an example of their transferring powers to local authorities: surely Opposition Members should welcome that, as I do.

Mr. Redwood: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I think that he is quite right, and I am delighted that he agrees with my policy.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): I welcome the Secretary of State's announcement about an inquiry into past land deals engaged in by the WDA in Cynon valley. There have been many rumours, and it is time that they were laid to rest. What will be the terms of reference for the inquiry, and can the right hon. Gentleman assure us that its results will be published in full? Nothing less will satisfy my constituents.

Mr. Redwood: I have asked the chairman to satisfy himself about what happened in the land transactions, with the commissioning of an independent investigation. I shall want to know from him what he subsequently discovers, and I shall tell the House either way—that is, I shall tell the House if nothing improper has come to light, or if something improper has come to light. In the latter event, action will be needed.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Has the Secretary of State noticed that no Opposition Member has objected to the increase in the number of democratically elected representatives? On the contrary. The right hon. Gentleman, however, seems to be so devoted to yah-boo politics that he cannot resist giving his "boo" when we have not given our "yah".

It is some comfort to Opposition Members to know that at least the Government have started to cleanse the stables that they themselves have fouled, but would it not have been better if the Secretary of State had appointed as

[Mr. Paul Flynn]

chairman someone who was respected in Wales as a non-political figure rather than a card-carrying member of the Conservative party who earned his living by collecting money for the party in a tax haven abroad? Cannot the right hon. Gentleman put across his sincerity in trying to cleanse the stables further by appointing more democratically elected members and genuinely independent chairpersons?

Mr. Redwood: I am suggesting the appointment of the maximum possible number of democratically elected people within the maximum permitted number of directors on the board. It so happens that that would take the number to five, which I think is a good number because it is the number of historic shires in the area concerned.

I am pleased that the hon. Gentleman has at last welcomed the proposals. However, I have listened carefully to all the comments that have been made, and no Opposition Member had said anything kind about them until he made his point.

As for the hon. Gentleman's remarks about Mr. David Rowe-Beddoe, I found them very disappointing. Mr. Rowe-Beddoe has developed a great reputation in Wales for the straightness of his dealing, his enthusiasm for the task and his considerable business skills, which were the reason for his appointment. I know that he is always happy to meet Opposition Members as well as Conservative Members so that he can understand their concerns and ensure that he does a good job for all parts of Wales.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): The Secretary of State stressed that the policies were relevant to the whole of rural Wales; he then referred to the transfer of social and economic grant-making powers to local authorities. He also said that that would be the responsibility of the local authorities concerned. Can he clarify the position of parts of rural Wales that are outside the DBRW area but are none the less rural? Will local authorities in those areas have the social and economic grant-making powers to which he refers?

Mr. Redwood: I believe that they have the powers. Money may be the issue, which I shall consider in the light of the hon. Gentleman's comments. The intention is to make social grants under existing local authority powers. As I explained, I shall consult on that and report to the House when I have had a clear answer on the best way of making payments. Of course, I wish to ensure that all parts of rural Wales have access to fair treatment both under a grant scheme and any other scheme that we may develop. For example, it may be possible to develop the strategic development scheme, which is already of great benefit to many parts of Wales.

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): The Secretary of State said that he would transfer current spending of, I think, £2.4 million to local authorities. Will he confirm that that excludes overheads and administrative and managerial costs, which therefore will fall as additional costs on local authorities? Will that money be ring-fenced by way of allocation to local authorities, or will they have to carry the cost from their broader finances, as has happened on many previous occasions, of which community care is a classic and disturbing example?

Mr. Redwood: The hon. Gentleman makes two good points. I want my officials to discuss such points with local authority associations and representatives so that we can reach a fair solution to the transfer and handling of these grants. We have a little time in which to do so, because I propose that the changes should apply from the next financial year.

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): Will the Secretary of State say something about the future funding of the Welsh Development Agency and the DBRW? At present, a large fraction of their expenditure results from the sale of property, which will continue for only two or three more years. What will happen in 1996-97, when there will be a black hole in future funding?

Mr. Redwood: Some time ago, I set out to Parliament in the general expenditure figures what the position will be, and I do not propose to change those figures today. They will be reviewed in the normal way in the autumn for subsequent years. I do not accept the gloomy analysis that there will be a great black hole after three years. Opposition Members forget that the agencies are not only selling completed properties, thereby gaining moneys from those sales, but are creating new assets. They will not suddenly run out of assets. The idea is that they should not become great land owners and property holders but should be interested in new business and development, reusing the money time and again.

Mr. Elfyn Llwyd (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): The Secretary of State said earlier that the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans) had read the mood of the people of mid Wales. I obviously did not read the mood of the *Western Mail* yesterday. The Secretary of State said that I would probably be negative about his proposals, but I welcome some aspects of his statement. I appreciate the extension of the role of local government, which was debated during discussions of the Local Government (Wales) Bill.

I should like to raise one or two small points for clarification. First, I take it that the smaller grant approach will still apply under the new system, because there is a difference almost in culture between the WDA and DBRW. Smaller ventures in mid Wales are important. Secondly, will the Minister confirm that EC grant funding will be available under the new set-up? I presume that it will be, but such funding is vital. I echo other hon. Members' comments: I expect that the DBRW will retain a strong presence in mid Wales, where its headquarters will remain.

On a small but technically important point, the Secretary of State is aware of my concern about rack rents and the letting of units. I wrote to him about that, and in reply he said that he would consider it. Will he in due course, please, forward instructions to the new body about high rents, which in the past have dissuaded people from taking units?

Mr. Redwood: I certainly want the rents to be sensible so that we can fill the space because we want the businesses. Rents should be at market levels so that we can let the space. I have always made that clear to the development bodies; that is the policy that I am asking them to follow. We must continue grants for smaller ventures. They are important to mid Wales, where the scale of most enterprises is smaller than in the more industrial

south. I do not think that it will in any way trouble the EC grants regime. That is not the intention; I want that to carry on.

I have already answered the point about office accommodation and headquarters. I am not announcing any changes today. I will listen to what the new chairman has to say. I do not visualise any major changes at the moment, but I will listen to what he suggests.

Mr. Nick Ainger (Pembroke): Will the Secretary of State accept that his announcement will be greeted with some disappointment in those areas of rural Wales which are not currently covered by the DBRW? A opportunity that has been missed, especially in Pembrokeshire, Carmarthenshire, parts of Clwyd, parts of Gwynedd, and even in those areas that were formerly part of the south Wales industrial heritage which, sadly, are now becoming rural areas. A great opportunity has been missed for giving the social remit—which, as it would appear from the statement, is continuing in one form or another by local authorities—to rural areas to be exercised by the WDA in the rest of rural Wales. Will the Secretary of State reconsider that point while he is reconsidering other details? If that is changed, I suggest that there will be a great welcome in some of the hillsides of Wales that are not currently covered by the social remit.

Mr. Redwood: I am pleased to look at what can be achieved under existing local authority and national government powers in the way I have described. We will now consult with local authorities and, of course, I will reflect carefully on what hon. Members have suggested during today's exchanges.

Mr. Jon Owen Jones (Cardiff, Central): Will the Secretary of State return to the legal dubiousness of spending the money in the way in which it was spent throughout the 1980s? In 1982, the WDA advised the Welsh Office that it was illegal to spend the money in the way that it was being directed. How does the Secretary of State intend to clarify that position? It is extremely important that mid Wales lost grant status according to DTI criteria and the money was redirected through the WDA into mid Wales.

We have yet to find out—and other hon. Members have asked this question in other ways—how the Welsh Office will justify, through economic criteria, as the DTI justified, giving grants to certain parts of Wales but denying grants to other parts of Wales which may be just as deserving or even more deserving. How will you justify that? How will you clear up the legal minefield in which the Welsh Office has got you?

Mr. Alex Carlile: Madam Speaker?

Mr. Redwood: Madam Speaker—I will do that bit for the hon. Gentleman as well—he is right. There have been doubts cast on the legal base. Some of those doubts apply to the loan scheme set up by the Labour Government in February 1979 and similar ones apply to the 1982 scheme, in which the hon. Gentleman is obviously interested. I have made it clear to the House that I have proposals here which I think can be done without any doubt at all. I think that that is the best way forward because I do not like recommending to the House things about which doubts can be voiced.

BILL PRESENTED

CHILDREN ACT 1989 (PROHIBITION OF CORPORAL PUNISHMENT) AMENDMENT

Miss Joan Lestor, supported by Mr. Clive Soley, Mrs. Llin Golding and Mr. Malcolm Wicks, presented a Bill to amend the Children Act 1989 so as to ensure that corporal punishment is not used in childminding and daycare for young children: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 15 July, and to be printed. [Bill 144.]

Statutory Instruments, &c.

SUMMER TIME

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.)

That the draft Summer Time Order 1994 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

Question agreed to.

SCOTTISH ESTIMATES

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 96 (Scottish Estimates),

That the Estimates set out hereunder be referred to the Scottish Grand Committee:

Class XIV	Vote 1	Agricultural support, Scotland.
Class XIV	Vote 2	Agricultural services, agricultural grants and fisheries, Scotland.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

Question agreed to.

Opposition Day

[17TH ALLOTTED DAY]

Housing in Wales

Madam Speaker: I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

4.43 pm

Mr. Cynog Dafis (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): I beg to move,

That this House records its concern at the continuing high level of unmet need for social housing in Wales; recognises that adequate provision of rented homes at affordable rents is a fundamental necessity; is opposed to any intention to reduce the proportion of the Tai Cymru budget dedicated to providing rented properties or to reduce the level of Housing Association Grant; calls for the restoration of a financial regime which would make the purchase and renovation of existing properties by both local councils and housing associations economically feasible; and demands the establishment of a Parliament for Wales with legislative and revenue-raising powers that would enable the people of Wales to implement housing policies appropriate to their specific needs and priorities.

It had been my intention to speak in last Wednesday's debate on housing initiated by the Labour party, but on the morning of the debate I found that it was to be specifically about England, so I could not speak about Wales in that context. When Plaid Cymru was offered a supply day this Thursday, I decided to take the opportunity to have a debate on housing in Wales. It is a vital issue at present, as I shall try to show. I want to show that at least one party in Wales is concerned about this topic.

I shall show the extent of the continuing problem with regard to housing in Wales, and I shall show that Government policy is, by and large, in disarray. There is a danger of foisting on Wales approaches already pursued in England which would be entirely inappropriate and damaging here. I am not for one moment saying that they are appropriate in England either.

It is true that Tai Cymru hopes that housing associations will provide more than 4,000 units of social housing in 1994. That sounds substantial, but it means that we would return to the level of provision that we had in 1980 after a long period of under-provision. Nevertheless, it is important to congratulate the housing association movement of Wales on its ability to respond to the challenge of providing social housing and delivering that substantial number. I was associated with that movement for more than 10 years.

The figure of 4,000 needs to be set in the context of a number of issues that I shall raise. First, there has been an enormous increase in homelessness in Wales over the past decade. It is a serious problem. The number has increased by 84 per cent., with 10,270 households accepted as homeless in 1992—the highest number ever. The Shelter report, which is quoted in the *Western Mail* today, shows that the position is not getting better; it is getting worse.

Mr. Rod Richards (Clwyd, North-West): The hon. Gentleman quoted the number of homeless households in Wales as being in the order of 10,000. The figure that I have for 1992 is 7,345. My source is Welsh housing statistics. Can the hon. Gentleman tell the House his source?

Mr. Dafis: My source is Shelter, which has access to similar sources to the hon. Gentleman. Even if his figure is right, it is a serious problem.

Over the past decade, there has been an increase of 121 per cent. in the number of homeless families housed in temporary accommodation. There is a particular problem with regard to young people. It is estimated that between 7,500 and 10,000 young people experience homelessness in some form every year. That is an astonishing figure.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the problem among young people includes a very large number of young people who simply are not in a position to buy accommodation? Whatever the Secretary of State's proposals to make it possible for more people to buy accommodation—welcome though they may be—there will still be a large residue of homeless young people who need houses to rent which are not being built.

Mr. Dafis: That is a crucial point, and it will be the main thrust of my remarks. However welcome proposals to facilitate owner-occupation may be, that approach cannot satisfy the needs especially of young people.

Another unsatisfactory aspect is the special circumstances in Wales with regard to the condition of housing. In Wales, 36.8 per cent. of the housing stock was built before 1919, compared with 26.6 per cent. in the United Kingdom as a whole. That is a significantly higher level. In certain industrial areas—for example, the Cynon Valley, about which I made some inquiries over the past week—more than 50 per cent. of the housing stock predates 1919. Much of that housing stock is inhabited by pensioners. As a result of the industrial legacy of that part of Wales, a high proportion of them suffer from varying degrees of disability. That means that we have disabled, elderly people living in antiquated houses which are seriously in need of repair.

Mr. Jonathan Evans (Brecon and Radnor): We know that the population of the Cynon Valley area has fallen recently and there has been additional housing provision. With that background, how would the hon. Gentleman explain the increase in homelessness to which he referred?

Mr. Dafis: The hon. Gentleman did not hear me. I did not refer to the Cynon Valley specifically in relation to homelessness. I was talking about the condition of the housing stock. A high proportion of the residents of that housing stock are elderly people who suffer a disability. They live in old property that badly needs renovation. Of those old properties, 9 per cent. apparently still lack or have to share a bath, shower or WC. They are still inadequately insulated. I am told that it is pretty well impossible for anyone who is not on benefit to obtain an insulation grant. The grant is entirely for people on housing benefit and some of those elderly people have a small pit pension which makes them ineligible for benefit.

To people living in old property badly in need of renovation, the effect of the imposition of 17.5 per cent. VAT on domestic fuel is particularly damaging. It is not too much to say that that represents a serious threat to the health and certainly to the welfare of many elderly people in such housing conditions. It is worth pointing out that there is a downside to owner-occupation among low-income families. The vast majority of the houses in

question are owner-occupied: 42 per cent. of all owner-occupied houses in Wales are in significant need of repair.

The Government will say that they are tackling the problem through the renovation grant system. Let us examine that system, which is in serious disarray. A tremendous amount of good work has been done and large sums of money have been poured into the renovation of existing sub-standard property. It is worth saying at this juncture that sometimes demolition and rebuild might be a more cost-effective option and we need to explore that.

Substantial sums of money have been spent on renovation of existing old property, but the whole thing has been badly handled. Hon. Members will remember the open cheque book system that applied for the first year or two of the system. While the open cheque book applied, there was no problem. The money was available and the work could go ahead apace. However, there was an enormous expansion in demand without the funds to meet it. The open cheque book system came to an end. Councils found that they must either break the body of law on mandatory grants or break the body of law on control of local government expenditure. I can quote an example from the ombudsman's report. Councils were legally obliged to make mandatory grants for renovation, but simply did not have the funds to do so. That has led to a great deal of frustration and delay, of which we are all aware from our constituency mail.

In the south Wales valleys, the waiting period for a renovation grant is eight years in Cynon, 10 years in Merthyr and nine years in Rhondda. The Welsh Office has responded by attempting to make the funds more quickly available by reducing the maximum grant level to 24 per cent. However, that will mean that many of the least well-off in the poorest properties which need the greatest sums for renovation will be unable to undertake the improvements. That is not satisfactory targeting, of which the Government are very much in favour.

Renovation is a good idea for environmental reasons because we wish to avoid developing green-field sites. It is a good idea for social reasons because there is often social cohesion in areas of existing property and because it avoids the costs of providing new infrastructure. So renovation of existing property is a good idea, although on the surface it is the more expensive option.

It is regrettable—everyone in the housing association movement in Wales agrees with this—that nowadays housing associations are simply unable to purchase and renovate. The Secretary of State for the Environment recently said that he wished to see housing associations return to purchasing existing property and, in that way, restoring the quality of life in well-established areas.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: Does the hon. Gentleman recognise that the key issue is a fiscal one? VAT is chargeable on renovation and makes the cost that much higher. Presumably the judgment ultimately involves sweeping away VAT.

Mr. Dafis: Indeed. The hon. Gentleman might have read my next sentence. The decision to impose VAT on renovation and to differentiate between it and new build is a Government decision. It needs to be reconsidered. It is not in the gift of Tai Cymru or even of the Welsh Office. It is in the gift of the Government.

VAT is not the only factor. Tai Cymru's acceptable cost guidelines do not recognise that other extra costs besides VAT are associated with the option of renovation. There are extra maintenance costs. In my experience, major repairs which involve considerable cost frequently have to be done to renovate a property.

We need to look afresh at creating a financial regime which will enable housing associations to undertake renovation work and, because renovation may not always be the best option, to consider how to purchase and demolish and new build on existing sites. I know of several instances of housing that has been expensively refurbished and could have been more cost-effectively replaced by new building on the existing site. We need to consider ways in which that could be made feasible where a property has reached the end of its useful life. All properties reach that stage at some time. Housing associations and councils are better equipped to undertake such tasks than many owner-occupiers. They are certainly far better equipped to do so than private developers and landlords.

The question of rents is a vexed one. Since the introduction in 1989 of the new mixed funding regime, housing association grant—HAG, as it is called—as a percentage of the total cost of providing new units has been pushed down. It currently stands at 62 per cent. The result is that rents have been pushed inexorably upwards. The Government argue that housing subsidies should be targeted through housing benefit rather than to bricks and mortar. That is the Government's rationale. It sounds plausible enough on the surface, but it, too, has a serious downside, which is increasingly recognised throughout the housing movement and the world of housing expertise.

Housing associations are already worried that only those who are in receipt of housing benefit can afford to take their property. That is becoming the case. It means in turn that people just above the benefit level, but still low paid, hard-up and unable to enter the open market for purchasing a house find it difficult to obtain housing. It also means that the poverty trap leads to a disincentive to unemployed benefit recipients in such properties to take employment. The poverty trap is a well-known phenomenon and it applies particularly where rents are high. It means in turn that housing association estates tend to have a high percentage of benefit-dependent unemployed people. That brings social problems.

It also has to be said that housing associations often do not have the resources or experience to provide the special management skills such as counselling or, in some cases, enforcement. They do not have the capacity or resources to tackle such problems. That is what tends to happen where the cost per unit dominates policy. There is a strong feeling in the housing association movement that cost per unit has constantly driven development.

The rent situation is already harsh with HAG at its present level—42 per cent. of housing association tenants pay 25 per cent. or more of their income in rent. That is approaching serious unaffordability. It is a harsh regime for those who have to pay rent and it is socially problematic for the reasons that I mentioned.

If the Government proceed with their proposal to reduce HAG from its present 62 per cent. to 55 per cent. by 1997, rent levels will become intolerable. The situation could even become inflammable. People will be annoyed and worried to the point of desperation, if rent levels rise in that way. City analysts UBS have calculated that rents would rise by 34 per cent. in those circumstances, and that 83 per cent. of tenants would be paying unaffordable rents, which

[Mr. Dafis]

depends on how one defines unaffordable. The Government refused to present an affordability index at the time of the Housing Act 1988, even though the housing association movement pressed them to do so.

On the whole, the housing association movement believes that affordable rents are between 20 and 25 per cent.—certainly less than 25 per cent. The Government seem to be thinking of an affordability index of about 35 per cent. It is a very serious matter.

If HAG is reduced to 55 per cent, there will not merely be a problem with rents. Most housing associations in Wales would find it impossible to raise the remaining 45 per cent. from banks and building societies and we must attend to that problem.

The mixed funding system could unravel and disintegrate, which brings me to the subject of low-cost home ownership. Tai Cymru has drawn up a new proposal for assisted ownership, whereby aspiring owner-occupiers who cannot buy on the open market have to raise only 70 per cent. of the cost of a house and HAG provides the remaining 30 per cent. That is an interesting proposal and I have no objection, in principle, to providing some public subsidy, which is what it is, to enable some categories of people to become owner-occupiers. I have no philosophical problems with that, as it is a useful approach, especially when local people on relatively low pay have to compete in the same housing market as wealthier incomers. We were familiar with that phenomenon in my constituency in south-west Wales and throughout western Wales in the late 1980s, when local people were priced out of the market because of demographic phenomena—migration and so forth. That sort of subsidy for acquiring one's own property is useful in that context.

The latest Tai Cymru proposals are ingenious. It is not the first time that it has come up with such ingenious ideas and I am prepared to praise it for that. The system is preferable to shared ownership, which has had some limited success but also some grave failures. It is good to see Wales ploughing its own furrow in devising policies in these times.

I am very dubious, however, about the rationale for assisted ownership presented in Tai Cymru's discussion paper—the creation of social stability. The idea is that social stability can somehow be enhanced by integrating at least 25 per cent. of owner-occupiers into any estate with more than 20 homes. The rules state that, initially, assisted ownership will be provided for in those circumstances. Any estate of more than 20 houses will have to have 25 per cent. of people on an assisted ownership scheme.

Significantly, that shows that Tai Cymru recognises the social problems created by the high-rent policy forced on it by the Government. There is a clear recognition of those significant social problems in Tai Cymru's policy document. We must tackle that aspect—the high-rent, low-HAG policy—as well as the problem of low pay and unemployment, rather than attempting to solve the latter problem by an assisted ownership input in a social housing estate. That attempt at social engineering is unlikely to succeed, as we shall see in a few years' time. We will be able to check to find out whether it has worked in that way.

A further reduction in HAG would be very damaging —indeed, it would be disastrous. It would be equally inappropriate for the Secretary of State to insist on an ever-greater proportion of Tai Cymru's budget being set aside for low-cost home ownership. In Wales, we want no emulation of the situation in England, where the Housing Corporation is being forced—kicking and screaming, I understand—to increase the percentage of its budget for low-cost home ownership from 33 to 45 per cent. between 1995 and 1997. That is the way that England is going, but we must not go that way in Wales.

All the evidence confirms that what one housing director told me in a letter this week is true throughout Wales. I shall quote his opinion, as I am sure that it is typical. He said:

"There remains a significant problem of unmet social housing need which demands the provision of low-cost rented housing rather than housing for sale which may well be outside the scope of local applicants due to the uncertain local economy and low wage base".

I am afraid that an uncertain local economy and a low wage base are not untypical of the Welsh situation. There is a consensus among people involved with housing policy in Wales—in the housing association movement, local authorities and charities, such as Shelter.

The Welsh Office knows of the 1990 survey conducted for the Council of Welsh Districts and the House Builders Federation, which found that less than half of new households formed in Wales could afford to buy the cheaper, older, second-hand homes available in their area. The position has probably improved since then because the market is less vibrant, but it is not significantly different. A large proportion of new households will not be in a position to enter into owner-occupation, even with the assisted ownership scheme.

Mr. Richards: The hon. Gentleman quoted a director of housing. May I quote another—the director of housing for Ynys Môn—who said:

"I consider that the existing housing stock on the island, together with the current initiatives being undertaken in partnership with private landlords and developers, will provide the decent homes which every Ynys Môn resident has a right to expect."

Mr. Dafis: I would be very surprised if my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones) did not confirm that young people wishing to set up home for the first time will find it difficult to get housing in Ynys Môn. If he will not confirm that, it must be the exception, as that is the general picture throughout rural Wales.

If one matched the housing stock—the aggregate number of houses—with local demand, one might be able to say that there was sufficient balance, but that is not the end of the story as there are population movements. Other people move in, and young people find themselves marginalised and unable to acquire property to live in.

We know that the Government's not-so-hidden agenda —it is hardly hidden at all, in fact—is the advancement of the private sector, even in the provision of social housing. There is talk, which the Under-Secretary of State did not deny in a recent reply to me, of paying HAG-type grants to private developers and landlords, which is an entirely different approach. The private sector has expressed scepticism about the idea, knowing that it will be in competition with the housing association movement for the same financial resources. Surely it is far better for that sort of provision to be made through the public sector, housing associations and local authorities.

The Minister of State for Housing, Inner Cities and Construction at the Department of the Environment,

extolled the virtues of HAMA, whereby housing associations become managing agents for private landlords. There is nothing particularly wrong with that in itself, but we must recognise how volatile, insecure and unstable such provision would be.

Private houses are lying unoccupied at the moment because the owners have been unable to sell them in today's depressed market. As soon as the market becomes more positive, the properties will be put up for sale, so trying to tackle the needs of social housing through that sort of procedure would be profoundly unsatisfactory.

Some Conservatives see housing associations as playing only a transitional role in the move towards an entirely privately owned housing stock. I am sure that many Conservative Members have that view. In Wales, the number of homes for rent in the private sector has fallen by 10,000 since 1981, so anyone who imagines that we will find salvation in that direction—either in terms of the number of homes or the quality of management—is deluding himself.

Mr. Walter Sweeney (Vale of Glamorgan): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the decline in private rented sector has been brought to a halt since the Housing Act 1988 and will be ultimately reversed?

Mr. Dafis: There is no evidence of that in Wales, and the statistics certainly do not confirm it. The hon. Gentleman might be looking at the figures between 1988 and 1992, but during the past 10 years there has been a decline.

It would be wrong to look in that direction for the provision of social housing, certainly in terms of the quality of management. The Department of the Environment recognises that in its suggestion that housing associations should be providing management services to the private sector. That is a recognition that private landlords cannot, and do not wish to, provide the quality of management that is currently provided by housing associations and local authorities.

Mr. Sweeney: Is not the reason for the reluctance of the private sector to increase the stock of private rented accommodation the fact that there is a fear that, at some stage in the future, the Opposition might reintroduce rent controls and other measures which would mean that investment in the private rented sector would prove to be misplaced? Is not all-party co-operation and an assurance to the private sector that it is to be welcomed and encouraged, rather than constantly denigrated, the solution to the problem?

Mr. Dafis: I was not denigrating the private sector, and I was not saying that the private sector might not make a contribution. I am saying that it would be foolish to look in that direction for a major contribution to solving the problem of social housing in Wales, and the statistics clearly indicate that.

There are people in the Conservative party who are prepared to delude themselves concerning the role of the private sector. In one of the debates on the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs called for a wide-ranging new housing Bill in which the brave new world of the private sector would be advanced even further. It was a very interesting dialogue between the Minister and the hon. Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham), in which local authorities were denigrated as landlords and the scenario of the large-scale provision of social housing by the private sector was proposed.

What was on the cards there was local authorities having no housing for rent at all. Clearly, there are different emphases within the Conservative party and one of the purposes of the debate tonight is to find out where the Secretary of State for Wales stands in the Conservative party in the matter. Will he represent clearly identifiable Welsh views and interests, or is it his priority to promote a right-wing agenda within his own party? Recent reports indicate the latter. It is said that the right hon. Gentleman wishes to introduce the right to buy for housing association properties which have been provided with mixed funding. That would have far-reaching and problematical implications.

Hitherto, the existence of a degree of administrative devolution has afforded some protection for Wales against the worst excesses of right-wing ideology in housing and other policies. However, it is insufficient protection, and we must ask ourselves: what will protect us from a new housing Bill? What will enable us to devise an approach to housing that is truly appropriate for Wales and in keeping with our values and priorities? We say that only a Welsh parliament with legislative and revenue-raising powers can enable us to do that. We hope that all the Opposition parties will support us tonight in this matter.

5.14 pm

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. John Redwood): I beg to move to leave out from 'House' to the end of the Question to add instead thereof

'congratulates the Government on its comprehensive housing policies to meet the needs and aspirations of the people of Wales; welcomes in particular the high and increasing level of home ownership in Wales; supports measures to promote wider home ownership; notes the high level of investment by Tai Cymru since 1989 which has exceeded £1 billion and produced nearly 22,000 homes; welcomes the attraction of substantial private funding to the housing association programme enabling greater diversity and choice; and rejects the call for the establishment of a Parliament for Wales which would create an unnecessary tier of Government and would waste resources.'

We had a ramble through the by-ways of housing policy from the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Dafis), ending with a short eulogy to the idea of an all-taxing, all-regulating and all-legislating Welsh assembly. It is interesting that the Opposition still have not clarified all the details about the kind of assembly that they would like, but at least the hon. Gentleman's party is clear and straightforward: tax more, legislate more, put in more red tape and tie people up in more bureaucratic knots—that is the kind of assembly they would like for Wales.

I look forward to seeing the verdict of the electorate on that in due course in a general election, and I know that the electorate will say a big no to an all-taxing, all-legislating assembly of that kind.

The long march of Everyman to freedom began with rights to justice symbolised by Magna Carta. It gathered momentum in the 19th and 20th century enfranchisement of all adults in the political life of the country. As the 20th century draws to a close, it is strengthened by a majority coming to own property and by many coming to benefit from college education. Everyman has gained his rights, his votes, his dignity and his enlightenment. Owning a home of your own is an almost universal aspiration and the experience of most.

[Mr. John Redwood]

In the 1920s and 1930s, the suburban semi spread all over Britain, and the suburbs of Cardiff and Swansea grew. Sneered at by the liberal intelligentsia, it was real social housing. Behind those front doors, people enjoyed more comfort than had been available to their parents. By those hearths, loves and lives were cultivated in a fruitful family way. The superior mind of socialist Bloomsbury found that hard to take—as some Opposition Members seem to—along with their whisky and soda. That housing was what people wanted then, and that is what many people in Wales want again today.

Design should not be solely a matter for the expert. We all have a view, and the profusion of styles is a consequence. Architecture moulds and reflects the spirit, and architectural style in Britain, I am pleased to say, is now much more varied than it was in the 1960s. There are many good examples in Wales.

The drab conformity of buildings in the countries of the old Warsaw pact reflected their totalitarian and uniform world view. Concrete architecture was also part of the levelling spirit of post-war Britain—mean-minded and unhelpful. British architecture today is part of the energy and variety of contemporary life and a vital part of our housing policy.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): The Secretary of State will be aware that in many of the more historic towns of Wales—I am thinking of Caernarfon in particular, but there are others around Wales—it may be more costly to provide housing and other buildings to the acceptable architectural standard that the right hon. Gentleman describes. Will he confirm that the Welsh Office will always be prepared to look sympathetically at the differential in cost between the market value attainable by a development in such towns and the higher cost necessary to meet those historic architectural requirements?

Mr. Redwood: In sensitive areas and conservation areas, it is particularly important that architecture should be sensitive to what is in the surroundings. I visited Caernarfon recently—as the right hon. Gentleman knows—to see the good work that is going on there on the projects that we and the local authority are backing to restore some of the beauty and excellence of the buildings in the heart of the town.

On the more general point, design matters. If it requires money—and it is legal to grant permission—I should like to see that work done. Sometimes it does not require more money—just a different and better design.

People should also be careful to look at the total cost—not just the one-off capital cost of a building, but the maintenance costs and the cost of using a building over many years. How depressing it is to visit schools where extensions were put up in the 1960s, for example, with flat roofs. They were cheap at the time, but my goodness, they have cost us dear ever since in trying to remedy the problems that they created. I want no part of that today in our housing policies; I want good design and practical, sturdy buildings, which also add something to the architectural life of our towns and villages.

People are now walking tall in modern Wales and modern Britain. People know that owning their home gives them more options. When we buy a house, we appreciate that the money we spend can make us richer. If people rent a house all their life, the money they spend can make the landlord richer. At a time like the present, when interest rates are low, when land is cheap, when inflation is low and growth is back in the economy, it is ideal to make a further leap forward in that great policy.

The idea that social housing should be housing for rent is one of the oddest in British social policy. Subsidised housing for rent not only reduces the scope for people to move house and to develop their lives as they see fit: low-cost home ownership is better value for the tenant and the taxpayer and it does not have the drawbacks of some rented accommodation.

Those who are truly concerned, as I am, to provide real social housing should think twice about those pensioners who pay high bills when they have their lowest income and are most frail. Many of those who have bought a house have much better prospects in their old age. They may be able to live on in their house for the rest of their life rent free. Alternatively, they may sell the house and use the money to provide more suitable sheltered accommodation in old age, in a setting of their choice, with the care of their choice.

If a couple had set out, just before the war, and purchased a house in Wales, after 20 or 25 years of paying a mortgage they would own their house. They would have no more mortgage to pay, let alone rent, and they would have an extremely valuable asset. If that same couple had set out and rented property—I am advised that rents were about 30p a week—and if they were still fortunate to be alive and renting a subsidised property, they would be paying 100 times that rental each week and they would have nothing to show for all the money that they had spent over all those years. For that reason and many others, the best social housing of all is low-cost home ownership.

The success of our housing policy in the 1980s was to attract many more people into ownership. The biggest advances by far came through rising incomes and more employment opportunities, which enabled many people to buy new homes of their own for the first time in the many attractive estates and villages that grew up around Wales. A very successful council house sales programme converted many tenants into owners. In the 1990s, we need to make sure that housing associations, too, make their contribution.

Mr. Jon Owen Jones (Cardiff, Central): Would the Secretary of State care to comment on what has been perceived as a particularly difficult British economic problem? He has rightly pointed out that, in the past, investing in one's home was considered the best use of a person's money. In other European countries, however, investing in some company that makes something is considered a better use of one's money. The problem is that, over the years, it has been a better option in Britain to invest in bricks and mortar than in industry. Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that that tendency might be a part of our problems today?

Mr. Redwood: People can do both, should do both and, now, largely do do both. Their investment in industry is mainly channelled through their pension savings, usually made on their behalf by their employers' schemes. There is room for both types of investment. Given the current levels of investment in industry, the stock market and in housing, I do not believe that we need to engineer an artificial shift

of the type that the hon. Gentleman has described. There is room for both types of investment, and investment in housing has a lot to recommend it.

Too few housing association tenants have the opportunity to buy their homes. My policy for the housing associations in Wales is to encourage a higher proportion of low-cost home ownership schemes and to encourage right to buy for new tenancies.

Local authorities can also play an essential role in facilitating home ownership and, at the same time, freeing up their stock for those waiting for council homes. Today, I am announcing a package of £4 million for local authorities from the homelessness reserve. Of that sum, £1 million will support enterprising schemes, including proposals from Newport borough council working with Lovell Partnerships to provide 36 homes and from Alyn and Deeside and Ogwr for 23 do-it-yourself shared ownerships. Some £2.4 million of the £4 million package is available to local authorities for transferable discount schemes, which will enable them to give significant grants to people who move out of council houses to purchase their homes. This means a new tenant for the local authority home and a new home owner at the same time. For those who wish to do so, I am allocating £600,000 to providing accommodation to elderly people moving out of larger council housing into accommodation more suited to their current needs.

Local authorities are in a position to cheapen the initial capital cost of the home by making land available on favourable terms or free. In Wales, I want to see more of those on lower incomes having more immediate access to a home of their own. I also intend to expand shared ownership schemes and other schemes where a subsidised capital value can offer someone a cheap way into a home of their own. The taxpayer is well protected by having a claim on the property should the person decide to sell and realise the gain in the short term.

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): As part of the policy to encourage home ownership, will the right hon. Gentleman consider the decision in the case of Murphy *v* Brentwood district council, which went to the House of Lords on appeal in 1991? As a result of that decision, there is no legal obligation on a local authority should a person who owns his own home find that it is defective. That person cannot sue the local authority for any fault in the inspection of the property during its construction. That represents a major retrograde step for home owners and has caused great concern to people who are purchasing a property.

Mr. Redwood: There are other ways of protecting the interests of those whom the hon. Gentleman is seeking to protect. I assume that they would take proper advice when they were thinking of purchasing their home. There are ways around the problem that the hon. Gentleman is trying to place in the way of that important policy.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: Let me spell out the implications of the decision. If a person buys a property from another person and the second owner finds that the builder has gone bankrupt, the insurance company will not cover that property if internal defects appear because of the absence of footings. As a consequence of the case, there is no recourse to sue the local authority. Will the right hon. Gentleman consider that decision and bring in legislation to overrule it? That decision has reversed all previous law. Now, it does not matter what the building regulator says to the local authority, because the building inspector can do absolutely nothing. People will have no come-back on the local authority if a defect is found.

We want to avoid what happened with BISF housing and Cornish Units, which had so many problems that the Government were forced to introduce legislation on defective housing to remedy them.

Mr.Redwood: The hon. Gentleman has partly offered his own answer, because, when problems emerged, the Government took action to remedy them. I will, of course, read the case to which he referred, but the particular chain of events that he described is a rather extraordinary one and not likely to become common, as he fears.

Now is an extremely good time to make a major advance in low-cost ownership. Land prices fell during the recession and building costs have been controlled by fiercely competitive markets. I have asked the agencies in Wales to bring forward more land for sale. I cannot accept a position where they are hoarding more than 4,000 acres of land, some of it usable for housing.

As a response to the invitation, the Land Authority for Wales will be making available 500 acres per year for all purposes over the next three years. Cardiff Bay development corporation has 150 acres under offer or available; the Welsh Development Agency is bringing forward 330 acres over the next three years and the Development Board for Rural Wales is currently reviewing its land stocks with a view to releasing at least 27 acres. Over the next three years, a total of some 2,000 acres of land will be offered for sale from the public sector. I trust that some of that land will be used for housing.

I also wish to ensure that the training and enterprise councils provide the tradesmen whom the builders will need over the next few years as house building increases again from the low levels of the early 1990s.

I am asking all councils to ensure that sufficient land is granted planning permission for development. I do not want massive increases in development in the most beautiful and prosperous areas of Wales.

Mr. Alex Carlile: I welcome what the Secretary of State has said on increasing home ownership and look forward to more people in Wales owning their own homes. However, does he recognise that one group not being catered for is that of young people who are not yet in a position to buy their own homes and who would not obtain the finance? Can we look forward to an announcement of increased facilities to enable them to find properties to rent?

Mr. Redwood: I shall cover that point later in my remarks.

I wish to see realistic attitudes towards redevelopment in areas that most need jobs, especially building jobs, and where land can be recycled and reclaimed. I have asked the WDA to make a major increase in its land reclamation programme and I have given it extra cash to do that. The WDA's single most important task at home over the next few years is to reclaim sufficient land so that the building industry is well supplied, while the best areas of Wales, in environmental terms, are protected from developers' bulldozers.

I shall use my influence over the new development plans of the unitary local authorities to ensure that, in total, Wales has enough development land available for her needs in the foreseeable future. I do not expect a balance

[Mr. Redwood]

in each individual area, as I wish to ensure that the most beautiful and prosperous parts of Wales are protected, while giving maximum encouragement to those areas in need of regeneration and of many more jobs.

Housing policy must recognise the pressures of social change but also the fact that it will influence social change itself. If we make subsidised housing too readily available to young people, it will induce them to leave home earlier than they would otherwise. Much housing policy in recent years has rightly been designed to take care of young people who are no longer prepared to live at home and other vulnerable groups.

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: On the Secretary of State's point about developing land while protecting the most beautiful and prosperous land, will he concede that, in some cases, land in a prosperous area with low unemployment is next door to a highly populated area with high unemployment, where there is no land to develop? In those circumstances, should not he try to encourage development on that land?

Mr. Redwood: I do not think that there are as many such problems in south Wales as the hon. Gentleman is suggesting. Occasionally, I shall have to take tough decisions under the planning rules and laws. But I have made it clear in previous debates that, wherever possible, I hope that local people and their local representatives can guide that work. Today's statement offers a way to square the circle between those areas that are less keen on new jobs and development, and those that are keen. The balance in Wales is not too bad, so we come to a sensible answer overall.

On social change and young people, some of that source of increased demand for housing needs to be met, while some of it needs careful handling through a range of other policies. I do not believe that a 16 to 18-year-old should have a right to a subsidised house just because he or she no longer wants to live at home. Only in extreme circumstances should the state intervene to break up a family—for example where violence or grave damage is being done. Most 16 and 17-year-olds are keen to leave home; it is a part of the natural process of growing up. But it does not mean that we should subsidise them to do so.

The bulk of housing support is now routed through housing benefit directly tied to the incomes and outgoings of the individuals concerned. Blanket or general subsidies to bricks and mortar can be a wasteful way to proceed and there is always a danger that the benefits leak to those who do not need such help. There is no need to subsidise a three or four-earner family in a council house bringing in several hundred pounds a week from reasonable jobs; there is every need to provide housing benefits to the low-wage or no-wage family next door to meet the rent bill, which is why we have been shifting the balance of our support.

Our care in the community policy has also added to the demand for suitable housing for the elderly, handicapped and mentally disabled. We need to ensure that sufficient sheltered and very sheltered accommodation is constructed and provided. We should not carry the policy so far that those who need the full support of residential care homes are discouraged from receiving it and are put into the community, where they may be less happy or secure. We need a balance, and I hope that all those involved in making those difficult judgments will understand the need to reach a sensible conclusion in each case, where either is an option.

Mr. Alex Carlile: I apologise for intervening again, but I very much welcome what the Secretary of State has just said. In my constituency, two hospitals house some seriously physically and mentally handicapped people. Will he add to his remarks the belief that some of those people will need not just care but continuing nursing care of the quality they have now?

Mr. Redwood: They need care that is appropriate for their circumstances. I do not want to get involved in specific cases, for obvious reasons. A judgment must always be made on whether people need medical care, which is under one set of arrangements, or more general care, which is under another. I want them to receive the care that they need. May I make it clear to all those involved in those judgments that, for my part, there is no wish to ensure that they are all placed in the community? Obviously, I am keen on the policy where it makes sense for them to be put into the community and where they and their relatives, as well as the professionals who make those judgments, think that that is the best solution.

In the "Agenda for Action" in November 1991, we set a target of adding 10,000 subsidised homes over three years. I am delighted that Housing for Wales has provided more than 9,000 homes since then and is on target to provide a further 4,000 in the current financial year. As well as rented accommodation—it is primarily rented accommodation—those will include low-cost housing for sale. To that end, I have asked Housing for Wales to deliver at least 420 homes for low-cost ownership during 1994-95, and I intend to take further action to increase those figures in the future.

Some elderly people find their larger family home too big for their needs. They might like a smaller property, but, if they rent rather than own, it can be difficult to find one. I am supporting the construction of more bungalows for the elderly, which will give them some choice and, where they choose to move, it will free a family home.

Good progress is being made on Wales's first urban village at Victoria, Ebbw Vale. Offices and workshops are being developed alongside homes. All that is in a setting that makes use of garden festival features including lakes, wetlands and woodland. It is a vivid illustration of what can be done to regenerate land ravaged by dereliction. Plans are also progressing well for the urban village in Penarth Haven in Cardiff bay.

I like the idea of urban villages that add something to the rich Welsh architectural tradition. Housing with a heart and communities that are more than the sum total of the houses built are the signs that an urban village has supplanted just another housing estate. Builders and developers take more care with layouts, design and landscaping when they have to persuade individuals to buy, rather than when they are working for the public client. One of the best experiences of my ministerial life before coming to Wales was to award the money to Manchester to demolish part of the Hulme estate—a concrete monstrosity which had aged badly during its short life. It was a standing reproach even to modern brutalism in architecture, and a mocking commentary on the beauty of Bath, which was said to "inspire" it.

Wales was mercifully spared the worst of such construction, but the warning remains: it is better to involve many rather than fewer in designing and buying houses, as it is more likely that they will reflect the spirit of those who will use them.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): This sounds like the Prince of Wales.

Mr. Redwood: I give full credit to the Prince of Wales, as the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan), from a sedentary position, has invited me to do, for his many good and brave words on architecture, which I think have made a strong impact on our architectural debate.

The slab style of architecture reflected only too well a view of society, which said, "We shall give you"—in their words—"a 'subsidised dwelling unit', if you accept our control of your area. Don't ask for tenants' rights, tenants' information or better services—you should be grateful to us for defining the limits of your horizons. When you give your address, you may not get the job or credit as easily as you would if you came from somewhere else, so your dependence is so much more reliable."

I want an end to such areas. It requires different housing; different patterns of ownership; higher expectations. Labour may say that it wants pathways out of poverty, yet it often blocks the roads that offer the most promise to most people.

The other day, I was interested to read that Cynon Valley has decided that its housing problem has improved dramatically in the past three years. In 1991-92, Housing for Wales was spending about £3.3 million in the borough, and the construction of about 115 houses was started. Cynon Valley borough council has now revised its figures downwards, and decided that it needs to build only a maximum of 45 new houses this year. I understand that it has found that there is much more scope for the better use of its existing stock, and that demand is not getting out of control.

That is an interesting idea from Cynon Valley. I look forward to that informing the speeches of some Opposition Members, instead of their usual diatribe that the demand is spiralling out of control, and that the only answer to the problem is to build ever more houses of a specific type.

We should make clear the distinction between rooflessness and homelessness. Fortunately, rooflessness afflicts very few people in Wales. In Cardiff alone, where it would be more serious, the Government are paying £800,000 to provide accommodation and support for young, single, vulnerable people. I want no one to be roofless in Wales. I intend to ensure that accommodation is available for those people who need and want it.

Homelessness is a condition which local authorities have a legal obligation to tackle. Many people who present themselves as homeless are by no means roofless, but they live in accommodation that is not ideal and they would like a change. One of the main aims of our continuing large programme of house building of all types is to meet their aspirations.

The proposals on which the Government consulted earlier this year are designed to bring about fairer arrangements for those people seeking a better home, and those people who are waiting patiently for social housing.

The hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North made several comments about the condition of the housing stock and about ways in which housing policy could develop. Yes, I, like him, wish more houses to be improved, and I believe that our policy of making available a substantial number of grants to people on low incomes who live in homes of their own that need repairing, is tackling the job manfully. Between January and March this year, 4,194 grant schemes were completed, totalling about £43.7 million. That is another 4,000-plus homes that are in a much better condition. We intend to press on, with substantial sums of money, so that the job can be well done.

I think that the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North was mistaking the issue when he commented that we were cutting the HAG grant rate too much, and expecting too much from the private sector contribution. I should have thought that he might welcome that. I hope that the Labour party will welcome it, now that its members are converts to the idea of private capital working alongside public money so that we can have more building work and better conditions for everyone.

It is important that we attract an increasing amount of private money into that type of activity, so that we can build more houses for the amount of public money that we have on offer, because we think that tax bills matter as well as the achievement on the ground, and that is the way of managing both.

The hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North expressed a fear about rents, but he did not take into account building and financing costs, which are vital to the equation before one can predict anything from the HAG rates as to how rents might be affected. I was glad that he praised some methods of shared ownership and assisted ownership, but then he seemed to turn against ownership altogether, which I thought was most disappointing, given the aspirations of many of his constituents.

Wales approaches the end of the 20th century in good heart. Her people are better educated, better housed and more prosperous than at any time in her history. Wales is no longer a nation of tenants in tied cottages. Wales is now a nation of home owners—of those who have seized the opportunity of the Conservative moment, and have a stake in Wales's present and future prosperity. Home ownership —one of the foundation stones of a stable democracy—is now firmly rooted in Welsh soil.

Conservative policies will continue to ensure that advance. If only Opposition Members would join in, they would discover that it is popular as well as right.

5.44 pm

Mr. Paul Murphy (Torfaen): That was a fascinating contribution from the Secretary of State. He and I hold degrees in history from the same university, but I suspect that our interpretation of the historic facts of the past few hundred years might differ, at least as regards Wales.

I confess that it is the first time that I have heard the Magna Carta quoted in the Chamber during a debate on housing in Wales. The 13th century barons who devised that great charter in those far off days probably had no idea how most of their tenants lived. I guess that they lived in hovels. I wonder whether, if it were left to the Secretary of State, he might think that the same will happen in Wales, because what he said today bears no relationship whatsoever, either to the recent history of housing in Wales, or to the condition of the houses of the Welsh people.

[Mr. Paul Murphy]

The Secretary of State speaks at great length about the significance and importance of owner-occupation, and he is right. He said that the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Dafis) did not support owner-occupation, which is the opposite of what the hon. Gentleman said. The hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North said that owner-occupation is not the only answer, which is what the Labour party says.

Some people believe that the Labour party supports only rented housing, and that the Conservative party supports only owner-occupation. That is only half right, in the sense that the Labour party certainly believes in a proper choice for people in Wales, as in the rest of the country. Our opinion is that there should be a variety of tenure throughout Wales—that people should have the right to own their houses, but they should also have the right to rent their houses from local authorities, private landlords or housing associations.

The Secretary of State touched on that side of the equation only very lightly, because he told the House and, I suspect, the nation—I mean the British nation rather than the Welsh—that his views on housing are effectively laissez-faire, fairly right-wing, ideological Conservative views about owner-occupation. He failed to mention—perhaps he does not realise, but I am sure that he does—that the percentage of people in Wales who own their houses is extremely large. In our south Wales valleys, a massive proportion of people own their houses. It is no new phenomenon to them.

It seems to me that the Secretary of State failed to understand that, although there were problems in the past with regard to the building of council house estates, because enormous estates were built which were too big and caused all types of social problems, the housing problems in Wales would have been phenomenal if those local authorities had not built those houses in past decades.

Mr. Sweeney: Although it is true that, historically, the percentage of owner-occupancy in Wales has tended to be high, is not it fair to say that it has increased from 59 to 72 per cent. since the Conservatives took over power from Labour?

Mr. Murphy: Inevitably the right-to-buy legislation has meant that thousands of council and development corporation houses have been bought by tenants. Of course the percentage of owner-occupation has increased. There is nothing new about that development or that phenomenon. In those intervening years, however, the number of people who are waiting for homes on council house waiting lists has also increased. There are now 75,000 people in Wales whose names are on local authority waiting lists, and there are nearly 19,000 names on the waiting lists of housing associations. So although, yes, owner-occupation has increased, at the same time the number of people who desperately need accommodation has also increased.

Why on earth cannot the Government understand the need for all types of accommodation, as all European Governments do? Perhaps that is the reason why the Secretary of State does not like it very much. He knows that, in Europe, there is a genuine and good mix of rented accommodation, private and public, and owner-occupation. That richness of diversity of tenure provides the answer to the housing problems in Wales, as it does to housing problems in Britain as a whole. To that extent, the Secretary of State did not answer the questions that the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North rightly and properly asked in his good speech.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: The hon. Gentleman misses the point. The figure for housing stock in Wales today is more than 100,000 higher than it was 14 years ago. The homelessness problem has been caused by marital breakdown and because young people now elect to leave home earlier, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said. We have the highest divorce rate in the whole of Europe, which is probably why many of the people are on the waiting lists.

Mr. Murphy: It may be that the divorce rate is high, but this is not a debate on moral values or divorce. It is a debate on the housing needs in Wales. I do not know whether constituents come to the hon. Gentleman's advice surgery every week to talk about accommodation problems, but I am convinced that all hon. Members—whether they represent a Welsh, English or Scottish constituency—will have had the same experience. The problem of housing is high on the list of those who visit our advice surgeries, not simply because they are divorced or because they are single parents, although those are important factors. What do we do with divorced people? Should we not house them? What about the children involved? Are they to be denied housing because their parents are divorced?

We are mistaken if we believe that the housing problems have disappeared simply because the right-to-buy policy has given people the opportunity to buy their own homes from local authorities. The Government are spending much less on housing in Wales than they have for a long time. Between 1989 and 1994, spending on housing fell from £197 million to £79 million. Council house rents have gone up. While the Government have been in power they have been obsessed with local authorities and their role in the provision of housing, whether in Wales or the rest of Britain. They will push up rents as high as they can to ensure that houses are sold to tenants. As a result, council house provision in Wales comes to a halt. Although almost 250,000 houses are still owned by local authorities in Wales, they still need maintaining. The Government have fallen down on providing sufficient money to local authorities to do the job.

The Government state that housing associations are the social providers of housing. I agree with the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North when he says that we are now in deep trouble because of the changes that the Government are making to the subsidies paid to Tai Cymru and housing associations. The reduction of the grant from 62 to 55 per cent. next year means that rents will rise on average by about 34 per cent.—they have already risen by 61 per cent. since 1989.

It will become evident that the only people able to afford the rents will be those whose rents are paid by some form of housing benefit. The last thing that we want to do is to turn the estates built by housing associations into ghettos.

Mr. Morgan: Welfare ghettos.

Mr. Murphy: As my hon. Friend says, they will be nothing more than welfare ghettos.

If ever there were a prescription for social divisiveness in Wales, that is it. What we need is what Governments of

both colours developed in my town of Cwmbran—the only new town in Wales for 30 years. They developed a mix of owner-occupation and houses with reasonable rents. That mix will disappear and all that will be left in Wales will be rented provision that provides nothing more than welfare ghettos, which will be bad news for Wales.

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: I thank my hon. Friend for giving way because I am interested in exploring that issue. Does he also recognise that it is not only the new build housing association areas that are becoming welfare ghettos, but older, inner city areas? House prices are relatively cheap in such districts, so housing associations have bought up about one fifth or perhaps 30 per cent. of the housing stock—I know that that is true in certain parts of Cardiff. Those districts are becoming ghettos as a result of the policies that my hon. Friend is explaining.

Mr. Murphy: My hon. Friend is right—I know that he has personal experience of those districts as he has represented them, both as a Member of Parliament and as a councillor. It is important for us to realise that the problems that we have identified exist not only in the valleys and rural areas, but in Welsh cities. I fear that the divisive policies that the Secretary of State has announced this afternoon could make the position even worse.

Society in Wales is becoming polarised, which is the last thing that we want. We need much more harmonisation, which can occur only if there is a proper mix. But because the Government are obsessed with not allowing local authorities to play a housing role, either as a provider or an enabler, we find ourselves in a serious situation. The Nationwide building society has threatened to pull out of the housing association sector as a direct result of the Government reducing the grant from 62 to 55 per cent.

A subject that must exercise the mind of anyone involved in housing in Wales or any public representative in Wales is the Government's consultation exercise on homelessness. I welcome the Secretary of State's announcements on any action that will reduce homelessness. If the right hon. Gentleman listened to the radio this morning, he will know that 500 church housing groups have condemned the Government's latest proposals on homelessness. The Government are setting the desperate against the very desperate. We must not create a situation where those on housing waiting lists are set against those who are homeless—they are often the same people.

Statistics show that, in 1992, only 11 per cent. of households that were accepted as homeless were rehoused in ordinary council houses. That shows that the policy does not work. I suspect that the Government's hidden agenda —perhaps not in Wales, but elsewhere in Britain—is to see the homeless figures fall. They wanted unemployment figures to fall, so they changed the system and massaged the figures. They say that homelessness does not exist, so the figures fall, but the problem remains. I urge the Secretary of State to think hard. All sorts of people in Wales, including those in women's refuges, could lose out as a direct consequence of the Government's proposals on homelessness.

The Secretary of State talks about the housing stock in Wales. As the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North rightly said, 37 per cent. of houses were built before 1919. Some 42 per cent. of all Welsh owner-occupied houses in Wales are in need of repair. Although the finance has been increased in the past few years, it is not new money. Instead of being used for council stock, the money is being spent on private stock. Whoever heard of a system where a mandatory grant for housing renovations cannot be used because the local authority has been cash limited by the Welsh Office? As a result, I suspect that villages and towns, particularly in the valleys, will be severely affected by the dotty combination of Government policies that do not seem to mix.

The maximum renovation grant has been reduced from £50,000 to £24,000. Obviously, the houses most in need of repair are those least likely to be repaired, and the quality of housing will be affected. Our rural districts are also hit.

Mr. Redwood: How much additional new money is the hon. Member and his party prepared to pledge to housing in Wales?

Mr. Murphy: Two years before a general election I am not in a position to give the figures and I would be foolish to do so. If the Secretary of State would tell me by how much the Government were to increase or reduce taxation next year, I would be prepared to answer his question. He knows that when the Labour Government come to power after the next general election, we will look at the books and work out our priorities. Our priorities will be different from those of the present Government. We intend to use the capital receipts held by local authorities to build houses and to improve the council stock. We would not do something as daft as to award a mandatory grant, but not allow a local authority to use the money.

Everybody in Wales agrees that the problem with owner-occupation is not so much that it is bad as that people in Wales often cannot afford to become owner-occupiers. I welcome anything that the Government do to provide low-cost housing in Wales for owner-occupation. That is vital, but we must not forget that in many of the cities and valleys of Wales—although not so much in the rural areas—there are secondhand homes which are quite old but which can be bought for £30,000 or even less. In 1990, the Council of Welsh Districts reported that 54 per cent. of new households in Wales could not afford home ownership. The same is roughly true today. Private house building is down; only 6,000 were built last year, as opposed to 9,000 five years ago.

What I am saying holds good for every part of Wales. Dyfed has the lowest average male manual earnings of any British county. Powys has the lowest average male earnings in the country. In Mid-Glamorgan, 22 per cent. of men and 40 per cent. of women are economically inactive. In Gwynedd, male disposable earnings are 14 per cent. below the British average. Wales is at the bottom of the earnings list in Great Britain. If people do not earn enough, they cannot afford mortgages. That is why only 6,000 new houses a year are being built now.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that, according to figures published by Lloyd's earlier this year, the average amount spent on housing in Wales is 16 per cent. of a person's income, whereas in England it is 19 per cent?

Mr. Murphy : I do not give much credence to figures from Lloyd's, but, whether they are right or wrong, they do not invalidate the figures that I have just given. We are the

[Mr. Murphy]

lowest earners, and that in turn means that people in Wales, especially young families setting off up the housing ladder, cannot afford to buy houses.

Mr. Sweeney: Surely that is only one half of the equation? If housing costs are lower in Wales, then lower wages in Wales should not make the slightest difference. In fact, if the gap between English and Welsh housing costs is wider than the gap between earnings, Welsh people will be better able to buy their own homes.

Mr. Murphy: But even people in the parts of Wales with traditionally low-cost housing cannot afford to buy. The survey done by the CWD four years ago showed that the average price of a house was about £31,000, and it has not changed much since. Even so, houses are not being bought. No one should delude himself that people in Wales are in a position to buy houses straight away. They are not.

We know that young couples do not enjoy the same opportunities today as they did 10 or 15 years ago—whether to buy a house, or to rent a house from an association, a local authority or the private sector. That is why 5,000 people in my constituency linger on the waiting list, and the situation is not improving.

The answer is not to say that we need more private-sector owner-occupied houses. That is certainly part of the answer, but it is only part of it. Because the Government do not want to allow councils to be involved in house building, and because they are cutting back the work of the housing associations, matters will only get worse. I think that we need another report on Tai Cymru. We have heard about all the reports on other quangos, and I should like to know what Tai Cymru is up to half the time. If the Government keep on cutting grants, it will not have much left to do. I hope, therefore, that the Secretary of State will have a look at Tai Cymru's work in the months to come.

We must allow councils to start using their capital receipts to buy houses. We also need a change in planning laws in our rural areas so that people can stay in the villages and towns in which they were brought up. The Government must abandon their homelessness review and provide proper accommodation for those in desperate need of it. More members of local authorities must be represented on the board of Tai Cymru—none of them are at present. The Government must abandon their obsession with local authorities.

Only this week, the Queen gave her Royal Assent to the Local Government (Wales) Bill and within six or seven months, the new shadow authorities will come into being. Those 22 new authorities in Wales will be housing authorities and the opportunity exists to allow them to provide proper housing for the people of Wales. The Government should give them the resources and the opportunity to do just that.

6.4 pm

Mr. Jonathan Evans (Brecon and Radnor): The hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Dafis) said that he was concerned about the fact that there was insufficient housing provision in Wales. As I listened to the list of prescriptions that he gave the House, however, it seemed to me that everything that he proposed would lead to less housing being available.

The hon. Gentleman complained first about the rehabilitation of property. I acknowledge his point about the financial difficulties that have resulted from fiscal changes to do with VAT and charges. He also rightly outlined another problem: when someone goes to rehabilitate a property, he does not know what difficulties he may find, so the costs, necessarily, become higher. The hon. Gentleman suggested that grants should therefore be higher. Without more resources, however, that would mean fewer houses. That is the difficulty that has faced Tai Cymru in all its decisions. It has not opposed rehabilitation; it is just that, if we choose the more expensive route, we end up with fewer houses. That is surely not what we want, given a recognition that we must provide more social housing, and it goes against the direction in which our policy should be aimed.

The hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North also spoke about rents. The same trade-off applies to rents. If we drive them downwards, perhaps by increasing housing association grant rates, as the hon. Gentleman proposed, again, without increased resources, there are bound to be fewer houses. That points up the emptiness of the remarks by the hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy), who was not prepared to tell us anything about resources, but who was prepared to describe the direction in which we should move in respect of rents, HAG rates and so on. Without additional resources, I repeat, in the end, that fewer houses will be provided.

Mr. Dafis: The balance between HAG and private money is crucial. In theory, we can increase the number of houses if we can continue to increase the proportion of private funding—but there must be a cut-off point. That is the vital balance to be struck between the number of houses provided and the rents charged. Is the hon. Gentleman in favour of further reducing HAG in Wales?

Mr. Evans: The hon. Gentleman is right to say that we cannot drive down HAG rates inexorably without ultimately finding that private finance is not available. The hon. Gentleman will know that I addressed the Federation of Welsh Housing Associations conference precisely on that point. We know from private financiers that once the proportion falls below 50 per cent., private finance may dry up. We have not yet reached that point. Still, the hon. Gentleman is right to draw attention to the issue for the future. A move in the opposite direction, to increase HAG rates, will inexorably lead to the provision of fewer houses.

Earlier in the debate, I intervened to say that the Welsh housing stock currently stands at record levels. That fact is not generally acknowledged when we debate housing issues. Since 1979, for instance, more than 100,000 extra homes have been provided. I return to the point about Cynon Valley: I recognise that homelessness there has increased, but it has done so at the same time as the population has declined, even though we have provided more homes.

Social factors are the reason why we need so many more homes—there are many more households. This is not a moral judgment or an attack upon those who, for one reason or another, have been engaged in a marital breakdown, but we cannot say in a politically correct way that we shall not speak about, or draw attention to the fact that, despite the massive addition to the number of houses in Wales, we still have a prevailing homelessness problem.

We have to examine the reasons for that and, at the same time, recognise that there is a duty on the Government to do what they can to alleviate that problem.

I make no apology for saying that during the past 20 years, the divorce rate has doubled and we now have the highest divorce rate in Europe. Those are important factors in understanding some of the difficulties that are placed within the remit of Government in addressing housing problems. What is the response? Since Tai Cymru was formed, 22,000 extra homes have been provided. Housing for Wales has so far spent £903 million, provided by the Welsh Office in a variety of ways. Listening to the debate, one would think that the whole thrust of the Housing for Wales programme is towards home ownership of one sort or another, through shared ownership or whatever.

Housing for Wales aims to deliver about 10 per cent. on the assisted ownership basis, according to the latest proposals, and the fall from that initial target of 10 per cent. has been due largely to the recession in house prices. All the evidence shows that in recent years people have not generally been going into private home ownership so much because, for the first time, we have seen the phenomenon of declining house prices.

As we now have historically low interest rates and house prices are starting to rise again, it is essential that Tai Cymru should take advantage of that by returning to the 10 per cent. figure and helping those people by adopting the remarks and words of the hon. Member for Torfaen and offering people the choice. If up to 10 per cent. of the people funded by Tai Cymru wish to take advantage of the scheme, they should be able to do so. The great advantage is that if we are able to spend the money in that way, we shall end up housing more people, and that has to be in everyone's interest.

Mr. Dafis: Would the hon. Gentleman approve of an increase over and above the 10 per cent. currently allocated to the owner-occupied sector? Would he like that percentage to increase beyond 10 per cent?

Mr. Evans: I believe very much in choice. If I have a criticism of the original "Agenda for Action" paper—I have to be careful as when it was published I was deputy chairman of Tai Cymru—it is that the Government set a target for owner-occupation. I do not believe that the Government should be setting a target for the level of owner-occupation that they would like in Wales. I believe in choice, and Tai Cymru is right to devote 10 per cent. of its resources to providing the opportunities for people to exercise that choice. If a significant number of people wish to exercise it, we can consider expanding the scheme thereafter, but that is the advantageous way to move.

Let me also outline to the House a view that I have expressed on several occasions in relation to general housing provision. Tai Cymru currently provides about 4,200 houses. The Welsh Affairs Committee received evidence from the chief executive of Tai Cymru to the effect that we need to provide up to 5,000 houses per annum and I support that target.

We have to bite the bullet and challenge those people presenting significantly higher figures. I am aware that Shelter Cymru and the Welsh Federation of Housing Associations are talking in terms of an expansion upwards to 10,000 units per annum. I doubt whether that could be delivered, but one has to recognise what the cost of that provision would be. Looking at the implications for private finance—some of which have been raised by the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North—that would ultimately mean the Welsh Office spending about five times as much on social housing in Wales as it does today. Those who support Shelter Cymru's aims should recognise the substantial financial costs.

Even if we had unlimited resources, it is important to recognise some of the other problems faced by those who are looking for proper and adequate housing within their own communities. I speak particularly about rural communities in my constituency. In recent weeks, I have spoken to some of my constituents in Llangattock and Bulch. The Llangattock community is quite small and the national parks planning guidance, policy and programme for that area allow for the building of 15 houses in Llangattock in the next 10 years. I understand that the policy has been approved, or at least examined, by the Welsh Office. There are 98 people on the waiting list in Llangattock, yet under the planning process only 15 new houses will be built in the next 10 years.

That problem exists not just in my constituency; there is a similar problem in Bulch and in the constituency of the hon. Member for Yns Môn (Mr. Jones). Recently, the hon. Gentleman and I were helpfully sent housing strategies and operational plans from Mr. John Arthur Jones, the noted director of housing in Yns Môn, which make it quite clear that planning permissions within Yns Môn are insufficient to address the number of people actually on the housing waiting list in the area.

There are real planning permission problems in some of our rural areas and I believe that the Welsh Affairs Committee, while expressing concern about some aspects of planning permissions that had been granted, invited the view that there should be some developments in some areas based upon the Welsh settlement pattern. That is important in some parts of rural Wales and is not always recognised by planning authorities.

It is important for the Government to examine the allocation of housing. Although I recognise that additional houses should be provided, allocation is also a matter of great concern. This afternoon, my right hon. Friend announced some changes to the development board, following a number of critical reports, one of which related to a housing allocation matter that activated the entire Welsh media. I spoke today to the local government ombudsman's office and I was informed that in the past five years, he has confirmed 16 cases of critical reports on local authorities in relation to housing allocation matters, 14 of which were serious enough to warrant a finding of maladministration. That illustrates that the allocation of housing is not a matter to be thrown aside; it requires some important consideration.

Mr. Murphy: I do not want to pre-empt the hon. Gentleman, but I assume that he is going to give some consideration in his comments about allocation, as he knows that the vast bulk of local authorities in Wales allocate by a proper points system. What does he mean by further consideration?

Mr. Evans: My area has moved to a points allocation system which, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has said, favours people who present themselves as being immediately homeless—those who are effectively roofless. If a person takes steps to find himself some temporary accommodation while seeking permanent

[Mr. Evans]

accommodation from the local authority, sadly, as things stand today, he or she will be on waiting lists for months, if not years, and ultimately probably not housed at all. Those who make no effort to find themselves temporary accommodation have an advantage over those in housing need who make some temporary arrangement, who, as a result of having taken that temporary arrangement, are disadvantaged in housing allocation thereafter. The whole issue should be examined by the Government and changes brought forward.

If the Government encourage local authorities to provide temporary accommodation, perhaps in the private sector, for people who are immediately roofless, they could take action with regard to other aspects, one of the most important of which concerns houses in multiple occupation. I have received a letter from Radnorshire district council which draws attention to the Prime Minister's commitment, given in the House on 6 May 1994, to have a Government review of the licensing of such houses. Some documents that have been sent to me show that the likelihood of injury to tenants in such accommodation is six times higher than is the case with other tenants. That leads me to the view that action is necessary.

I welcome the fact that there has been a 34 per cent. reduction in the use of bed and breakfast accommodation, but I should ultimately like to see its use eliminated. I am strongly of the view that it has no part to play in Britain's housing provision. I am also concerned about overall levels of housing benefit. However, in deference to the House and the fact that others wish to speak, I shall leave that point.

Much has been said about Tai Cymru's proposals about assisted ownership. As I said earlier, that amounts to barely 10 per cent. of the overall resources that will be made available by Tai Cymru, which will still be geared towards the provision of rented housing for those in housing need. Housing for Wales should be congratulated on the significant contribution that it has made in that sector over the past five years. It would be wrong if the tenor of the debate were to lead to the view within housing circles in Wales that the thrust of Tai Cymru's provision in future will be directed only towards owner-occupation. Nothing could be further from the truth.

6.21 pm

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): By making his excellent choice of subject for today's debate, the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Dafis) drew from the Secretary of State an interesting and provocative statement about the future of housing in Wales. I share with the Secretary of State the hope that owner-occupation can be increased substantially, particularly if that makes it accessible to a wider range of people in the social stratum of Wales. It is extremely important that quality housing should be available to as wide a range of people as possible. The evidence suggests that those who own their own houses sometimes look after them rather better than do those who live in homes in public ownership, so more owner-occupation could lead to a higher quality of property in Wales.

One issue on which the Secretary of State's statement was a little disappointing was housing for rent for young people. The right hon. Gentleman was right to say that 16 and 17-year-olds cannot and should not expect to be provided with their own properties to rent. Family life has its difficulties. All of us who have been the parents of teenagers know that the period between 14 and 18 can be one in which there are tense moments, but they are part of building towards an adult life.

However, the Secretary of State may have overlooked the extent of the need for housing for rent for young people older than 17—the 18 to 25 age group. I share the concern expressed by the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans) about the increasing divorce rate throughout the United Kingdom, but that is a fact with which we must live.

It is also a fact that, in well-regulated families, parents experience intelligent but difficult, or intelligent but wise, young people who, when they reach the age of 18, 19 or 20 build up their own relationships and rightly want to lead their own independent lives, and perhaps are entitled to expect society to give them a footing on the housing ladder. In rural mid-Wales—for example, in Newtown or Welshpool in my constituency—it costs as much to rent a room or a small flat as it does in London, but the wages are significantly lower. There is not the supply of houses to rent that is needed. I do not suggest that that is logical. Many people in the construction industry do not realise that there is, potentially, significant income to be made from building flats to rent. The Government should encourage developers to realise that the opportunities are available and that they are rather foolish not to take them up, but they are not doing so.

Therefore, I invite the Government to consider whether there might not be ways to give private developers, rather than the money, the confidence to realise that building houses for rent for young people is a realistic way first, to provide properties in which young people can live and, secondly, to make a reasonable amount of money from sound business investment. Particularly among the smaller developers—in rural Wales it is inevitable that developers will be small—there is a lack of confidence in that.

That is not a matter of ideology. It is destructive to talk about left and right-wing ideology when one is discussing the building of houses in which young people can live. It is inevitable that there will be a mix between public housing, in one form or another, and private housing, but we must try to ensure that we achieve the quantum of housing that meets at least the majority of need.

I think that all hon. Members are worried when young people, sometimes with a baby or expecting a baby, come to them, and they find that one partner is living with one set of parents and the other with the other set of parents. That is a common experience. We must do something more to try to provide such people with the properties that they need in the period before they have the earnings and the capital base to borrow money from banks or building societies.

In this short contribution—I know that others wish to speak—I want to make three other points. The first relates to renovation grants. The hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North was right to refer to the appalling waiting lists for renovation grants. In my constituency—I have written to Ministers about one or two of the cases—young people live in caravans for years because of the queue for renovation grants. Some of those renovation grants are for old properties that are well worth saving; some are of

historic value. Every year that passes makes it more expensive to rebuild such properties and bring them up to a reasonably modern standard.

I hope that the Secretary of State will reconsider the renovation grants regime in order to ensure that it operates in such a way as to achieve a reasonable throughput. It is difficult to explain to constituents, other than by blaming the Government, why they have to wait three, four or five years for such grants. I suppose that those of us in Opposition parties can blame the Government with impunity, but it does not increase one's job satisfaction. I would rather be able to praise the Government on this issue and say that the grants are being made more readily available. It is not fair to blame local authorities. Montgomeryshire district council has been doing its best in this sector.

My next point concerns incomplete private developments. Again, that may be peculiar to areas where private developments are inevitably small, because of rurality, and where the developers are therefore small. My constituency is peppered with private developments which have started with a splendid plan, full of landscaping, trees, good roads, sound drains and everything else that one could wish. Architects are good at preparing such drawings, but they are prepared for builders who, unfortunately, are part of what Customs and Excise call the phoenix syndrome—small developers who go bust and rise from the ashes in a different form on the following day leaving unfinished estates, broken roads, inadequate retention sums, no trees and large bills for the owner-occupiers who are the very people whom we want to encourage to buy properties. That often happens to estates where the properties are relatively cheap and are built to a budget.

Local authorities do their best to imposes conditions on developers, but, if one looks around not just my constituency but others and sees the estates that have been in a dreadful state for years, they do not seem to be working well. It would be good if the Government could examine that issue and find a way to ensure that new dereliction on estates does not arise.

I agree with every word that the Secretary of State said about physically and mentally handicapped people and care in the community. There are people who cannot realistically lead an independent life in the community. I will not draw Ministers again on whether there should be nursing or non-nursing care. I am happy to settle for the Secretary of State's unequivocal statement that there will be appropriate care, based, of course, on appropriate advice.

There are in Wales patients in hospitals for the mentally handicapped for whom appropriate care is nursing care. I am not satisfied, and neither are their carers or relatives, that those patients will be cared for properly if they are placed in the community in two-person or three-person accommodation with changing staff. I ask the Secretary of State to consider ensuring that where they are needed, communities are provided for groups of a dozen or 15 residents—some of whom may be in or near a persistent vegetative state—in which a high level of care is available, so that the public may be reassured that the weakest members of our society are given the strongest protection. Of all the issues discussed today, that is the most important.

We must care for those who cannot care for themselves. Otherwise, as we know, serious abuse follows. It is not enough to wear sackcloth and ashes after sexual abuse has been committed against weak members of society. I hope that I may look forward to the Secretary of State putting his wise words into wise action.

6.31 pm

Mr. Walter Sweeney (Vale of Glamorgan): I am sure that quality, availability and affordability of housing are close to the top of the agenda for all hon. Members, even though we may differ over the appropriate means of achieving those ends. Every week in constituency surgeries I hear about housing problems. They are not a representative cross-section, but, anecdotally, they are relevant. Complainants fall into two categories—young people, often single mothers, desperately trying to find somewhere to live, and older people desperately seeking a transfer from one council house to another.

Young people in the first category are symptomatic of a breakdown in family values. In an ideal world, they would be living at home as members of stable families, and saving up money before even thinking of having a baby. Unfortunately, young people leave home and form relationships, not necessarily in that order, and the girl in question becomes pregnant and needs somewhere to live.

The second category is the result of council housing estates tending, in general, to be unpopular places to live. Well-intentioned national and local government policies in years past have resulted in growing problems in society —a vicious circle of deprivation. New generations often grow up with no firmly rooted family values, family support or stability in their lives. As a consequence, crime becomes endemic in such areas. Many constituents who come to my surgeries begging for a council transfer do so because their homes or cars have been vandalised.

Last week, I saw a constituent who has five children. Three of them are handicapped—one of them severely so. The social services department allocated that lady a car to enable her to transport the extremely handicapped child. It was set fire to, and shortly after the social services provided a replacement vehicle. Just before her visit, that car also was vandalised by stones being smashed on its roof.

Social housing is necessary for some people, but is not desirable. I long for the day when there will be a shift in the balance. My constituency has 75 per cent. owner-occupancy, nearly 20 per cent. council or housing association occupancy, and just 5 per cent. private rented accommodation. I want the private rented sector to be expanded because that is how to achieve more flexibility in the housing market.

The Government's right-to-buy policies have been extremely successful. The hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy) did not do the Government justice when he said that there has always been a high percentage of owner-occupancy in Wales and that it would inevitably continue to rise. In fact, it increased from 59 per cent.in March 1979 to 72 per cent. at the end of 1992. That did not happen by accident. The Government applied a variety of useful measures to encourage owner-occupancy. The right to buy, which was strenuously resisted for years by Labour and the Liberal Democrats, enabled more than 90,000 public sector tenants to purchase their homes.

In 1993, the Government launched a rent-to-mortgage scheme, which extended the opportunity to own to another 70,000 tenants in Wales who cannot immediately afford the full purchase price. Owners of long leases of flats have been given the right to enfranchise their properties. The

[Mr. Walter Sweeney]

long decline in the private rented sector has been arrested, thanks to the Housing Act 1988. The hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Dafis) was sceptical about whether the private rented sector is growing, but between 1990 and 1992 the number of privately rented dwellings increased by 15,000.

Housing associations have become the main providers of new, affordable housing. Since 1985, public expenditure on housing associations has been supplemented by £177 million of private sector finance. That means that more homes can be built at a time of public expenditure restraint.

I want to sound a note of caution, because the social problems that developed from the expansion of council housing estates may recur in respect of housing association estates. I see that happening already in my constituency. One of my constituents complained recently that, shortly after she purchased a house on a new estate, the developer had difficulty selling the remaining properties because of market conditions. Consequently, a job lot of the properties was sold to a housing association. That lady feels that the misbehaviour of some of the tenants who have moved into those properties has led to a reduction in the value of her house.

Mr. Murphy: What a shame.

Mr. Sweeney: The hon. Gentleman may say that—from a sedentary position—but surely we should be concerned about people who find themselves in the negative-equity trap because of bad behaviour on the estates on which they live. We need to ensure that, in future, huge housing association blocks do not create the same problems.

Dr. Kim Howells (Pontypridd): The hon. Gentleman's assessment of the position seems fairly insulting to some of us who grew up in excellent houses on council estates, which are fine places in which to grow up. When the Conservative Government took office in 1979, local authorities were suddenly deprived of the ability to maintain such houses. It is a question of maintenance, whether the properties concerned are in the public or the private sector.

My local authority has been forced to send letters warning people that they will have to wait 20 years for maintenance grants. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would like to tell us where the sense or justice is in that. How much better it would be for such groups of houses if enough money were available to renovate and maintain them.

Mr. Sweeney: It is a bit rich for a Labour Member to talk about the maintenance of council houses. For a short time, I lived on the Hulme housing estate, which was mentioned by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. That estate was run by Labour-controlled Manchester city council; the standard of maintenance seemed to be nil, and half the properties in the block that I inhabited were empty.

Since the present Government have been in office, the number of houses in Wales has increased from 1.1 million to 2.2 million in absolute terms. The problem is matching housing stock to housing needs. I believe that that can best be done through the private sector and market forces. I must declare an interest: I am a landlord, albeit not in Wales. I believe, however, that in order to increase occupancy of houses the Government must try harder to encourage landlords to enter the private rented sector.

The Government have rightly allowed those with lodgers to receive the first part of their rental income tax free. Further steps need to be taken to encourage multiple occupation, which is currently inhibited by draconian regulations. I am not convinced that living in bedsits serves the best interests of, for instance, students and young mothers; I think that such accommodation is basically lonely and anti-social, and brings about misery and the breakdown of family ties. More people should live en famille, with perhaps half a dozen people sharing a house. Students have had wide experience of that way of life, and if such properties are well run and in good condition they can provide landlords with a good return and justify investment.

The Opposition parties could contribute in an important way. They are fond of looking forward to the day—constantly receding—when they may take office. The private rented sector would greatly appreciate a commitment to support and encourage increased provision of private rented accommodation. That would produce a better balance in the housing market and help to guard against shortages.

6.44 pm

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): This has been a good debate and most of the speeches have been constructive. I intend to be generous: hon. Members on both sides of the House have made some excellent points. Although there has been a difference of emphasis, most of what we have heard has been positive. I confess that I found some of the comments of the hon. Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Sweeney) rather bizarre; at times, I could not follow his train of thought. I was surprised that he should attack housing associations, which have demonstrated excellent management skills over the years. The hon. Gentleman would like much of the balance to be transferred to the private sector, but many private developers do not possess such skills.

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) pointed out that many private estates in Wales are left after the developers have gone bust. Roads are unmade, weeds spring up and amenity areas become overgrown. The record of some private developers leaves a lot to be desired. No one suggests that a single organisation has all the answers to the problem of housing provision; a balance must be struck between the requirements of those who are fortunate enough to be able to afford their own homes and those who cannot do so, whatever the circumstances. I accept that, as the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans) said, social circumstances sometimes put people on waiting lists, but—

Mr. Richards: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Jones: I will not give way to the hon. Gentleman, because he has not been present for the debate.

I understand the point made by the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor, but it does not remove our responsibility to try to find some answers. I think that the main answer lies in a proper balance between local authorities, housing associations and private developers, which should work together to meet the needs of the people of Wales. If it has done nothing else, the debate has shown

how important it is for such co-operation to continue. Tomorrow's *Hansard* will show that, in that regard, it has been excellent.

I said that I intended to be generous in my praise for those who have spoken, but I must point out that the Secretary of State was rather uncharitable about my hon. Friend the Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Dafis), who made an excellent and well-researched speech.

Mr. Richards: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones) alleged that I had not been present during the debate. That is not true; I had to leave the Chamber for half an hour to hear a serious complaint from one of the hon. Gentleman's constituents, Mr. Gordon Pritchard, about Ynys Môn borough council.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Hon. Members cannot use debating time to explain why they were or were not in the Chamber. A brief explanation might be all right, but further explanations are not necessary.

Mr. Jones: I think it important for me to respond to points made by hon. Members who have been present throughout the debate and who have made constructive contributions. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North on the presentation of his speech, its detail and research and the way in which he advanced his arguments.

Dr. Howells: And his good looks!

Mr. Jones: Yes, and his good looks—the most important factor of all.

The Secretary of State seemed to want to give us a lesson in home ownership. The Minister of State, Welsh Office will know that there is a long tradition of home ownership in Wales. The word perchentyaeth is rooted in Welsh culture, history and tradition. The Secretary of State should discuss that with the Minister so that he will understand that we are not averse to home ownership, which we have always valued and which we want to extend.

The Secretary of State referred to Magna Carta. We are fortunate in Wales: we have much information on our history. We know about not only Magna Carta but the laws of Hywel Dda. When the Secretary of State discusses those laws over a cup of tea with the Minister, he will learn that throughout their history Welsh people have attached great importance to home ownership. I am sure that he will recognise that. Perhaps in his reply the Under-Secretary of State for Wales will acknowledge that on behalf of the people of Wales.

The Secretary of State made some interesting points about the role of housing associations and the need for them to encourage low-cost home ownership. We should like him to say a bit more about that on another occasion. His use of the word "encourage" is interesting. If he means that he would like housing associations to move in that direction, that is acceptable; but if he is saying that the funding for Tai Cymru will have to move in that direction, that is another matter. We are entitled to know whether it is the former or the latter. I hope that the Under-Secretary will answer that question.

We have heard some interesting arguments about housing association grant. My hon. Friend the Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North said that he did not want it to be reduced to less than 62 per cent. I recall that the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor said that he did not want it to be reduced substantially. We did not hear whether the Secretary of State would support such a reduction, so the Under-Secretary must say what the Government have in mind. What proportion of HAG will be paid?

All statistics and surveys show that the three key issues that most affect people's lives are their families, their health and their homes, which are reflected in the problems that hon. Members hear about in their surgeries every week. Housing is the single most important issue to our constituents. That is why we chose the subject for our Opposition day debate.

Housing is important because it meets not only the physical need for shelter from rain and for comfort but the emotional need of well-being and of satisfaction with one's position in life. Will the Government ensure that more people in Wales have such benefits? We acknowledge that people will own their own homes, and it is acceptable that their proportion has increased, but, as a result of Government policies, some people have no opportunity to own a house of any description and their lives are being blighted. We want the Government to have the priorities that the people of Wales consistently vote for but are never delivered.

The problem is that since 1979 a welter of legislation has been passed. Housing Act after housing Act has sought to deal with the problems. We accept that some of those Acts have worked, but, as always, they have failed some groups of people.

I must confess that I was interested in the Secretary of State's remarks about a Welsh assembly or parliament raising taxes. This Government have raised more taxes than any other in the history of the United Kingdom, so to accuse us of wanting to raise more taxes in a Welsh parliament was pretty rich.

The right hon. Gentleman also talked about increases in legislation. I was elected to the House in 1987. The number of Acts, including housing Acts, has rocketed since 1979.

Mr. Wigley: My hon. Friend said that some categories of people inevitably faced difficulties. Does he accept that areas also experience difficulties? In Dwyfor, in my constituency, second homes account for 20 per cent. of the housing stock, and pressure is placed on the rented sector because rents are dictated by the holiday market. That is an important industry, but private rents are too high for people who want to rent. Likewise, people cannot afford to buy because the cost of buying a house is determined by factors outside the local economy. In Dwyfor, Meirionnydd and other areas where tourism is important, there is a need for rented social housing because external factors mean that the market cannot provide.

Mr. Jones: I agree with my hon. Friend, who has long experience of those matters. He has been in the House a number of years and has seen the problems that have occurred in my and other hon. Members' constituencies.

My hon. Friend has reminded me of an important point. The hon. Member for Vale of Glamorgan said that if the value of houses in Wales is lower than in other parts of the United Kingdom, and the amount of grant local authorities were giving was lower, somehow or other equality resulted.

[Mr. Jones]

The hon. Gentleman should remember that the property boom of the 1980s alienated many young Welsh people, who could not get into the property market. Between 1985 and 1988, house prices in Ynys Môn doubled. Incomes, however, did not double during that period. Having set their heart on a house, young people who had spent years saving up a deposit were faced with despair because they could not afford the mortgage. A couple who had tried to save a small deposit and obtain a 95 per cent. mortgage on a property worth £40,000 in 1985 found that, in 1988, its value had risen to £85,000. Their incomes or salaries were not sufficient for them to afford the house.

Pressures have therefore been placed on the planning system and on the provision of housing for social need. I reject the hon. Gentleman's argument that there should not be any room for social housing in Wales. It is crucial that we move on the issue today.

Mr. Sweeney: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Jones: I appreciate that I have named the hon. Gentleman, but I must finish making my points because we want to wind up the debate quickly.

We have a different housing philosophy in Wales. We want a proper balance. The motion states that the only way in which we can properly meet the housing needs of the Welsh people is to have a parliament of our own in Cardiff.

6.59 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Gwilym Jones): We have had an interesting debate. We realise now that both the Welsh nationalists and the Labour party would take action that would result in a reduction in the amount of social housing being built in Wales, that the Labour party is determined to spend more in this area, but is desperately afraid to say how much, and that both would impose the extra taxation that a Welsh assembly would cost the people of Wales.

Opposition Members talked about the need for specific Welsh policies. I honestly do not know where they have been for the past few years. Have they not taken note of the many initiatives which we have taken forward in Wales precisely to meet the specific housing needs of the people of Wales? Have they not read "Agenda for Action for Housing in Wales", which was published by my predecessor in November 1991? In that document—the first of its kind anywhere in the United Kingdom—we set out our policies, which we have been following over a number of years and which have brought forward real achievements, of which we can all be proud.

The agenda set out three main objectives: to encourage home ownership for the vast majority of the people in Wales so that about 80 per cent. of households can achieve owner occupation by the turn of the century; to create greater diversity of choice and supply for those who cannot afford or do not want to be home owners; and to improve both the quality of the housing stock and the lives of the people who live in those homes.

There has been much reference to the high level of unmet need. However, there are no national criteria for housing need or an agreed level of housing need, precisely because it is not possible to define housing need as an absolute. Estimates of need for social housing in Wales vary widely and, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said earlier, almost always tend to be overstated.

I was interested in the exchanges between the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Dafis) and my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards) with regard to homelessness figures. The hon. Gentleman accepted that his figures were probably wrong. The difference between my hon. Friend and the hon. Gentleman meant that the hon. Gentleman could easily be 50 per cent. out. However, that did not seem to matter to him; they were just figures that he could throw up in the air.

I shall set the record straight for the hon. Gentleman. The latest figure for the number of homelessness cases at March 1994 is 2,628. That can be compared with 2,867 in March 1993. As I know that Opposition Members cannot work it out, it is a reduction of 8.3 per cent. The reduction in the number of homelessness cases should be widely welcomed.

Our role in meeting housing need is to set the broad policy framework and encourage local authorities to employ the wide range of options available to address housing need and to make the best use of the resources available to them. Local authorities have a statutory duty to assess housing need in their areas. They are the appropriate organisations to prepare local housing assessments which will provide the context for housing associations and other agencies to plan their strategies and programmes, as well as help to inform the distribution of resources. These assessments provide the basis for authorities' strategic and operational plans, taking account of likely available resources as well as priorities between competing needs and the best use of resources in meeting objectives that are essential for the effective delivery of housing services.

I suppose that I should thank the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North for the congratulations that he inadvertently gave the Government on their housing record. He specifically congratulated the housing associations in Wales on what they have achieved. However, it is the Government who have massively supported and enabled the housing associations to go forward and achieve all that they have done. In 1989, the Government established Housing for Wales to build on the enthusiasm of housing associations in Wales and to work in partnership with local authorities.

Since Tai Cymru was established, total investment in Welsh housing associations, including that for the current financial year, is in excess of £1 billion, producing almost 22,000 necessary new homes in Wales. In the current financial year, the total resources for Housing for Wales will be about £200 million, which should enable more than 4,000 new homes to be completed.

I remind hon. Members that the introduction of mixed funding has enabled 50 per cent. more homes to be built than under the old system. Housing for Wales is now the main provider of new social rented housing in Wales. It works closely with local authorities, which recognise the benefits that the new mixed funding regime can bring. I am pleased to say that local authorities have transferred almost £70 million to Welsh housing associations in the past five years to provide additional social housing.

The hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones) asked me about next year's housing association grant rate. I completely reject the wild prediction made by the hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy). He should know, as I

am sure all Opposition Members know, that the question of the housing association grant rate will be considered, as it is always considered, during the normal round of the public expenditure survey.

We will carefully consider all the questions that need to be addressed: whether we should be subsidising bricks and mortar or helping families; and whether we should be providing cheap rents for all, or providing more homes, exactly as my hon. Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans) spelt out. All of us would recognise that it is unreasonable to subsidise people who can afford to pay, because that means that people who are deserving will be deprived of necessary housing.

I am pleased to report that strategic housing agreements between Housing for Wales and nine local authorities have been signed since the initiative was introduced in 1991-92. I see that as helping to cement the partnerships and take further forward the excellent relationship that exists between Housing for Wales and local authorities.

We also recognise that an active private rented sector offering a variety of accommodation and tenures is necessary for those who cannot or do not wish to buy their own homes. I found it somewhat ironic that the hon. Member for Torfaen sought to remind us that he was a history graduate. His history seems to have stopped at some time in the past. He certainly does not have much recollection of current affairs. He tried to claim that he was in favour of a variety of housing tenures, including the right for people to rent from the private sector. What his history should have told him is that his party voted against the Housing Act 1988, which did so much to expand the opportunities for the private rented sector.

The number of private rented dwellings in Wales increased from 80,000 in 1990 to 95,000 in 1992. For Opposition Members who cannot do arithmetic, that is an increase of 19 per cent. That is a substantial and worthwhile contribution to expanding the sum of housing available for the people of Wales. We are not content with that. We are going forward with the rent-a-room scheme which was introduced in 1992. Householders no longer have to pay income tax on rent from a lodger if the gross annual rent is less than £3,250. That is a further worthwhile contribution to expanding the sum of housing available in Wales.

Naturally and rightly, my hon. Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnor referred to the needs of housing in rural Wales. To assist authorities to meet particular rural housing pressures, we created the rural housing reserve in 1991-92. Investment over the past three years has totalled nearly £16 million, leading to the production of some 700 homes. In the current financial year, £4 million is available which, together with investment through Housing for Wales, is expected to produce 1,150 homes. Rural authorities also benefit from other central reserves, including renewal, rented private sector and homelessness reserves. I need not remind my hon. Friend that Housing for Wales devotes at least one quarter of its resources to rural housing. Between 1989-90 and 1993-94, investment totalled nearly £240 million, producing nearly 4,700 new homes.

Our final "Agenda for Action" objective is to improve the quality of the housing stock and, of course, of the lives of the people who live in those homes. Much reference has been made to renovation in the debate. I thank the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) for what he said about the provisions to which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State referred for the mentally handicapped under community care. This is not the time to expand on that, but we have published our new guidance for the Welsh mental handicap strategy. I think that the hon. and learned Gentleman will find in it exactly the provision that he is looking for and which we are all looking for. It is important that we continue to try to ensure that the right care and choice are available to mentally handicapped individuals and their carers.

Since the current home renovation grant was introduced in 1990, almost £850 million has been made available for home renovation in Wales. That includes for this year £149 million for mandatory renovation grants alone. That is £3.5 million more than last year. It should enable Welsh local authorities to complete some 9,600 grants.

I was interested to note the suggestion of the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North that we should bring clearance and demolition back on to the agenda. While I accept that that is not entirely irrelevant, I feel that we have moved on from the days of widespread clearance, and rightly so, exactly in the way, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said, that we have put behind us the grey architecture and slab concrete of the socialist past.

In addition to the renovation grants, £26.3 million has been made available to local authorities in each of the past two years for disabled facilities and discretionary grants. The current funding arrangements for disabled facilities grants enable local authorities to consider all housing options, including transfers to more suitable accommodation, in responding to the needs of disabled people.

Dr. Howells: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Jones: I fear I do not have time. I was just about to refer to the hon. Member for Torfaen, who complained that we were not spending enough. Just as his party would not say at the last election, the hon. Gentleman would not say how much he would spend. He brought out that canard about capital receipts, which he then pledged himself to make available. I wonder whether the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) will be upset when he sees that in the record. I well know the claims that Welsh Labour councils have made that that would mean spending of at least £177 million. It might help the hon. Member for Torfaen, if he rushes off to see his hon. Friend, to say that the local councils will have only £23.7 million to spend from their capital receipts.

I remind the House that grants are also available to landlords to repair and improve or convert houses or buildings into flats and accommodation. We can boast a good record on area-based renewal schemes in Wales: 13 renewal schemes have been declared, and there are more in the pipeline. Resources of more than £17 million will be available in the current year for area-based schemes.

One matter was conspicuous by its absence from the speeches of Opposition Members. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State rightly concentrated on the fact that the vast majority of people in Wales aspire to home ownership. That is demonstrated by the high take-up of the right-to-buy initiative. More than 100,000 council tenants have exercised the right to buy since 1979. Surveys keep telling us that 80 per cent. or more of the people of Wales want to own their own homes. Opposition Members hardly referred to that at all. Where was the welcome for the progress that has been made in increasing home ownership

[Mr. Jones]

from 59 per cent. in 1979 to 71 per cent. now? We recognise and we will continue to respond to the aspirations of the people of Wales for a higher level of home ownership, and we will deliver.

One other idea was conspicuous by its absence in the debate. The hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North was remarkably brief in referring to an assembly for Wales, although I know that the hon. Member for Ynys Môn went on at slightly more length about it. That ancient, discredited policy from the 1970s has been trotted out as the great idea of all the Opposition policies. Yet we know by the token references that Opposition Members have made to it this evening that they are doing nothing more than going through the motions.

Wales is now better housed. Major sums are being provided for new social ownership and maintenance of existing housing. There are more opportunities for ownership, which is the exact and clear aspiration of the people of Wales. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced today an exciting expansion of the transferable discount scheme in Wales. We are making great progress. At the same time, we continue to ensure that there will be choice—real choice, unlike what the Opposition offer. I am confident that we shall go forward. We shall continue to go forward. The last thing that we in Wales need is that ultimate quango—a Welsh assembly. It has been roundly rejected by the people of Wales before and it will be rejected again if it is ever put to the test.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 26, Noes 153.

Division No. 290] **[7.16 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cox, Tom
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dafis, Cynog
Dixon, Don
Dowd, Jim
Henderson, Doug
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
McMaster, Gordon
Meale, Alan
Morgan, Rhodri
Murphy, Paul
Pendry, Tom
Prescott, John
Salmond, Alex
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Wigley, Dafydd
Wilson, Brian

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mrs. Margaret Ewing and
Mr. Elfyn Llwyd.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcl)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dykes, Hugh
Elletson, Harold
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, Sir John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hampson, Dr Keith
Harris, David
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Lidington, David
MacKay, Andrew
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Ottaway, Richard
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Rathbone, Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spink, Dr Robert
Sproat, Iain
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Tredinnick, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whittingdale, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No.30 (Questions on amendments) and agreed to.*

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House congratulates the Government on its comprehensive housing policies to meet the needs and aspirations of the people of Wales; welcomes in particular the high and increasing level of home ownership in Wales; supports measures to promote wider home ownership; notes the high level of investment by Tai Cymru since 1989 which has exceeded £1 billion and produced nearly 22,000 homes; welcomes the attraction of substantial private funding to the housing association programme enabling greater diversity and choice; and rejects the call for the establishment of a Parliament for Wales which would create an unnecessary tier of Government and would waste resources.

Social Security Benefit Rights

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): I have to inform the House that Madam Speaker has selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

7.27 pm

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): I beg to move,

That this House would fully restore social security benefit rights to all 16 and 17 year olds.

I was slightly surprised this afternoon when a message was received in our office which suggested that I speak as long as I like because there would be a dearth of other contributors to the subject. That reflects seriously on aspects of the policies of the other Opposition parties and on Government policy, because the issue is serious and affects many young people and families throughout of the United Kingdom.

I attach great importance to this aspect of social security legislation. It would not be amiss to say, Madam Deputy Speaker, that when you and I were 16 or 17 years old, we were living in the 1960s, when it seemed to young people that the world was their oyster. There were job opportunities in abundance and many of us, irrespective of background, could go to university, further or higher education, guaranteed a full student grant, and could find summer jobs with ease to eke out that grant. Those were very opportune times for many of us.

I am deeply concerned about what is happening to young people throughout the United Kingdom today. Our young people should be filled with optimism and idealism. But instead we seem to have a society where many of our youngsters feel that they are in a dead-end. They feel alienated from the democratic process and downtrodden, and the world no longer seems to be the oyster which we envisaged in the 1960s. It now appears to be a shark—often a loan shark.

In moving the motion, I shall quote several figures which I think are of relevance. *[Interruption.]* I note that there is an element of disrespect from the Government Whips and others on the Treasury Bench, but these are serious figures which should be taken into account.

Figures drawn up by Shelter, for example, show that one in four of Scotland's unemployed is between the ages of 16 and 25. Training allowances for 16 and 17-year-olds have not been uprated since 1989. In September 1992, a careers service survey showed that only one training place for every 26 young people was available if they were registered with that service, although I am sure that the Minister will argue about the importance that is attached to training schemes.

I shall quote from the Social Security Advisory Committee, which said:

"The YT guarantee is not being delivered in full and, without such a guarantee, the absence of a right to continuing entitlement to Income Support can leave vulnerable young people with no visible legal means of support . . . If the general exclusion of 16 and 17 year olds from Income Support were removed, those in genuine need would be able to access Income Support quickly in the normal way."

The reality is, of course, that those young people cannot access income support in the normal way. Forty-five per cent. of young people staying in emergency accommodation had previously slept rough. *[Interruption.]* I wish that the Minister would listen to the statistics. He is busy talking to somebody else, but I wish he would listen because the statistics are important and merit the attention of the House and of hon. Members who are present.

My colleagues from Plaid Cymru have spoken on the issue of homelessness. That is a very serious issue, because if people have neither a job nor a home, what kind of hope is there for them? Last year, 14,000 16 and 17-year-olds in Scotland were out of employment, and it was estimated that 75 per cent. of them had no income whatsoever.

Throughout Britain, 122,500 16 and 17-year-olds were defined as jobless and, of those, 90,400 had no source of income. The reality is that 75 per cent. of 16 and 17-year-olds who are out of work have no source of income. They have no opportunity in society to find themselves a home or a job, and they have no income whatsoever. I suggest that the Government are driving them into despair.

In 1988, the Government removed the benefit from young people. No doubt the Minister's response—which has been presumably written for him in a departmental brief—will emphasise that income support is available in exceptional circumstances.

Mr. George Kynoch (Kincardine and Deeside): Hear, hear.

Mrs. Ewing: I notice the hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside's comment. No doubt he is, as always, looking for promotion within the Government. May I remind him of those exceptional circumstances?

A 16 or 17-year-old might have access to income support if he is a parent, in physical or moral danger or if he is handicapped. That covers a small percentage of the number of people we are talking about and, of course, the bureaucracy ensures that many of the people who might be eligible in those circumstances do not apply. We will never know how many people do not apply for income support in exceptional circumstances; nor will we know the numbers who have been rejected.

No doubt the Minister will talk about the severe hardship allowance as a safety net established by the Government. Originally that was introduced as a stop-gap measure for young people, but it has now become a mainstay provision. In the first 12 months of the existence of the severe hardship allowance, 10,669 successful applications were recorded.

Let me remind the House of the mechanisms that young people have to go through to be succesful. A young person who wants to make a claim for income support under the severe hardship provision must register at the careers office and take his proof of registration to the unemployment benefit office. The unemployment benefit office will then issue the young person with a form to take to the local Benefits Agency office, where he will be interviewed. There are three offices through which any young person seeking that mechanism of support must pass.

In the four years since then, the numbers have increased sevenfold. That is an indication of the crisis that exists. I also link that with the issue of homelessness, because that is a major aspect of the problems that young people face.

The Scottish Council for Homelessness says clearly that one of the greatest problems that young people face is homelessness. It argues that we need to restore the claim to income support to 16 and 17-year-olds and ensure a single rate of income support for all those who are living independently, regardless of age.

[Mrs. Ewing]

Much has been made of the cardboard cities and the homeless in London, but it happens in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Stirling and any town within Scotland and throughout the United Kingdom. What kind of life are we holding out to those young people? The attitude struck by the Government comes close to being criminal.

It will be interesting to learn what other hon. Members say in the debate, and there is a moral issue at stake for all of us as legislators. I started by saying that when you and I were 16 or 17, Madam Deputy Speaker, the world seemed to be full of opportunities. For many people now, the world is not full of opportunities. Young people throughout the United Kingdom are left in desperation, despair and hopelessness.

We have costed in our budget what it would cost to restore benefits to young people in Scotland, and we reckon it would cost £23 million. I believe that that would be £23 million well spent. It would enable young people to have dignity and the decency of an independent life.

I ask the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) and the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) who sit on the Opposition Benches: what exactly is the Labour party saying to 16 and 17-year-olds? Much play was made during the European elections of the Prime Minister's attack on beggars, people sleeping rough and people who have not had any other opportunity in life.

Yet when the Labour party was asked about what it would do, there were four different replies in one day. The acting leader of the Labour party, the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), confused the issue when she said that there must be "good quality training" and "some assistance", but she refused to say what form that would take. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) intervened, saying on Radio 4's "World At One" programme:

"If more money is required that will have to be considered . . . The major point is that we are not going to be passive and simply criticise the results of present policy."

But no indication was given of what position the hon. Gentleman would adopt as shadow Secretary for Social Security on that issue.

Labour's Treasury Spokesman, the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms Harman) said that the Labour party would announce detailed plans "nearer the time" of a Labour Government. That, perhaps, was very optimistic from her point of view, because whether there will be a Labour Government is for the people to decide.

The hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) said:

"The benefits to the young, in particular, equalled the benefits in most of Europe."

Yet the reality is that 16 and 17-year-olds in the U.K. do not have equality with their counterparts in Europe. Not only the Government but the official Opposition face the challenge of reviewing their policies towards 16 and 17-year-olds. The Opposition must come clean tonight on their policy. My party has made it clear that it will reinstate the benefit; we have costed it and it is within our budget. It is an important aspect of our policy.

There is an element within the House that does not understand the strength of feeling and passion within our communities about young people. Many hon. Members, particularly from Scottish constituencies, spent the past few weeks campaigning in the Monklands, East by-election. People regularly said on their doorsteps that they were deeply concerned about what was happening to youngsters in our society. From time to time, we talk about the problems of drugs, crime and deprivation, yet it is in our hands to ensure that money is made available to young people to ensure that they do not fall into those traps.

We must make clear our commitments, because principled guidance exists in our politics. I find it strange when I pick up *The Herald* and find that it carries the headline

"Blair accuses Tories of stealing Labour policies"

The newspaper reported:

"Tony Blair yesterday accused the Conservatives of getting ready to steal some of his party's clothes on employment and social policies."

On the same page, under the headline

"Lang cautions against 'one more right turn'"

the newspaper reported:

"In fending off the challenges of a revitalised Labour party, which he accused of stealing Conservative policies in their quest for office, the Conservative party had to deal with voters wanting change."

It seems weird to me that one party, the official Opposition, is accusing the Government of stealing their policies while the Government are accusing the other party of stealing their policies. Do we intend to address the issues that confront our society or are we just going to sit back and let 16 and 17-year-olds become the victims of unionist policies? I am not going to take any lectures from members of the Labour party in particular, but from any member of any unionist party about Santa Claus policies. The sum of £23 million is a small in comparison with the problems involved.

My party is totally committed, if the other parties are not, to the idea of social justice in our society. We will ensure that that is offered to young people as well. That policy will not be assimilated by the rather exclusive nonsense of the London parties, which seek power for themselves rather than power for the people.

My party believes that the packaging of the Labour party and of the Government are exactly the same—they just try to label it differently. I want to hear clearly from both of those parties tonight exactly what they will do for 16 and 17-year-olds.

7.42 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Alistair Burt): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'recognises that vulnerable 16 and 17 year olds and those facing severe hardship continue to have access to benefits; believes that it is in the long term interests of 16 and 17 year olds that they do not go straight from school on to benefits, but into training, employment or further or higher education; and fully endorses the Government's training guarantee and the continued expansion of vocational, further and higher education.'.

I ask my colleagues to vote for the Government's amendment.

For the past 15 minutes, I have felt like an innocent bystander at the clash of the tartan armies, because the remarks of the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) were intended for consumption in an internal argument north of the border rather than to address the issues that should concern the House tonight.

The hon. Lady was a little ratty with me earlier when I was having a discussion with my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security

about a matter she had raised. I suspect that that was due to her chronic insecurity at being alone, at that time, on her Bench. No matter that the issue we are discussing is of great importance; alas, the sense of that importance was not shared at that time by her colleagues. I am delighted to see that the leader of the Scottish nationalists, the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond), has arrived and I should be delighted to give way to him.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): I was absent because I was on St. Stephen's green giving an interview on the future of Rosyth. Given that the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland is sitting next to the Minister, perhaps he could use this opportunity to enlighten us rather more than the Prime Minister was prepared to do when my hon. Friend the Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) asked him a question about it this afternoon. Is Rosyth naval base to close, which will mean that more job opportunities will be lost for young people and others in Scotland?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I must point out to the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) that the motion is narrowly drawn.

Mr. Burt: All I can say to the hon. Gentleman is: good try. I am sure that that does not relieve the sense of insecurity that his hon. Friend felt at the beginning of her speech.

I was also delighted to listen to the hon. Lady's remarks about who is stealing whose clothes—whether the Labour party is stealing the Tories' clothes or the Tories are stealing Labour's clothes. All that is obvious is that no one is stealing the hon. Lady's clothes or those of her party, so it would appear that the paucity of her remarks tonight is reflected in her party's other policies. That is why no one wishes to steal them.

I should like to address the real issues, which are genuine and important. That is why I am surrounded by a number of my colleagues who share my interest in this subject.

Mrs. Ewing: Two thirds of my party are present.

Mr. Burt: Two thirds of nothing is nothing.

I accept that the motion tabled by the hon. Lady may be based on the best of intentions, but it is just one more example of how the Opposition parties fail to see how policy towards young people must be rather more than just a knee-jerk back to benefits.

Our policy is the only real one on offer. It is about education and training for young people, and developing a positive approach to life in a highly competitive world market economy. It is about helping young people fulfil their potential so they can live independent and productive lives. It is about the United Kingdom as a whole; Scots as much as anyone else.

If young people aged 16 and 17 are not yet in work, we offer them real options: Scottish highers and A-levels—as good as anything comparable anywhere in the world; general and national vocational qualifications, building up our vocational skills base; and youth training, also usually leading to NVQ level 2, which delivers a wide variety of courses to a wide range of abilities. All those options carry with them financial support in one way or another, either from the parents of those at school, employers or the youth training allowance. Those options are available to all young people; young women as well as young men and members of any minority group.

Given all this, I have to ask what is the point of reintroducing income support for 16 and 17-year-olds. All those not in employment, such as young mothers, are entitled to claim income support as of right already. So who would gain and what would be the effect if this apparently generous motion were actually put into effect? I suspect that, in terms of welfare, which presumably is the intended justification, the answer is "not much".

Mrs. Ewing: Would the Minister like to give us the latest training figures on the basis of how many people who apply for YT opportunities are offered places?

Mr. Burt: According to the figures for Scotland, there are more vacancies for YT places than there are people ready to take them up. At the end of the last monthly count, some 4,000 places were still vacant according to local enterprise companies. I do not believe that there is any doubt about the improved efforts of the Government and those who assist them to fulfil the YT guarantee.

If benefit were restored, a majority of those in education and training would continue as they do now, and be supported as they are now. Those waiting for a place on a YT scheme could claim for a short time while they waited, but those in severe hardship can claim now, as they could in the future. As a result of the motion, extra money would be given to some young people, many of whom will be from relatively well-off backgrounds living at home with their parents. From a welfare point of view, the measure would be ineffective.

What is worse, it would encourage those with less commitment to think they can give up their school, their course, their employer training and live on benefit. A wholly negative and inappropriate effect. During the mid-1980s, when the economy was moving ahead rapidly and unemployment falling—a look back, perhaps, to the halcyon time in her youth about which the hon. Member for Moray talked—claims from school leavers remained at a high level. That is an indication of the effect that easy benefit access can have. Perhaps even more significant, 16 and 17-year-olds leaving school would be able to go straight on to benefits with no incentive to do more. That gives exactly the wrong message and represents a sharp step away from the attitudes we should be trying to foster in this House.

Anything that undermines our skills effort in this way is a serious matter. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the International Monetary Fund have said that the United Kingdom is set to have the fastest growth of any major economy this year and next. This growth will be reflected in Scotland. Unemployment has been falling and employment rising —26 per cent. of employers expect to increase the number of jobs on offer this summer, the most optimistic figure for four years.

Especially important in the context of this debate is the forecast by the independent Institute for Employment Research that the number of jobs at technician level and above is expected to rise by 1.6 million during the 1990s. If we can educate and train our young people, the jobs will be there; and we will ensure that that education and training are available.

[Mr. Burt]

Our overall approach to unemployment and economic regeneration was recently highlighted by the OECD as the best way forward. The active policies that we are pursuing to help the unemployed were singled out in particular. We will not give up now on what is one part of a successful and coherent set of policies.

The future demands better educated young people, and young people are recognising that it is in their interests to get those qualifications. In 1992-93, 70 per cent. of 16-year-olds stayed on in full-time education—a 70 per cent. increase over 1979.

General national vocational qualifications have made an exciting start and are proving very popular. Action is in hand to ensure that they are rigorous and of high quality. They develop skills, knowledge and understanding in a broadly vocational context. We expect successful GNVQ students to go on to higher education and good jobs. NVQs —covering 80 per cent. of the work force—have now been accredited and will increasingly offer a firm basis for most job-specific training.

We have substantially improved the educational information and advice available, which allows young people to make informed choices about the school or college and type of course that best meet their needs. The local education authority, via the careers service, provides statutory vocational guidance and planning services for young people. Again, the publication of performance tables for schools and colleges has been an important step and now includes vocational qualifications.

Those steps should help us achieve a further aim—increasing the number of young people who continue to develop their knowledge and skills after their 16th birthday. The number has risen rapidly over the past few years—more than 20 per cent. since 1979, so that 87 per cent. of 16-year-olds are now in some form of education and training. The target is 91 per cent. by 1995-96, and funding to the further education sector allows for a 25 per cent. growth in the numbers of their students from 1993-96. What a contrast to offer such a positive future, rather than turning back and offering our young people a future of benefits.

Training is the other arm of our success story. The quality of training is improving rapidly. The Government are committed to ensuring that young people not in work or at school will have a greater range of choice through youth credits, and the opportunity to become better equipped with high-quality skills and qualifications. That will be achieved through the introduction of modern apprenticeships and accelerated modern apprenticeships, which will provide high-quality, work-based training to NVQ level 3 for 16 to 17-year-olds. To enhance further the range of options available for young people, accelerated modern apprenticeships will also be available for 18 to 19-year-olds. The modern apprenticeship initiative should result in some 70,000 young people achieving NVQ level 3 or higher each year.

Youth training NVQs are a valuable step towards higher standards and there is evidence that young people are taking increasing advantage of the opportunities that we provide. The much higher standards now required by employers are resulting in many more higher level qualifications. For example, the proportion of all leavers gaining an NVQ qualification rose from 38 per cent. for leavers in 1990-91 to 67 per cent. in 1993-94.

In Scotland, our training policies have been centred on the creation of Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise, with their unique remit to bring together training and economic development, and have produced good results for young people in recent years. In the Scottish Enterprise area, total vocational qualifications gained by trainees in youth training have risen by 50 per cent. from 7,015 in 1991-92 to 10,443 in 1993-94; there has been a 24 per cent. increase in achievement in youth training of vocational qualifications at levels 2 and 3, from 6,621 in 1991-92 to 8,211 in 1993-94; and the proportion of young people with employed status in youth training has risen over the same period from 25 to 41 per cent.

Mr. Salmond: I thank the Minister for giving us those statistics, but is he familiar with the statistic from Shelter, which estimates that last year, 5,000 young people slept rough in Scotland at some time? Will he explain why, in this land of opportunity that he is outlining to us, 5,000 youngsters in Scotland slept rough last year?

Mr. Burt: We shall come to benefits and the safety and security of young people a little later. In contrast to the speech of the hon. Member for Moray, I was offering a picture of how measures taken by the Government to improve education and training opportunities for young people were being accepted and taken forward. That is a much more positive picture than the hon. Lady was painting.

Mr. Salmond: Answer my question.

Mr. Burt: I shall come to the subject of benefits later. As the hon. Gentleman was late arriving, he can wait for me to come to his question a bit later.

Even better results have been achieved in the Grampian Enterprise area, where youth credits pilots have been running for three years. Here, training starts have almost doubled and the vast majority of trainees have employed status and are working towards a vocational qualification. Indeed, attainment levels among young people in Scotland generally are such that the Advisory Scottish Council for Education and Training Targets has launched challenging new Scottish targets for competitiveness to replace the 1991 national education and training targets.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland has taken over responsibility for training policy in Scotland with effect from 1 April. He will work within our overall Great British strategy, published in December last as "Prosperity through Skills", but now has the opportunity to adjust and develop aspects of policy to reflect Scotland's distinctive institutional arrangements and levels of attainment.

My right hon. Friend is now reflecting on such adjustments and on the content of a package of training measures comparable in resource terms to that announced for England and Wales in the competitiveness White Paper. It is too soon to say what the package will include, but a number of areas are being looked at, including apprenticeship training and the guidance needs of young people.

The Government are also committed to making the YT guarantee work. The hon. Lady mentioned that matter. We are spending more on youth training this year than last; and

in 1993-94, we spent £849 million, which is an advance on the previous year. In the future, we shall spend more per trainee. Broadly the same budget that covered 210,000 first-time entrants to the programme in 1990-91 will cover about 160,000 first-time entrants—more than 25 per cent. fewer—in 1993-94. So, in spite of falling numbers in that age group, we are not only maintaining our investment in their future but increasing it.

We also recognise the practical importance of linking the training with employers. Training and enterprise councils and local enterprise councils in Scotland have conducted marketing campaigns to generate more employer-based training places; funded new workshop and initial training provision; and offered subsidies to offset employer costs of training places. And for trainees with special training needs, additional funds have been provided.

However, there will always be some people unable to take advantage of these opportunities, either in the long term or short term, and who need the help of the benefits system.

In 1988, we substituted the youth training allowance for supplementary benefit for unemployed young people. That was a sign of our commitment to invest in the future of young people and help them make the most of their potential, which is a stark contrast with the proposals apparently put forward by the Opposition's Commission on Social Justice. Their proposal seems to be that we should pay more money for less work with no end product in terms of training or qualification.

One of the most important policy aims of our programme was to ensure that those young people who could not take advantage of youth training, either through having to look after their child or because they were disabled or vulnerable for some other reason, were protected. We took great care to ensure that those vulnerable groups retained entitlement to income support at any time.

Since then, we have extended the length of time that child benefit could be payable by up to 16 weeks after the young person had left school. That enabled parents to continue to receive not only child benefit but other benefits such as dependant's allowances and family premium while their children looked for work or YT places or, indeed, waited to go back to school or on to college at the end of the summer.

In addition, where young people cannot stay at home to grow up in a stable and caring environment, we have given automatic entitlement to income support while they are in secondary education. Most important, we completed the safety net for vulnerable youngsters by introducing the severe hardship provision. That enables support to be given at any time to those in particularly difficult circumstances. To guarantee maximum flexibility, we made decisions under that provision discretionary. Each case is judged on its merits and, where there is a risk of severe hardship, benefit will be paid, normally until a job or training place is found.

Help can be given under that provision to young people irrespective of whether they are homeless, living independently or living with parents who are having difficulty supporting them, so help is targeted to where the need exists. Our monitoring shows that help is reaching those who need it.

Mrs. Ewing: Does the Minister accept that those discretionary payments must be backdated because of the nature of the award, so a young person in critical, emergency circumstances must apply for a social fund loan? Would not it be better if those youngsters received automatic payments without the backdating that leaves them in that vulnerable position for a period of time?

Mr. Burt: Having visited the Glasgow unit that deals with that when I was first appointed, I am immensely impressed with the speed with which severe hardship provisions are dealt with. It is probably the benefit with the fastest turn-around, and I suspect that in very few cases are people who need a severe hardship payment turned away or given a length of time to wait.

More important, as the hon. Lady knows, quoting the statistics, we are making more severe hardship awards than we did. We paid 118,000 young people under the provision in 1993-94, and we are currently dealing with about 11,000 claims a month, with a success rate of nearly 90 per cent.

I know something about that, too, because, when I was first appointed, I received representations from lobby groups representing young people throughout the country, and one of the things that worried them was the availability of severe hardship awards. Not only did it appear to be a difficult route to follow, but there was insufficient information about who was, and who was not, entitled to receive benefit. There was a widespread belief that one could not obtain that benefit when one was living at home.

I worked very hard, personally, with the lobby groups to explain that that was not necessary. We developed a new leaflet to publicise to young people's advisers that benefit would be payable even if the young people were living at home, if their parents were on benefit and they could not manage.

We took steps to ensure that that information would be made available in the places where youngsters go. We took steps in the Benefits Agency offices to ensure that one person in each office would be responsible for 16 and 17-year-olds, and that that person would develop expertise and skill in dealing with them and dealing smoothly and rapidly with the complaint. We ensured that the benefit was more widely available. The same criteria had to be met as previously to ensure that someone was eligible, but efforts were made to ensure that those people who were in need had the best opportunity of obtaining it.

I regard the increased figures as a reflection of the efforts that we took to make the benefit more widely available. I think that we did the right thing.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): I am interested in what the Minister says, and I think that there is some truth in it. Things have changed—there is no doubt about that, for reasons that I may refer to later. However, does he recognise what an indictment it is of the original quality of the arrangements, and of the continuing claim that there is a guarantee to every youth, that there should be 11,000 claims a month for severe hardship, 90 per cent. of which succeed? How does that square with the idea that every one of those youngsters was guaranteed a training place in the first place?

Mr. Burt: They are guaranteed a training place and, as I am sure that the hon. Gentleman knows, the ability of the YT guarantee system to produce places has improved

[Mr. Burt]

markedly in the past year. On the most recent figures, I think that we are down now to about 1,800 or 1,900 people who are left waiting for more than eight weeks—that is all.

A variety of different situations can give rise to a youngster feeling that he or she needs to make that claim. The hon. Gentleman cannot have it both ways.

Mr. Wilson: Neither can you.

Mr. Burt: No. What we say is— *[Interruption.]*—No. I do not believe that is true. The guarantee does work. We have an enormous of number of people in youth training places now. As I said, the figures for Scotland show that there are youth training place vacancies.

For a number of reasons, people might fall vulnerable and need severe hardship allowance. We make it available and have it as a safety net, but if no one was receiving it, I dare say that, as my colleagues appreciate, Opposition Members would argue that the benefit is so difficult to obtain that no one can claim it. Because we have taken genuine steps—I was grateful for the remarks of the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson)—to try to make it more available to people in need, the hon. Gentleman criticised us because people actually take it up. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman can have it both ways.

We continue to monitor the arrangements closely and we have every intention of making further improvements where necessary, although we need to see how the job seeker's allowance will operate before making any further moves.

In conclusion, the Government have no plans to restore a blanket of income support to 16 and 17-year-olds.

Mr. Salmond: I have been listening carefully to the Minister, and I still have not received an answer to my very simple question. Why, in spite of the picture of a world of opportunity that the Minister has been painting, with all those improved schemes, does Shelter estimate that 5,000 Scottish youngsters slept rough at some time last year? It is a simple question. The hon. Gentleman is reaching the end of his speech. May I have an answer?

Mr. Burt: As I said earlier—when perhaps the hon. Gentleman was not quite concentrating—there is a variety of reasons why people might find themselves in need of severe hardship provisions. I am convinced that there is absolutely no reason why any single youngster should be on the streets of Scotland tonight. Assistance is available from the Government for benefit and for need. The numbers of people who might sleep rough on the street in any one night are hundreds rather than thousands. It is a matter of regret to all of us, but the hon. Gentleman knows of the variety of circumstances that lead people to be there, from the various surveys that are done.

The Government have played their part, by making resources available and pursuing initiatives to try to help find homes for single people. Statutory responsibility rests with housing authorities. They should review their policies and priorities to ensure that they deal effectively with the problems that confront homeless and roofless people.

However, being responsible for severe hardship allowance, knowing the way in which it has been applied in the past couple of years and knowing the efforts being made by hard-working and well-meaning staff to ensure that it is available for those who need it, I do not believe that anyone who is genuinely in need would be refused that benefit. The success rate of 90 per cent. shows that.

Mr. Wilson: I am grateful to the Minister, and I shall quote figures later that bear out what he said and show what an enormous change there has been in the way that severe hardship applications are treated, but the Minister should reciprocally recognise what a brutal policy that was in the first place, and what astonishing cruelty was visited on tens of thousands of young people before those changes took place. Those young people could not apply for severe hardship payments, and, as a result, they were cast thoughtlessly on to the streets.

Mr. Burt: No. Once again, with the great gift that seems to affect people who sit on the Opposition Benches, the hon. Gentleman is able completely to misinterpret what I said.

The benefit has always been available and could always have been applied for. My feeling, as perhaps one of the least brutal Ministers that the hon. Gentleman might come across—it is not my style—was that I saw a benefit that was available, about which the original intention of Government was entirely correct, but which, for some reason, was not working through to the people who needed it. That is part of the job.

Opposition Members constantly ask the Government about eligibility for benefits and the need to ensure that those people who are eligible can claim. Those Members speak about claimants' campaigns and everything else. I saw a position in which the benefit was there, in which people were in need and lobby groups would come to me and say, "I think this should be available, but I can't seem to get it and no one knows about it," and so on. I said, "It is there, and it can be done." Other people simply did not know that the benefit was available because they had not gone and obtained the information, and the information was not disseminated. So we worked to do that.

For me, that completed the circle. One has a Government who are offering, in a growing, expanding economy, jobs, training, further and higher education, which are being accepted by more youngsters than ever before. One has a positive picture for youngsters and, in addition, one has two safety nets—a safety net in statute for the vulnerable and a safety net through severe hardship benefit for others who have slipped through for any other reason. I think that that is the complete picture.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Is my hon. Friend aware that when the benefit was available freely to all, I had a large number of complaints from parents in my constituency whose daughters were staying on at school after 16, saying that they were shacked up in Morecambe with their boyfriends at the expense of the Department of Social Security? That was the type of thing that the Minister rightly has prevented from happening.

Mr. Burt: My hon. Friend is right and, indeed, as I mentioned earlier, there was a culture that, no matter what one's family background, if one was in a position to claim benefit, one did, whether one needed it or not. At the same time as politicians were walking the streets, urging people to ensure that their taxes were well spent, they were covering a position in which there was widespread misuse and no one wanted to do anything about it.

We ended that, I think, and I think that removing automatic entitlement to benefit for all 16 and 17-year-olds and replacing it with a system whereby we encouraged them to do their best, encouraged them to take advantage of the opportunities that we then increasingly made available, to improve their opportunities for jobs and skills in the future, was the best way forward. I still believe that, and I also still believe that we have protected the most vulnerable people and ensured that they do not slip through the net.

We have no plans to restore a blanket of income support for 16 and 17-year-olds. To do so would be to concentrate on the wrong area and would be poor targeting of resources. It is far better to invest in high-quality training than to provide benefit for people who are not looking for work or training, thus encouraging unnecessary reliance on the benefit system.

Instead, we are concentrating our efforts on more positive and productive policies, such as improving the education system to cater for young people's needs and abilities, and encouraging young people to make the most of their potential through education or training. We are providing good-quality training places to equip young people with the skills that they need to enter work and build successful careers. Those are the best ways for young people to begin to lead independent and productive lives.

The hon. Member for Moray spoke of young people being independent through having automatic entitlement to benefits. What sort of independence is it when one is dependent on other people? It is far better that we encourage young people to be truly independent and to have the skills that they need for the future. It is better for us to provide that so that they can participate in a growing and positive future.

8.10 pm

Mr. Henry McLeish (Fife, Central): I always enjoy listening to the Minister. We play in the parliamentary football team together—I think that he plays inside left. However, what worries me is that the longer the Minister works in the Department of Social Security, the more like his boss he becomes. That is an alarming prospect, particularly for the Minister.

The intervention of the hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) suggested that such mischievous prejudice promotes and fires Tory youth policy, which is shocking. It is a slur on young people to pretend that one can build a policy around so many prejudices when young people are looking not for a dependency culture, which the Government wean them on, but real opportunities. Those opportunities were not mentioned in the Minister's contribution today.

The subject is important because young Scots face a crisis, and their predicament is mirrored throughout the rest of the United Kingdom. An important process is at work. The youngsters of 16, 17 and 18 are making the transition from school to work—they are being integrated into society. The transition from childhood to adulthood should also be a transition from dependency on parents and others to independence. Such an important process shapes the formative years of virtually every youngster in Britain, but the Government have shocking policies to deal with it. It is vital that the Government take seriously all facets of the process.

The main question in today's debate is why young people in Britain are being sold short by a Conservative Government. No society, no Government and no political party can take the matter lightly. What happens in those critical two years can influence the nature and lives of young people. Equally important, it can influence the nature and lives of the wider community, so we must take the subject seriously. The Minister's comments smacked more of a smokescreen than of concern for the deep-seated problems in Britain.

The subject of benefits and financial support for young people is important. There is a crucial distinction between the old-fashioned policies of the nationalists and the prejudiced policies of the Tories. The Labour party wants opportunities for young people. We want to move the culture further on—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Kynoch) is, as usual, mouthing from the Back Benches, and saying that the Tories are for freedom, choice and independence. If that is true, why has the number of people on income support in Scotland, as compared with the number of people who were on the old supplementary benefit, increased by 88 per cent? Some 1 million Scots are living on the breadline because of the Tory Government. Does that suggest independence or greater dependency?

Mr. Kynoch: The hon. Gentleman was talking about different sorts of policies. What is the policy of the Labour party? As the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) said, there is no Labour party policy.

Mr. McLeish: We shall never be disappointed with the Conservatives. We have the old alliance—

Mr. Burt: Answer.

Mr. McLeish: I shall answer. We have the old alliance between the Conservatives and the nationalists. The party of nationalism thrives on the back of Conservatives, who fear that the nationalists might desert them in difficult times.

I shall now explain Labour party policy. The position is clear: the Conservative party is the party of dependency. No matter what Conservatives claim, every fact suggests the opposite of what they say. I shall give the figures later to outline that point. I shall make Labour's position clear —I see that everyone is now sitting up. A Labour Government will ensure that there will be no young Scots, or anyone else in Britain, without a place in mainstream education, a place in further or higher education, a place in work with training, a training place or a form of income.

We must move the debate away from the old, tired view of dependency to talk about giving young people opportunities.

Mrs. Ewing: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Burt: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. McLeish: I am being assaulted from all sides. I shall give way in a minute.

Unlike the present Government, we shall give young people the benefit of training opportunities. The best policy is to take young people seriously, not constantly to steep the argument in dependency.

Mrs. Ewing: I am interested in what the hon. Gentleman is saying, particularly in the light of the alliances that he and his party have had with the

[Mrs. Ewing]

Conservative party over many years, including those in Tayside and in other regions of Scotland. They show where the Labour party stands. Is the hon. Gentleman saying that the Labour party is committed to ensuring that benefits will be available to 16 and 17-year-olds at an uprated level? Is he prepared to give that financial commitment tonight on behalf of his party?

Mr. McLeish: I will not take lectures from a party of protest when Labour is preparing to be a party of power. Will the financial commitment of the Scottish National party to Scotland's young people come after the funding of a separate Scottish army, separate Scottish navy and separate Scottish air force? It is vital not to get sidetracked by such issues.

A Labour Government will ensure that no young Scot is without a job, a training place, a place in education—higher, further or mainstream—or a form of income. That is crystal clear to me.

Mr. Burt: For those of us who are dimmer and have not quite got hold of what the hon. Gentleman said, may I ask him to repeat it and make it clear? Is he saying that there will be an automatic entitlement to income support for all 16 and 17-year-olds under a Labour Government—yes or no?

Mr. McLeish: I am surprised that the Minister should criticise himself as being dim, and I do not accept that he is. I shall clarify my remarks still further. I anticipated that the issue would rouse the sleeping partners on the Government Benches. My right hon. Friend the leader of the Labour party said:

"Labour's priority is to make sure all young people get work, or good quality training. But if they cannot there must be some assistance—we are looking at these issues through the Social Justice Commission at the moment."

That is the important issue that develops the debate.

Mr. Burt: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his remarks about my intellectual capabilities. Will he comment on a quote from the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms Harman)? She said:

"If you're asking us what our plans will be on day one of a Labour Government, obviously we'll have to make the detailed plans nearer the time".

Is the hon. Gentleman saying that that view of Labour party policy—which we think is closer to the truth—has been overridden by what he has said? The hon. Gentleman has still not said whether automatic entitlement to income support for 16 and 17-year-olds is to be restored. Will he answer yes or no?

Mr. McLeish: The Minister clarifies the point himself, by talking about drawing up detailed plans at a more appropriate time—

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Retreat!

Mr. McLeish: There is no need for retreat, and I suspect that the Minister is now clear on the point that I have been trying to make, so we can move on to more important matters.

It is vital not to let the debate get bogged down in the Tory agenda. The dependency culture has always been alive and well under this Government, yet they seem to want to keep on talking about it—because as soon as they move to training or education they are on shaky ground. What is actually happening in Scotland certainly does not square with the Minister's speech this evening.

The self-worth of our young people is crucial both to society and to their sense of well-being. They want to work, as the Minister would agree. What is more, they want to be trained and educated. They want to be successful, to build up careers and to start families.

The problem with keeping the debate at a superficial level is that we may overlook the fact that young people are facing severe difficulties at a time of massive social, economic and employment adjustment. The labour market is changing. The Minister may say that a recovery is in progress, but looking around Scotland it is difficult to see where the jobs are being created. The Government's own quarterly employment figures show very little growth in employment. Young people now have fewer opportunities in the labour market, and it is changing qualitatively too. It is very difficult for them to break into it and—despite the rhetoric about skills—mass deskilling in much of our manufacturing base is also going on.

The Government do not talk about apprenticeships these days. Although they have introduced a new concept using that name, they do not collect the figures any more. We know that there has been a massive reduction in the number of quality training places in manufacturing. Apprenticeships in my constituency were often the avenue of progress for many young Scots.

The hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) highlighted the problems of homelessness in Scotland, but the Government will not acknowledge that the nature and structure of families are changing. There are hon. Members on both sides who want to moralise about that, but the hard facts, meanwhile, have to be dealt with in public policy development. I refer to the linking of homelessness with family breakdown and other family difficulties. All this is part of the changing culture of Scotland and of Britain, and it reinforces my point about treating issues affecting 16 and 17-year-olds with sensitivity.

There is mass unemployment in Scotland. Even on Government figures—manipulated and altered 30 times in 15 years—nearly 3 million people in Britain and 250,000 Scots are out of work. What kind of environment does that offer young people? When I was 16 or 17—or when the Minister was, come to that—we could choose from quite a large number of jobs. There was no housing problem either, and probably no difficulty with finding training. Now, mass unemployment has changed everything. I must tell the House with some passion that bright, dedicated youngsters in my constituency who want to work are painstakingly looking for work, but in Fife there were only 18 vacancies, at the last count, registered at the careers service. I appreciate that they were not the only vacancies available, but looking for work is a soul-destroying business nowadays.

Mr. Kynoch: How does the hon. Gentleman account for the fact that the unemployment rate among those under 25 in the United Kingdom in April 1994 was 5 percentage points better—that is to say, lower—than the average rate in the European Union? Is he aware that a recession has been going on around the world, and that the policies of this Government have generated greater employment and prospects for our young people?

Mr. McLeish: In the world that I inhabit, in my constituency, those sort of comments do not square with the facts of life. We can talk about differences between European nations, but the figures are compiled differently —*[Interruption.]* The Under-Secretary of State for Scotland may hum and haw all he likes, but he clearly does not want to hear the answer. The Italian and Spanish figures show up significant differences for this age group, but the figures are compiled quite differently. What matters is that young people in my constituency want jobs and are little interested in what happens elsewhere. We should therefore dispense with bogus analogies that do not stand up to examination.

Another point about unemployment is that youngsters are trading down their expectations, and that is bad for their sense of self-worth. Young people in my constituency who have qualifications are doing jobs that require none, and those who have been doing jobs that needed no qualifications are doing no work at all. That depresses them, and it should give us cause for concern.

Another problem derives from people's attitudes to young people—a point emphasised by the intervention from the hon. Member for Lancaster. People have their prejudices and then build them into sweeping generalisations, which can then sometimes motivate public policy. I do not believe that young people in Britain have changed, but they are surrounded by great change, and we have a Government who have walked away from facing up to the consequences of that change.

I am pleased to see that the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), is here for the debate. Ministers often talk about youth unemployment. I have with me some figures from the Department of Employment computer which have not been published. They show that, at the last count, nearly 10,000 young Scots were classified as unemployed but not included in the official figures. Why not? The Government believe in an opportunity-led, laissez-faire, free-market Scotland, so perhaps they can explain the discrepancy in the figures.

I have another question for the Minister. Unpublished figures from the Scottish Office show that, on 14 March 1994, 7,831 young Scots were eligible for youth training, 5,551 were covered by the guarantee, but 5,428 were without a start date. How does that fit in with the central proposition by the Secretary of State for Employment, who speaks eloquently about only 150 young people in England and Wales not having had their requirements met by the guarantee? If that number is right, why is the number 5,500 in Scotland?

The hon. Member for Moray also discussed the severe hardship allowance. My hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) has already pointed out that the benefit is widely available and its take-up is being increased, but that many young Scots, not because they are in desperate hardship but just because they need the money to live on, are applying for it. If the Government view the benefit in that light, why cannot they take a more enlightened view of the whole question of financial underpinning for young people? Figures supplied by the Department—an excellent Department it is—suggest that between 500 and 600 young people each quarter are applying in my constituency for the allowance. Multiplied by a factor of 15, we arrive at a crude figure for the whole of Scotland of about 8,000 applications for the SHA.

Mr. Salmond: The hon. Gentleman is approaching a point at the heart of this debate with which I strongly agree. What he is saying is that, because of the pressure of events, this selective, discretionary benefit is becoming a universal benefit. That being so, why do we not agree to make it a universal benefit, end the pretence and stop people slipping through the safety net?

Mr. McLeish: I am delighted that the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) agrees with the central theme. A central problem for the Government has now been raised by the Opposition parties. The benefit is now available although it was applied brutally at the start. Young people were coming to me who simply could not get hardship allowance on any criteria because the Government were pushing their free market ideology and hoping that the benefit would not have to be paid. That has changed dramatically and I leave it to the Minister to think through the ultimate consequences.

The other important point about the financial support of young people is that it is simply a mess. The Government tinker with child benefit and extend it; they have a bridging allowance which moves like a ship at sea; there is severe hardship allowance and then there is youth training allowance. Does the Minister think that the incoherent application of public money in such a way is the best and most productive method of helping young people and society? I suggest that it is not.

To finish my catalogue of concern about young people in Scotland, why do the Government provide no minimum wage protection for young people in the workplace? They decided to get the wages council off the backs of young people and let the market flourish—in their eyes—knowing full well that for young people it meant simply a cut in wages and further exploitation in the workplace.

Why do we have the poorest employment conditions for young people in Europe where rights are undermined and access to tribunals is simply non-existent? It is obvious that there are major problems for young people in Britain. Their greatest worry is the central problem of lack of economic independence and from that flow all the consequences in terms of poverty, homelessness and, in some inner cities, crime-related difficulties.

Mr. Burt: As the hon. Gentleman would expect, I am following his argument closely. I cannot see, however, that if he tries to return to a system of universal access to benefit, he is helping with the problem of dependency. If the opportunity exists and is provided universally, the determination to be on training schemes and the like may not be there. I do not see how making the benefit universally available would get over the problem of dependency. If the hon. Gentleman is suggesting that there should be some form of selection, to what extent is he offering something different from what the Government are offering?

Mr. McLeish: The Minister may have been following the arguments, but that is not the issue at stake. The Government sought to strike up a partnership with young people after the abolition of universal entitlement in 1988. They have not honoured their commitment to young people. On 14 March, 5,500 young Scots had been guaranteed training, but the Government have reneged on that guarantee. That issue has to be taken seriously. It is not

[Mr. McLeish]

about universality or the dependency culture; it is about the Government who have simply sold young people short and reneged on their commitments.

We are concerned about reneging on commitments because we need training and access to employment opportunities in every facet of Scottish society. The Government cannot have it both ways and most young Scots are being denied, or having to go through obstacle courses to get, certain forms of minimum income. At the same time, they are being denied opportunities for training that they were promised in 1988 and beyond.

The Government have smashed any partnership and destroyed young people's confidence in their ability to deliver. The debate is about moving the country on so that we do not patronise young people, but see them as a positive resource; it is all about encouraging opportunity and getting away from the sole issue of trying to make it as difficult as possible for young people to be financially independent. A YTS place paying £29.50 does not provide independence, but it produces self-worth by putting young people in a workplace environment; they are meeting other workers and are seen to be building and shaping their own future.

The Government must appreciate that it should be the right of every youngster between 16 and 18 to be given a chance. They should not be bogged down with keeping young people without financial support, and as part of that, reneging on their guarantee. That is unforgivable and the Government stand condemned. If they want to practise as well as preach independence, choice and freedom for young people, it must be about positive opportunities rather than keeping them hooked on dependency culture.

We need a complete rethink on youth policy in Britain. A number of facets of that crisis have been identified tonight—some of them have been raised by hon. Members—but we need an inquiry into the condition of young Scots and a fundamental review of youth training.

We hear nonsense from the Minister about there being more places available than young people taking them up. In my constituency, there are a large number of YT places, but no one in his right mind would want to go anywhere near them. That experience is mirrored throughout the country. Volume has to be linked to quality and when the Minister makes statements about large numbers of vacancies, he should look at the quality of vacancies and ask himself the following question: if he were that age, would he be happy to go into an environment where health and safety protection is non-existent and exploitation is high on the agenda? That is the nature of some of the YT places.

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr): Does the hon. Gentleman not feel that it is totally out of proportion to suggest that health and safety protection are non-existent in any training place in any factory, given the interest that the health and safety inspectorate takes in every workplace in the country? Has not he gone over the top?

Mr. McLeish: If the hon. Gentleman had listened properly, his comment about going over the top would not apply. I made the point in response to the Minister's claim that there was a massive number of vacancies. I could take the hon. Gentleman to so-called vacancies in Scotland; young people are right not to go near them. Careers services are often coerced into putting such places into the statistics to satisfy the Government, but, given a free rein, they would not do so. There are places where young people are being exploited and lack of health and safety provision is one aspect of that. I did not say that it was the same in every workplace, but a large number of vacancies are in that category.

I made the point that youth training needs a fundamental review. We have to change our attitude to young people. It must become more positive and less prejudiced and we should think in terms of opportunity rather than dependency. We also need to move to the concept of making young people as fully productive as possible. It is all about full employment in a modern context and allowing the self-worth of all youngsters to be generated in the way that they want—not in the way that Governments or employers determine—and to allow them to work in an environment of opportunity to give them the best possible start. We want positive young people with potential to be able to develop that to the fullest.

We believe that the Government's current policies on benefit and training simply do not satisfy the wishes of young people and, of course, we want the Government to tidy up their act on statistics to give us more facts and less smokescreen.

8.38 pm

Mr. George Kynoch (Kincardine and Deeside): I come to the debate on three different footings: first, as a former employer in Scotland; secondly, as a former director of a local enterprise company in Scotland—Moray, Badenoch and Strathspey local enterprise company; and, thirdly, as a parent of a daughter aged 20 and a son aged 17. One of my children has passed through the 16 to 17-year-old stage and the other has just left school and wants to go on to further education, so I am sympathetic to the problems that 16 and 17-year-olds have to face.

I am also here as an hon. Member representing constituents, seeing just what is happening in my constituency and my part of Scotland. The unemployment rate in the Grampian area, for example, at about 5.4 per cent. at present, is the best in Scotland.

This debate is not about costs but about the completely different attitude to employment and life in general of Conservative Members on the one hand and Opposition Members on the other. The Opposition parties have different complexions. At the Monklands, East by-election the Labour party fought hammer and tongs with the Scottish National party. I give my condolences to the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) for not quite making the winning post. However, I must also extend my condolences to the Labour party for its significantly reduced majority.

Mr. Wilson: Do the hon. Gentleman's condolences to the nationalists extend to regret that the 799 Tory votes did not go to the Scottish National party, in which case the Labour majority would have been lower?

Mr. Kynoch: I hear what the hon. Gentleman says. I was not responsible for the way in which Conservative voters voted in Monklands, East. However, general elections can often be a completely different matter from by-elections. I am drifting slightly from the point, but I am

sure that the by-election concerned the employment prospects of young people and the way in which they are treated in Monklands, East.

Mr. Gallie: Does my hon. Friend agree that many in Monklands, East simply were not Tory voters—probably gey few. Is not the Scottish National party now seen as the tartan socialists, the real socialists in Scotland, and was that not a factor in the election?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. That is sufficient on the Monklands by-election. Let us return to the motion.

Mr. Kynoch: My hon. Friend the Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) has a valid point. The Scottish National party is clearly the Scottish socialist party. The philosophy that it is putting forward today is one of total dependency. Young people who are leaving school are being offered the chance to go on to social security immediately. They have no incentive to make their own way.

I agree with the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) when he talks about the transition period for 16 and 17-year-olds between full-time education and going out into life as adults, having to pay their way and live in the outside world unprotected. It is important that there should be a gradual transition. They should not be given an easy route forward. They should not be given a benefit and do nothing in order to claim it. We need to provide the right environment in order to encourage Scots to better themselves and lead the industries of the world, as they have done in the past.

Mr. Salmond: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Kynoch: I should like to carry on for a minute. Not every 16 and 17-year-old needs to go down the benefit route. Many go on to higher education. The Government have already achieved their goal to have 30 per cent. of young people in higher education by the end of the century. In the 1970s, under a Labour Government, the proportion of young people in higher education was a mere 17 per cent. We must be doing something right in encouraging people to do what is better for them.

The hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) is no longer in her place, but she talked about when she was at university with a full grant. She said how things had changed and how students were no longer able to exist on their meagre takings through the grant or the loan system. I was at university at approximately the same time and I can remember only too clearly that when they were at university all students picked up part-time work. The hon. Lady implied that that was no longer possible, but my daughter, who is now at Heriot-Watt university, and her colleagues all manage to find part-time jobs. They do so because they want to and because they want extra pocket money. They want to go out and do it themselves; they do not want it handed to them on a plate as Opposition Members seem to wish.

Mr. Salmond: I am sure that Opposition Members will think, "Jolly good for George's daughter." The hon. Gentleman refers to young people in Scotland as "them". Will he consider the logic of his argument about the dependency culture? Why should his argument stop at withdrawing benefits from 16 and 17-year-olds? Would not the logic of his argument be to pick on the adults as well as the young people? What defence does he put for the safety net of universal benefit provision for adults? Is not the logic of his argument to withdraw it from everyone?

Mr. Kynoch: The hon. Gentleman is trying to say that we should be encouraging people to get off benefits, with which I heartily agree. It is right that we should try to have an economic environment in which we can get conditions right so that we can get employment up and unemployment down so that benefits are not required. However, we must still have that safety net for those undergoing severe hardship. That is exactly what the Government have done. It is hypocritical for the Opposition parties to talk about the dependency culture as they have when they want a dependency culture.

Mr. McLeish: This is an important point. Can the hon. Gentleman give us an idea of what proportion of Scots between 16 and 18 do not want to work? What is soul-destroying about a debate such as this is the presumption that young people do not want to be trained; do not want to work; do not want to get up in the morning. My experience is the opposite. I believe that the overwhelming majority of young people have enterprise and initiative. The predicated argument is always that in some way we must do down young people by putting them through a rigorous, punitive, coercive benefits regime because otherwise they may become dependent on benefits and may not want to go into the outside world.

Mr. Kynoch: I never said that. The hon. Gentleman talked about the difficult transition from the dependent, protected society of school life into the outside world. If young people are suddenly cast into the outside world without the gradual transition of guidance and encouragement to better themselves through training or further education, the tendency for some is, unfortunately, to fall into the trap of dependency on the state. That would not be serving our young people to the best advantage. It would not be fair on young people and it would not fulfil the objectives that the hon. Gentleman has tried to put forward tonight.

I followed part of the hon. Gentleman's argument, but the big problem with the Opposition parties is that one has clearly made a commitment and has said that in the unlikely event that it was in power in any shape or form it would have universal benefits—the nationalist party. I must be significantly dimmer than my hon. Friend the Minister because I am not clear whether the Labour party is advocating universal benefits. If it is, the hon. Member for Fife, Central would have his fingers smacked by the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) because there is the edict that the Labour party cannot pledge anything at present. The hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) is doing a wonderful presentation job with no substance. Like the hon. Member for Fife, Central, he, too, would gloss over an issue such as this and we would hear nothing of substance.

We are talking about more than just benefits. We are not talking about costs. We should not be looking at costs; we should be trying to provide an environment in which British industry becomes more competitive so that it can flourish and gain trade in opposition to other nations. Page 30 of the Government's recent competitiveness White Paper, "Helping Business to Win", states:

"Hard working people with high skills and the knowledge and understanding to use them to the full are the lifeblood of a

[Mr. Kynoch]

modern, internationally competitive economy."

I could not agree more. I come from the highly competitive textile industry in Scotland, which has passed through incredibly difficult times because of competition from low-wage countries in the far east, where products can be produced significantly cheaper. The Scottish industry had to produce something different. As time passes, British manufacturing industry must ensure that it produces quality products manufactured by skilled operatives, using the latest technology. It is imperative to provide the facilities that will allow youngsters to be trained in the proper skills and technology that industry requires.

I repeat that it is a question not only of costs but of producing a premium product that can command a premium price. Scotland in particular has the skills. Locate in Scotland has been incredibly successful in attracting investment because of the skills available there. If those skills are to be nurtured to make employment potential even greater, we must create a training environment such as never before.

Since the establishment of Scottish Enterprise and local enterprise companies, training opportunities for 16 and 17-year-olds have increased significantly with local interpretation.

Mrs. Ewing: Evidence taken by the Employment Select Committee on 21 October 1992 showed that 7,946 young people in the youth training guarantee group in Scotland were without a training place. Does the hon. Gentleman think that is progress?

Mr. Kynoch: Perhaps the hon. Lady will wait to hear my further remarks about training. I would refer to her constituency in particular, but, to be fair, her LEC bridges both Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise. I shall refer to the benefits of the skill seekers operation pioneered by Grampian Enterprise.

Some of the problems of the YTS scheme have been addressed by the skill seekers scheme. The Government have tried to introduce the right environment. They should not interfere and coerce industry to improve training, but cajole it into providing opportunities for 16 and 17-year-olds.

Local enterprise companies face the difficulty that much of business is reluctant to train. That is sad—but in recessionary times, short-sighted companies cut back and do not provide training places. It is important to place greater emphasis on youth training and I welcome Government expenditure in that direction. Expenditure on training throughout the United Kingdom in 1993-94 totalled £844 million and it will remain at approximately the same level in 1994-95—despite the fact that the number of 16 and 17-year-olds is falling and a higher proportion are remaining in further education.

In Scotland, the youth training and skill seekers budget totalled £86.5 million in 1993-94 and is forecast to increase to £93.5 million in 1994-95. We are seeing greater Government commitment to better training.

Grampian Enterprise pioneered skill seekers and training credits. In 1990, the Department of Employment offered the then Training Agency area offices the opportunity, in the run-up to the establishment of LECs, to pilot a system of training credits. Grampian Enterprise seized that opportunity, realising that there could be major benefits compared to the youth training to which the hon. Member for Moray referred. Youth training relied heavily on non-employed placement and disestablished the normal relationship between the employer and young employee. In Grampian, that resulted in a drop-out rate higher than 40 per cent.

Most young people leaving YT did so to enter a real job rather than the indoctrinated job that YT offered, so that they would have something of a future. They entered that job without substantial training, which was most unfortunate. With skill seekers, Grampian's primary objective was to re-establish the principle of real jobs with real training. Since 1991, the turnover of 16 and 17-year-olds in training has significantly improved.

When Grampian ended the YT scheme, there were 1,900 people in training. Only 32 per cent. of them had employed status, and those working towards a vocational qualification accounted for 50 per cent. The number of leavers achieving a vocational qualification was pitifully low, at 8 per cent.

Six hundred employers contracted to operate youth training schemes. The company that I operated took YTS youngsters and employed every one. We used it as a pilot skill seekers scheme. Having put those young people through training, we felt that we could then offer them jobs. Almost all of them accepted positions with the company.

After three years of operating skill seekers in Grampian, almost 4,000 young people are in training compared with 1,900 on 1 April 1991—of which 95 per cent. are employed. Ninety-five per cent. are working towards a vocational qualification and 54 per cent. of leavers achieve a qualification. The number of employers contracted to the scheme is 2,200, compared with 600 before. There is much greater co-operation with local industry. [*Interruption.*] I hear sedentary suggestions that my comments may be having a negative effect on some people. I am sure that, if they are having any effect, they are probably making youngsters—wherever they may be listening—rush off to Grampian Enterprise to take advantage of its skill seekers scheme.

I mentioned the number of trainees on that scheme who were aiming for recognised vocational qualifications. Many are seeking such qualifications at level 3—craft level —or above. The figures for YT are not currently available, but we know that more than twice as many trainees are now aiming for higher-level qualifications.

I believe that Government intervention—if we are to call it that—in the youth labour market is helping employers to train young employees and direct them towards recognised vocational qualifications, thus enhancing the skills pool. The Government have provided an opportunity for all youngsters to go out and better themselves, preparing themselves more effectively for the outside world with better skills and better equipment to provide British industry with higher-quality, improved products and more efficiency—thus bringing about a better economy, a better Britain and a better Scotland.

8.59 pm

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) for opening a debate on a subject in which I have been very interested for a long time. I am sorry that her speech had to include the ritualistic attack on the Labour party, but I

suppose that she can hardly refrain from that. Among other things, there was also the usual build-up in Scotland, using radio, television and other parts of the media to attack Labour. I find that sad: I should have thought that the obvious culprit responsible for the plight of 16 and 17-year-olds was the Tory party. It is rather pathetic that the hon. Lady aimed so much of her fire in the wrong direction.

However, I have no interest in bandying words with the nationalists tonight, because I know that the guilty people are the Government. I also know that, if ever there was an issue that demonstrated the silliness of nationalism in the United Kingdom, it is this one. The tragedy is that many of the young people who are sleeping rough in England's towns and cities—indeed, within a few hundred yards of where we are now—are Scots, people from our constituencies. Those young people have enough going against them; making them foreigners in the cities whither they have been cast out is surely an additional folly.

Mr. Salmond: That is a remarkable statement, coming from someone who was not going to make any attacks. I should have thought that it was an argument for a better economy in Scotland.

The hon. Gentleman was correct about one thing, however: he has been interested in this issue for a number of years. In his Adjournment debate in 1988, he said:

"The only urgent answer is to restore income support to youngsters who do not have jobs or YTS places".—[*Official Report*, 5 December 1988; Vol. 143, c. 144.]

When did he stop believing that that was the only urgent answer?

Mr. Wilson: I was not attacking the hon. Gentleman's party; I was attacking the concept of turning young Scottish people into foreigners in this city. That is not an attack on a political party. If the hon. Gentleman's party stands for that, it is his party's problem, but it does no favours to the young people whom we are discussing.

Mrs. Ewing: Answer the question. Will you pay the benefits?

Mr. Wilson: With respect to the hon. Lady, the hon. Gentleman asked two questions. I shall answer the second in my own way and my own time.

I did not use my Adjournment debate to attack any minority party; indeed, I was pleased to allow Mr. Jim Sillars, then Member of Parliament for Glasgow, Govan, a few minutes in which to speak. To his credit, he did not use that time to attack the Labour party; he attacked the Tories. Perhaps, as someone looking for votes in west central Scotland, he had a better idea of where the blame lay than the current members of the Scottish National party.

I do not believe that the past should be swept away. I believe that we owe the young people who have suffered under the current legislation more than that. We cannot simply move on, saying that things have changed and citing the reforms to which the Minister referred. In 1988, largely as a result of the efforts of a then junior social security Minister—the right hon. Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major)—what I described then as an evil piece of legislation was introduced. That legislation withdrew the right to benefit from 16 and 17-year-olds. The Government did that without thinking of the human consequences and the damage that would be done to young people.

I believe that that legislation should be permanently hung around the Prime Minister's neck. He was the Minister who was primarily responsible for it, and for the vast reservoir of human damage—indeed, the ending of life—that resulted from it. The Prime Minister did that on his way up the greasy pole; he should never be allowed to forget that he was responsible for that damage.

Mr. Kynoch: The hon. Gentleman seems to be neglecting all the safety net provisions that my hon. Friend the Minister outlined earlier. He is speaking as though the safety net was done away with, but it was not.

Mr. Wilson: I was about to deal with the safety net.

In my Adjournment debate in 1988, the Minister who replied was the right hon. Member for Chelsea (Mr. Scott), who has moved on to kicking the crutches away from the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill. He went through the litany of justifications for the measure. He said:

"I can think of nothing more debilitating for the mass of youngsters leaving education and entering the adult world than to have automatically to depend on state benefits."

I can think of something more debilitating: to leave young people without a job, without a training place and without a penny of legal income. That is what the Government did. He went on to say:

"the offer of a YTS place is guaranteed."

That was a falsehood then and, to a lesser extent, it is a falsehood now.

The Minister continued:

"In the 12 weeks since the new provisions took effect, 1,688 applications under the severe hardship provision have been received. In 1,139 cases, a direction resulted and in 549 a direction was refused."—[*Official Report*, 5 December 1988; Vol. 143, c. 147-48.]

The Minister said tonight that 11,000 severe hardship applications are made each month, 90 per cent. of which are accepted. But in the crucial early months and years of the legislation, about 500 applications a month were lodged. Five hundred people got through the hoops to make the applications, a third of which were disallowed. That prevailed for some two or three years, a little while before the present Minister took up his job, and no doubt he has made some useful changes.

That is where my description of the legislation as evil is justified. In those years, tens of thousands of young people were recklessly cast aside without a job, without a training place, without a pretence that the guarantee would be fulfilled and without the severe hardship allowance, to which at least many of them are now entitled. The measure was one of the cruellest and most despicable acts of the Government under Baroness Thatcher, but we should never forget the role of the present Prime Minister.

What brought about the change? Things were so bad, the human debris that was created was so extreme, that the Department of Social Security felt obliged to commission a survey from MORI, which drew some remarkable conclusions and which bear out what I have said. MORI conducted a survey of 500 youngsters, a self-selecting group because they had found their way into social security offices in the first place. The survey showed that 500 destitute youngsters had claimed for discretionary severe hardship payment. Almost half of them had slept rough. One in five had been sexually abused before leaving home. One in three of the boys had stolen or begged to obtain money. One in six was literally penniless when arriving at a DSS office, usually directed there by charities. That is what Conservative Members voted for in 1988. That is the scheme that the Prime Minister conceived and it had to be sorted out because of the wreckage that it had created.

Mr. Kynoch: Do I therefore take it that the hon. Gentleman, if not the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), is advocating the universal restoration of benefits for 16 and 17-year-olds?

Mr. Wilson: I shall answer that question by referring to the original purpose of the measure. It was never about saving money because the money involved was not large, and it is not large now. It is a diversion to talk about the cost of restoring this benefit.

There are three potential explanations showing why this was done in the first place: first, it would save money, which is a relatively unimportant argument; secondly, there were competing philosophies of what should happen to 16 and 17-year-olds, and whether they should be in the benefits system; and, thirdly—this was the major argument—with a stroke of the pen, the Government got all the 16 and 17-year-olds off the unemployment statistics. That is what they were doing in 1988 with the social security legislation. In one blow, they got 100,000 people off the unemployment statistics by the cruellest of logic.

As we all know, they are not unemployment statistics. They contain only those who are unemployed and eligible to claim benefit. If, by definition, we say that 16 and 17-year-olds are not eligible to claim benefit, no 16 or 17-year-olds show in the unemployment statistics. That is what the legislation was primarily about in 1988. To this day, I regard that as the biggest insult to 16 and 17-year-olds—those who still have no job, no benefit and no training place, and who are not even considered to have the human worth in this society to be counted in the unemployment statistics. Yet that is what was done, and it is one of the ways in which the unemployment statistics have been reduced. There is an army of 100,000 16 and 17-year-olds out there who have none of those things and who do not even count as an unemployment statistic.

I say this to any journalist who may hear this debate and who covers the subject of unemployment statistics: never again talk about the number of unemployed; talk about the number out of work and claiming benefit. As soon as one accepts the Tory terminology, one wipes the 100,000 16 and 17-year-olds from the face of the earth. That is what the social security legislation was about.

Labour will not fiddle the unemployment statistics. We will not leave anyone destitute in the streets. We will fulfil a guarantee—replacing the bogus guarantee that was given by the Government either to give proper training to young people or to make one of the other provisions available to them. I shall ask the Minister a direct question.

Mr. Kynoch: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Wilson: No; I must watch the time.

Things have moved on a great deal. Instead of 500 applications a month for severe hardship, a third of which were refused, the Minister proudly—and with some reason for that pride—told us that there are now 11,000 applications a month, of which 90 per cent. are accepted. As the Minister was not here, I shall repeat that the gap between the two statistics is two thirds of 500 and 90 per cent. of 11,000. That is the difference between the evil of what was done between 1980 and 1991 and the improved system which now functions. To that extent, the Minister is due congratulations. If he had anything to do with the earlier regime, he is due none. There has therefore been some change in that direction.

I shall ask the Minister a direct question: if roughly 10,000 youngsters a week are, to all intents and purposes, getting benefits through the system, do they count in the unemployment statistics? Are they regarded as unemployed people who are eligible to claim benefit? Is severe hardship allowance a benefit for that purpose? I am sure that the answers would be interesting. If not, it is simply another sleight of hand to keep them off the unemployment statistics.

I have some sympathy with the argument that it is not the best thing for young people to go straight on to benefit. I should prefer it if they went into training places or jobs. I invite Tory Members to come to my constituency and see the training centre at Moorpark house at Kilbirnie which is run by Cunninghame district council, where first-class training is given. It is not true to say—and no hon. Member has said it tonight—that all training is third rate or is exempt from health and safety or anything else. Some training is third rate, but training is good where proper resources are put in. That is the best thing for 16 and 17-year-olds—that or real jobs. But what must be in place is a real safety net for every 16 and 17-year-old who has neither.

Mr. Kynoch: I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way again. Does he realise that skill seekers, which was pioneered in Grampian and to which I referred, will be available throughout the local enterprise company structure in 1995?

Mr. Wilson: I have discussed the question of skill seekers with Ayrshire Enterprise. The scheme has some worth, as many of the schemes and many of the people who are trying to implement them have worth. No one is denigrating training. We are saying that we should have more and better training and stop the pretence that everyone already has access to training.

I shall finish by referring to the statistics for my constituency. I obtained today the Scottish Office careers service management returns for my constituency. At the Ardrossan office, 59 youngsters are in the guarantee and are registered for youth training. Twenty of them are due an offer of a place which starts immediately and do not have one. At the Irvine office, which covers the Garnock valley, 80 youngsters are in the guarantee and registered for youth training. Thirteen are due a place immediately and do not have it. In Ayrshire as a whole, which includes the constituency of the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie), 335 youngsters are in the guarantee and eligible for a place and 111 do not have a place. That accords closely with the figures for Scotland which my hon. Friend the Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) quoted.

However, the argument is not about numbers. If one innocent youngster since 1988 under the legislation has been offered the guarantee of a youth training place and then denied it, was not given the financial support and was put in the position described in the MORI survey, it was an offence against the House and against humane government.

Yes, there have been improvements, but the scheme is based on a flawed concept. If there is a guarantee, everyone should have a place. If there is not a guarantee, let us hear it honestly tonight and let us create the missing thousands of places. The fact that so many youngsters have suffered

under the scheme should be acknowledged historically. A Labour Government will fulfil that guarantee and no one will be left destitute.

As I said at the beginning of my speech, I do not care if the nationalists attack the Labour party until they are blue in the face. It does not seem to do them a great deal of good. People in Scotland and the rest of Britain—it is a British issue—understand that Labour will not leave young people in that position. There will be a guarantee. No one will be left destitute. There will be good training, real jobs and a genuine safety net. That is what Labour offers and I am proud to offer it. The historical judgment of what was done in 1988 by this Government and this Prime Minister to that generation of young people should never be forgotten.

9.17 pm

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr): It disappoints me to find so few Members in the Chamber tonight. Representatives of the Scottish National party are here, although only in the latter stages of the debate have they managed to bring in all the SNP Members. There are no Plaid Cymru Members present. There are no Ulster Unionist, Democratic Unionist or Social Democratic and Labour party Members. Only three socialist Members have been present during the debate at any one time. There are no Liberals in the Chamber. Perhaps that reflects the words of the motion and suggests that it was defeated even before it got off the ground and even before the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) rose to her feet to advance the argument.

In recognising that people felt that it was not worth while coming to the Chamber for the debate and despite the passionate words, to which I well relate in some respects, of the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson), I suggest that if we went back to the past we would do no favours to the 16 and 17-year-olds. As the hon. Member for Moray said, there is something wrong about a system which allows idle hands. It creates a dead-end society. There is something fundamentally wrong with allowing 16 and 17-year-olds to lie in their beds and expect the state to pass cash to them.

The hon. Member for Cunninghame, North suggested that the 1988 legislation took 100,000 young people off the unemployment lists. I dispute the figures that he used earlier. My contacts in the enterprise companies, whether in the north or south of Scotland assure me that they can guarantee places for every youngster who comes to them. No youngsters are turned away.

Given the words of the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North, if a youngster were turned away with no place, the Government guarantee and the contract would be broken at that point and the youngster should be entitled to benefits. If they want to work, but cannot, that is a different matter, but that is not the case. Youth training, in whatever guise, instils discipline and interest in youngsters. I fully appreciate that it is not all top class, but it is worth while because of the great range of opportunities offered to young people throughout the country by people who have put much effort into training initiatives.

Yesterday, a question was asked in the House about the opportunities for engineering apprenticeships in Scotland —they are still alive and kicking. One company in my constituency Aviall, which maintains aeroplane jet engines, is recruiting more and more engineering apprentices every year. They are highly skilled and the apprenticeships highly valued.

When I listen to the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) and other Opposition Members, I wonder how many of them had spent time in a workshop, a factory or on the industrial scene. Many of them seem to come straight from education to this place and they miss out. I must inform the hon. Member for Fife, Central—despite the fact that he is not here at present—that his comments on safety are not recognisable, when one takes into consideration the role of health and safety inspectorates in the modern industrial world. Young people, in particular, are guarded within the United Kingdom workplace. Ill betide any employer who contravenes the United Kingdom's health and safety regulations.

To return to Aviall and the apprenticeships that it is offering, 80 per cent. of its apprentices achieve higher national standard. That is not something to hang our heads in shame about when we discuss youth training. It was not achieved in the past and it offers much for the future. It says a lot, not merely about the training skills and education facilities available, but about the quality of our young people.

As I recognise that there is only limited time, I shall refer briefly to youth training. Back in the early days, when youth training schemes first started, I took on such a scheme. Not all the youngsters involved gained employment with the company that I represented, but they all certainly gained work experience and moved on to other workplaces. About 75 per cent. of them achieved jobs, and that was on what was considered to be an underrated youth training scheme.

Today, we have moved much further forward. Huge numbers of youngsters go into higher education in Scotland and that, in itself, is a tribute to the facilities that the Government have put on offer.

Earlier we heard about student grants and students' difficulties. If we analyse what happens in other European countries, we recognise that our young people are not all that badly done by.

I shall mention one point regarding the speech of the hon. Member for Fife, Central. He said that there was a suggestion that Conservative Members believed that young people did not want to work. Quite honesty, that is totally untrue. Conservatives believe that people should use their resources to the maximum, and that there is no more important resource in this country than our young people. Conservatives desire to put them to work.

It is all right for Opposition Members to come out with woolly words, saying that we need to give youngsters real jobs. The Government have created employment opportunities in this country and, while employment is falling in every country across Europe, it is rising in this country. That is important, and it offers hope to our young people.

The Scottish National party motion is a total waste of time, and the absence of hon. Members from the Chamber is recognition that it makes a valueless contribution to the debate. I urge my hon. Friends to reject the motion.

9.25 pm

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): I shall try to answer the final comment of the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie). He was self-contradicting, as that was not how he started his speech.

The Scottish National party took this subject matter for our supply day debate this evening for three main reasons. The first was that it is a hugely important issue in its own right, and the fact that the Chamber is not stuffed to the gunnels is more of a comment on hon. Members than it is on either the issue or the motion. If we were to apply "Gallie's law" to the various subjects that are talked about in the Chamber, we would rapidly draw the conclusion that most hon. Members do not believe that any Scottish subject is worth while on any occasion. The Government Benches are seldom full when we debate a Scottish issue.

The second reason why we chose the subject—I admit it openly—was that we wanted to tease out some of the neanderthal attitudes towards young people that have been displayed in the speeches of the hon. Member for Ayr and other Government Members. Their idea is that if people were entitled to benefit, they would somehow be tempted away from training places or the hope of career, that they would want to lie in their beds all day if they got benefit and that they would not have an incentive to get out in the big wide world. *[Interruption.]* Those phrases have come up during the debate.

The hon. Member for Ayr said that he resented the impression given by the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) that the idea among Conservative Members was that young people did not want to work. What other impressions can there be if the underlying argument of those who oppose the motion is that if young people are entitled to benefit, they will not go on a training scheme and will not go out to start a career?

Mr. Gallie: I suggest to the hon. Gentleman that his assumption is totally wrong. Conservatives have been providing training opportunities that will give value to youngsters in the years ahead. We want to ensure that youngsters do not grow up with the dependency tendency that is so often encouraged by socialists and by the hon. Gentleman. The opportunities given to youngsters these days demonstrate that we value youngsters and that we are attempting to achieve the best from them.

Mr. Salmond: Even the hon. Gentleman's interventions are self-contradicting. That is exactly the point. The argument that underlies his attitude is that somehow if people were entitled to the princely sum of £27 a week of automatic benefit, they would veer away from a training course or a future career. That is a remarkable comment on the Conservative party's attitude towards young Scots and to young people elsewhere.

The third reason why we chose this subject for the debate—again, I openly admit it—was to try to tempt some firm commitment from the Labour party, but I am afraid that the debate has failed on that. There should be a firm commitment on that issue. I wish that the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) had been able to give tonight the same commitment that he managed to give as a Back-Bench Member in 1988. It is entirely legitimate for one party to ask another what commitment underpins its attitude, if anything, and what underpins its policy, if anything.

When I was preparing for this debate in the Library, my musings were interrupted at various times by the stamping of feet from above. I was informed by an aggrieved librarian that that was the typical antics of the 1922 Committee at its end-of-term bash. I thought that the only thing that could possibly provoke such unanimity from the 1922 Committee was the resignation of the Prime Minister, but, no, apparently the Prime Minister did not resign this evening.

Two things struck me about that enthusiastic foot stamping. First that, obviously, Rosyth had not been raised as an issue at that meeting—or perhaps Scottish Conservatives were elsewhere. Secondly, no one in that end-of-term rally could have reminded the Prime Minister that he was the Minister who withdrew benefits from youngsters in 1988. It is this Prime Minister who made one of the most disgraceful interventions during the European election campaign, when he argued that there should be a criminal offence of "aggressive begging". My party and the other Opposition parties believe that if any criminal offence was committed, it was committed by those Tory pickpockets who removed benefit from young people. That is the offence, not the consequences of it that we see, with so many youngsters on the streets in Scotland and elsewhere.

The heart of the debate falls into two parts. First, the Minister failed to give a satisfactory answer to my repeated intervention asking for his explanation of the Shelter estimate that, last year, up to 5,000 youngsters in Scotland slept rough at some time. That is related to a number of factors—for example, housing provision. One quarter of homeless applications come from young single people aged between 16 and 24. More than 10,000 young people applied as homeless to district and island councils in Scotland in the previous financial year. Of those, only 3,000 were deemed to be in priority need and, of them, just 1,900 secured permanent accommodation. There is simply not enough emergency accommodation in Scotland, because only one in five of young people who apply for it is admitted. It has also been revealed that 45 per cent. of those staying in such accommodation had slept rough at some time. That is the basis for the Shelter estimate that up to 5,000 youngsters in Scotland slept rough at some time last year was reached.

The Minister said that there was a variety of reasons for that appalling statistic. I suggest that the reason that up to 5,000 young people slept rough in Scotland last year is that those young people had no houses, no jobs, no available training and, in many cases, no hope whatsoever. As the Minister and his Scottish colleagues bear the burden of the responsibility for the inter-reaction of housing provision and benefit, would it not be reasonable to acknowledge that, if 5,000 youngsters are sleeping rough in Scotland, the system for which the Minister claims so much credit is not working in practice on the streets of Scotland?

The second issue at the heart of the debate is whether a discretionary or universal scheme provides sufficient protection. There has been a massive growth in the number of people applying for, and getting, severe hardship payments in the 16 to 17-year-old category. However, that payment was never envisaged as a mainstream provision for such significant numbers. It has been used to mop up the effects of recession and the failure to meet the guarantee of a YT place for all who want one.

During the debate, I was struck by the way in which the hon. Member for Fife, Central and other Opposition

Members have referred to the thousands of young people who are in the qualification category for a guaranteed training place but cannot get one.

Mr. Gallie: That is not true.

Mr. Salmond: The hon. Gentleman may shake his head, but those details have been offered for constituencies and in global figures. Those details have even been given by local enterprise companies in evidence to a House of Commons Committee. If the hon. Member has not bothered to read the detail on offer, there is little that we can do to educate him. Will the hon. Gentleman take it from me that thousands of youngsters cannot get the training place which the Government originally guaranteed?

Mr. Gallie: I dispute that. The Scottish Select Committee and I have been in touch with enterprise companies throughout the country and they advise us that a place is available for any youngster who wants to go on a youth training scheme. If all the places were taken up, there may not be enough, but places are certainly available on Ayrshire Enterprise for youngsters now applying.

Mr. Salmond: Every time the hon. Gentleman intervenes or makes a speech, he contradicts himself in the process. He should accept that a mountain of evidence shows that thousands of youngsters in Scotland cannot get training places. He says that if every youngster available for a training place wanted to take it up, there would be a shortage of places. He thereby admits that the devil's bargain struck by the Government when they withdrew benefits from 16 and 17-year-olds, on the basis that a training place would be available for everyone, has not been kept.

Mr. Kynoch: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will not disagree with a fax that I received today from Mr. Bruce Armitage, director of training at Grampian Enterprise, about the enterprise company in the hon. Gentleman's area of Banff and Buchan, which has the highest number of youths undergoing skill seekers training of any district council. It says;

"In holding a firm line on employment with training we have not experienced any Youth Guarantee difficulties. At the end of March 1994, we had only 12 young people awaiting an offer under the Youth Guarantee."

Will the hon. Gentleman respond to that?

Mr. Salmond: I was making a general point. I am extremely pleased that youngsters in my constituency are finding things better than others elsewhere in Scotland. Unemployment in my constituency is lower than the Scottish average—it is rising fast now because of a number of factors in fishing and other industries—but it cannot be considered typical of the whole of Scotland, which is what we are meant to be debating.

In evidence given to the House of Commons by local enterprise companies, it was estimated that up to 9,000 youngsters in Scotland at that time—admittedly, it was 1992—had not gained access to the training place which they were guaranteed.

Mr. Kynoch: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Salmond: I have already given way generously to the hon. Gentleman. I shall make the point once again that the bulk and burden of evidence are crystal clear. Thousands of youngsters in Scotland have found the offer of a training place meaningless because a place has not been offered.

Before those interventions, I was saying that the nub of the debate was whether a universal or a discretionary benefit was appropriate under those circumstances and I pointed to the massive growth in the number of people applying for severe hardship payments. Benefits Agency figures show that, in 1989, 10,609 successful applications were made for severe hardship payments in the UK and that, by 1992, that figure had risen to 77,906. There are two ways of looking at those statistics. First, one can argue that the severe hardship payment, which was originally a selective means of assistance and a discretionary benefit, has effectively become a safety net provision. For that reason, while the problem has not gone away, it has been ameliorated compared with a few years ago.

I hope that I am not doing the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North an injustice, but that was his basic argument. He was giving the Government too much credit because credit is not due. Clearly, tens of thousands of youngsters suffered when no effective safety net was in place. It can be argued that, because the severe hardship payment has become more than a temporary provision, some safety net is now in place. However, another way to look at the matter is to say that if the emergency and severe hardship payments have become a universal benefit, the argument for not having a universal benefit in the first place has been removed.

If we concede this point of principle on the issue of 16 to 17-year-olds, it will be replayed throughout the income support and social security system. If it is conceded that discretionary benefits can be fair to everyone and provide an effective safety net, we shall witness the end of the universal benefit system, not only for 16 and 17-year-olds, but for whole categories of the population.

As I said earlier to the hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Kynoch), who seemed to attribute qualities of self-reliance to people if benefits were withdrawn from them, it would be as appropriate to argue that of an adult Scot as it would be to argue it of a 16 to 17-year-old Scot. If he picks on the 16 to 17-year-olds—if that is the underlying argument behind the policy prescription that the Government are following—why not pick on a range of other groups of the population?

My warning to those people who are not sympathetic to the argument in the motion would therefore be that if it is accepted that a selective discretionary benefit can provide an effective safety net for 16 to 17-year-olds, that argument will be replayed throughout the social security system, and sooner rather than later. It has been accepted, at least in some parts of the Labour Benches, that it is not a financial issue. The sums involved are minor in the global public finance sector. A philosophical question is at stake.

It is argued by Conservative Members that youngsters, if given the option of a safety net, will accept that comfortable safety net and stay in their beds, as was said earlier, instead of going out into the big, bad, wide world and finding a career or training place. That argument underlies the Conservative party position.

The Labour party's position is that it cannot give a spending commitment on anything. Why not?

Mr. Wilson: If the hon. Gentleman has just recognised that it is not primarily a spending issue, why does he immediately afterwards attack the Labour party for not

[Mr. Wilson]

giving a spending commitment? I have given, and other Labour party spokesmen have given, a clear guarantee that every youngster will be covered in one of the various ways mentioned. Any sensible party should devise the best modern way to assist all those youngsters. If the hon. Gentleman accepts that it is not primarily a spending commitment, I find it difficult to understand what he disagrees about.

Mr. Salmond: That is exactly the point. I accept that it is not basically a financial issue. The sums involved are incremental in public finance, but there is a question of the philosophy of the Labour party at present, which unfortunately means that no spending commitment, however minor, can be given to any group of people, because it breaks the shadow Treasury law that one must not give a spending commitment on anything.

The Labour party was thrown into confusion about that subject. It should have had the political initiative, as a result of the Prime Minister's disastrous intervention—about beggars in the street—in the European election campaign. However, within days, the Labour party's iron law on spending commitments had thrown the Opposition on to the defensive. In the immortal words of the shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer, something must be done as long as there are no budgetary implications.

Some issues inevitably have budgetary implications, even if those are minor as regards total Government finance, and this is one of them. At base, it is not an issue of finance or Budgets or money, but a moral issue about the withdrawal of benefit from young people in 1988—a wrong that was done to tens of thousands of youngsters, for whom the consequences have been severe—and about how it can possibly be claimed that an emergency provision can fulfil the safety net role which, elsewhere in the benefit system, depends on a universal benefit application.

Why on earth should 16 to 17-year-olds, of all people, some of whom are the most vulnerable groups in the population and 5,000 of whom ended up sleeping rough in Scotland at some time last year, be singled out for the trial run of the selective benefits system down to which the Conservatives will undoubtedly drag this country?

If the Labour party surrenders that principle to the Conservative party when there is very little finance involved, how on earth will it make a stand on any other principle? It is time to treat the subject as a moral issue, not a financial one. It is time for other hon. Members to justify themselves to 16 and 17-year-olds by joining my hon. Friends and me in the Lobby tonight.

9.44 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. William Hague): This has been an interesting debate. It was opened by the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing), who began by deploring the absence of hon. Members from other parties. The effect was slightly lessened at the time by the absence of any other hon. Members from the Scottish National party. The hon. Lady has since been joined by some colleagues.

We have had a full debate with some excellent speeches from my hon. Friends the Members for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) and for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Kynoch). We also heard some interesting speeches from the Opposition.

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): The reason why I was not present earlier in the debate was that I was away defending people against another aspect of Government policy—the withdrawal of the ability of adult trainees to train. The Government's attack on adults is mirrored by their attack on youth. I am here to support the Scottish National party, which believes in defending all people who need help and are being denied it by the Government.

Mr. Hague: I am glad to have been of service to the hon. Gentleman by providing him with the opportunity to state his case and show his presence in the debate. His remarks tie in with some of the more outlandish comments made by the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond), who tried to portray the Government's policy on 16 and 17-year-olds as a sign of the Government's intention towards the rest of the population. The difference between 16 and 17-year-olds and the rest of the population is that we can guarantee that they will have education or training places. He said that there seemed to be a presumption by the Government that people do not want to work—

Mrs. Ewing: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Hague: Let me make a little progress and then I shall give way. I want to answer as many points as possible in the time available.

The Government presumption is the opposite of that suggested by the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan. They presume that people want to work, obtain education and training. Now, the overwhelming majority in that age group are able to do so.

We should knock on the head at the outset the argument advanced at various times in the debate that the youth training system—the guarantee—is not working and large numbers of people are unable to obtain a place. My hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside spoke of his experience in regions of Scotland, including the Grampian region. He mentioned that in one instance only 12 people could not be found a place.

The most up-to-date overall figures for Scotland—for which I think the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) asked—are that, as of 31 May, there are 4,308 people in the guarantee group, more than 1,000 of whom have been waiting for more than eight weeks. The number of vacant training places is more than 4,000. It takes time to fit some people into the right places, but those are the overall statistics, which we should bear in mind. Where problems arise, resources are directed at them. Fife Enterprise has allocated an additional £500,000 to increase by 400 the number of youth training places available in the Fife region. I hope that the hon. Member for Fife, Central will welcome that.

The hon. Member for Moray asked about the cumbersome claims process. Most of the decision-making on severe hardship has been devolved from the central unit in Glasgow to local offices. That makes the process quicker and the local office can respond to local circumstances. We want to be particularly careful that vulnerable young people receive appropriate support. We have nominated an officer in each Benefits Agency district office who has special responsibility for 16 and 17-year-olds.

We have improved training to make staff more aware of the specific needs of young people and how to deal with them sympathetically. We have also issued a best practice guide to staff, stressing the vulnerability and sensitivity of

the group. We have improved contacts with voluntary organisations and local groups that deal with young people so that they are aware of the support available.

The Benefits Agency's plans to introduce a one-stop service will be particularly relevant to people in that group. They will eventually be able to have all their benefits business dealt with at one time, in one place and by one person.

Mrs. Ewing: The Minister quotes figures for the youth training guarantee, but the fact is that many young people are not guaranteed a place on YT, and they certainly do not have a job at the end of it. He also talks about a one-stop agency for young people, but when will it start? The three offices that young people have to go through now deter many of them; it is a very bureaucratic process, and difficult to understand. We need a date.

Mr. Hague: The guarantee is available to all who wish to take advantage of it, and most young people go on from training to get a job, or they undergo further education or training. The process is succeeding.

The Benefits Agency's plans to introduce a one-stop service were announced some months ago and are proceeding. We cannot give a date by which the whole process will be finished, but there will be established in the agency a one-stop shop, and that is the ultimate objective of the agency's work.

For the moment, the Glasgow unit remains responsible for decisions not to pay and for complex cases. It also closely monitors decisions that are taken. We are reviewing more effective procedures for claiming income support under severe hardship as part of our deliberations on the operations of the job seeker's allowance.

The hon. Member for Moray claimed that other European countries were more generous to young people. I must take this opportunity to put her right. In most EC countries, social assistance benefits are not generally payable to young people under the age of 18. In Belgium, they are usually payable from 18, except also to people who are pregnant or looking after a child. In Spain, they are payable from the age of 25, except to people looking after a handicapped person or child. In France, they become payable from the age of 25, and are also payable to those looking after at least one child. In Ireland, 18 is the relevant age, in Luxembourg, it is 30 and in the Netherlands, it is 18. Hence the hon. Lady's assertion that other European countries are more generous to young people of this age group does not quite correspond with the facts. I hope that she will study with more care some of the figures from the Community.

The hon. Member for Fife, Central asked about the quality of training places on YT. Stringent requirements are placed on TECs and LECs in respect of the quality of training places. The types of places are geared to the needs of the local labour market. Seventy-six per cent. of those completing training enter jobs, further education or training. Seventy-four per cent. of YT leavers completing their training in July 1993 gained a qualification or credits towards one. That is evidence that the quality of training is good, and local enterprise companies are required by contracts with Scottish Enterprise or Highlands and Islands Enterprise to offer high-quality training appropriate to the needs of the local labour market. If contracts are being breached, cases should be brought to the attention of the relevant chief executive.

Mr. Salmond: If the Minister is correct and all these training places and opportunities are available to young people, will he answer the question that his colleague could not? In Hague's promised land, why were 5,000 youngsters in Scotland, according to Shelter, sleeping rough last year?

Mr. Hague: There is no question of "if it is right that these places are available". They are available. There is no reason for anyone to sleep rough on the streets of Scotland tonight. It is, in any case, rather misleading to talk about 5,000, because it is an estimated figure for the whole year. At any one time, the number is probably nearer several hundred. There is no need for any of those people to be there. Severe hardship payments are available for those who need them and there is a guarantee of education or training for the whole of that age group.

Mr. Salmond: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Hague: No, I really must get on. The hon. Gentleman made a 20-minute speech before I began my wind-up and I have answered his point to the satisfaction of a large proportion of the House.

The idea that the offer of a guaranteed place is a falsehood is not true. All 16 and 17-year-olds are guaranteed a YT place and a training allowance. If some choose not to take advantage of the opportunities available, it is their choice. The Government believe that young people should make a positive choice for training rather than becoming dependent on benefit. The overwhelming majority make that choice and want to take up education and training.

We want young people to make the most of the opportunities provided. That is consistent with the policies that run through the current review of social security—focusing benefits on those who need them, removing disincentives to work and making sure that social security is affordable.

We believe that young people should start their adult lives equipped for the future and not dependent on benefits. They should not be encouraged to be dependent on the resources of the state. It is better to train in new skills and increase their ability to earn for themselves. That view has wide support on all sides of the House and Labour Members have expressed support for it in principle this evening.

It adds up to a sensible strategy of offering education or training to all, removing any financial incentive not to take up training, creating the right attitude and leaving only a tiny percentage of the total in the age group suffering hardship and making special provision for them if they do.

I wonder what Scottish National party Members think would be gained by a change of the kind they have advocated? Have they thought through the consequences? What would happen if their proposals, such as they are, were agreed to? What would happen if we were to tell 16 and 17-year-olds that they would be better off than they are today if they left home? What would happen to the quality of our work force in future if we told 16 and 17-year-olds that the state would support them, irrespective of their willingness to be trained? What sort of nation are SNP Members trying to build?

We also have to ask how the SNP proposes to pay for it. Labour Members were asked to state their policy this evening. With all due credit to the hon. Member for Fife,

[Mr. Hague]

Central, who made clarification upon clarification of his party's policy, he retreated into a fog of obfuscation. There is no clear Labour party policy on the matter.

We are debating a motion which is only one sentence. The Scottish National party is clearly in favour of it. The Government are against it. We do not know whether the Labour party is for or against it, even though we had a lengthy speech from the hon. Member for Fife, Central. It is even more disturbing that Labour Members do not know whether they are for or against it; they are waiting for the Social Justice Commission to make some pronouncement and, even then, we do not know whether they will be for or against it.

At least we can give SNP Members some credit for being consistent and knowing what they want to do. It is a pity that they have so many competing spending priorities, such as the commitment to a new national household minimum income or to campaigning for a common Euro-pension of £90 for a single person and £130 for a couple. I do not know how they propose to pay for that, particularly in an independent Scotland. None of it was thought through before they tabled the motion.

It is strange that the SNP chose this subject for its Opposition half-day debate. Why did it not choose to debate the Scottish economy? Presumably, because it is improving. Why did it not choose to discuss unemployment in Scotland? Presumably, because it is falling. Why did it not choose to debate inward investment in Scotland? Presumably, because it is so substantial.

Instead, the SNP chose to debate a policy based on misconceptions. It would be damaging in its effect, it is out of step with the policies of other countries, its consequences have been ill-thought-through and it is put forward without the slightest indication of how it is to be financed. It thoroughly deserves to be rejected.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 2, Noes 121.

Division No. 291] **[10.00 pm**

AYES

Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Skinner, Dennis

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Alex Salmond and
Mr. Andrew Welsh.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Bates, Michael
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chapman, Sydney
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Devlin, Tim
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Elletson, Harold
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Fabricant, Michael
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Gallie, Phil
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Gillan, Cheryl
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Hague, William
Harris, David
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Lidington, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pickles, Eric
Rathbone, Tim
Richards, Rod
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spink, Dr Robert
Sproat, Iain
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Andrew MacKay and
Mr. Irvine Patnick.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments) and agreed to.*

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House recognises that vulnerable 16 and 17 year olds and those facing severe hardship continue to have access to benefits; believes that it is in the long term interests of 16 and 17 year olds that they do not go straight from school on to benefits, but into training, employment or further or higher education; and fully endorses the Government's training guarantee and the continued expansion of vocational, further and higher education.

Mrs. Ewing: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Given the importance that many hon. Members attach to policy matters, is it in order for the official Opposition in particular, but also the Liberal Democrats, to abstain in such a vital vote?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Lady is an experienced campaigner in the House; she knows that that is not a point of order for me.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): With permission, I shall put together the motions relating to European Community documents.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(9) (European Standing Committees),

ENERGY AND ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COHESION

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 5074/94, relating to energy and economic and social

cohesion; and supports the Government's view that, while energy may make a welcome contribution to economic and social cohesion, energy projects, policies and programmes should not be used specifically to promote cohesion objectives unless it is clearly appropriate to do so, and that the development of an increasingly competitive and efficient energy sector has an important role to play in the economic progress of the Community.

GUARANTEES FOR CONSUMER GOODS AND AFTER SALES SERVICE

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 10635/93 relating to guarantees for consumer goods and after sales service, and endorses the Government's response to the Commission.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

Question agreed to.

Statutory Instruments, &c.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

That the draft Local Authorities (Charges for Land Searches) Regulations 1994, which were laid before this House on 4th May, be approved.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

Question agreed to.

WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

That the draft Weights and Measures (Cosmetic Products) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 10th May, be approved.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

Question agreed to

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

That the draft Weights and Measures (Intoxicating Liquor) (Amendment) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 10th May, be approved.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

Question agreed to.

DEFENCE

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

That the draft Army, Air Force and Naval Discipline Acts (Continuation) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 23rd May, be approved.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

Question agreed to.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

That the draft Betting and Lotteries (Northern Ireland) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 24th May, be approved.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

Question agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

That the draft Agriculture (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Northern Ireland) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 24th May, be approved.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

Question agreed to.

FEES AND CHARGES

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

That the draft Seed Potatoes (Fees) (Scotland) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 16th June, be approved. —*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

Question agreed to.

PETITIONS

Elmstead Market (Travellers' Site)

10.11 pm

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): It is my honour and duty to present a petition from the parishioners of Elmstead Market. It concerns a gipsy site that is proposed for Grove arm, Elmstead Market, by Essex county council. It is contrary to the local plan, and will encourage development, waste agricultural land and pose a risk to historic woodland; it should not be proceeded with without the public inquiry to which the petition refers.

Out of an electorate of 1,353, 997 people—73.5 per cent.—have signed the petition, and 94.4 per cent. of those have supported it; only 59 of those asked to sign it declined. It has the strong support of all the residents of Elmstead.

The Petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons should ask the Secretary of State for the Environment to establish a full public enquiry as soon as a planning application has been made.

To lie upon the Table.

Military Bands

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): I have a petition on behalf of nearly 10,000 of my constituents, many of whom have worked with the campaign to keep the Royal Marines School of Music in Deal. It reads:

To the honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled.

The Humble petition of the residents of the District of Deal, Kent and beyond,

Sheweth

That there is concern in Deal and beyond about the Government's review of military bands and its impact on the Royal Marines School of Music remaining in Deal; That the people of Deal believe the Royal Marines School of Music should remain in Deal; That the people of Deal and beyond hereby demonstrate the considerable strength of feeling of the local community towards retaining the School of Music in Deal; That the people of Deal trust that any review of military bands will lead to the most sensible national solution, namely the development of a combined services School of Music in Deal because of its first rate suitability for such a role, both financially and logically.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House will appeal to the Secretary of State for Defence to intervene to ensure the retention of the Royal Marines Music School in Deal. And your petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray etc."

I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to present this petition, which is hugely important to my constituents and many local societies, including the Royal Marines Association, the Men of Kent, the Deal Society and many others in Deal who have a long and close connection with the Royal Marines School of Music.

To lie upon the Table.

Local Government (Cleveland)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

10.14 pm

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): May I say at the outset that I and my parliamentary colleagues who have supported the four district option for Cleveland—my hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson), the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin), whom I am glad to see in his place, and the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Bates)—fully support the decision that the Government announced yesterday on the future of Cleveland?

The Minister for Local Government and Planning announced that he was mindful of the need to ensure a smooth transition, with adequate time for the planning of change. It is clear, given the time needed to prepare the new unitary authorities, that a start date of 1 April 1996, with elections to be held in May 1995, will fulfil that requirement of a smooth transition with adequate time for planning.

The announcement has the support of the leaders and chief executives of the four district councils of Stockton, Langbaurgh, Hartlepool and Middlesbrough. Indeed, in a letter to my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), the leader of Middlesbrough council, Councillor Mike Carr, stated:

"Firstly (the new arrangements) will allow us to have elections before the new authorities commence their work. We have always argued that the new authorities should have a new mandate so that local people could exercise their democratic choice, and so the new councils could genuinely be a synthesis of the best of the two tiers of the current system.

Secondly, no less importantly, it will introduce a sense of certainty in the process and a realistic timetable. We believed that we could 'deliver' by April 1995, but it would have been a close run thing. We certainly hope that the announcement removes a serious potential source of friction for the County Council and that they will see their way in cooperating with the transfer of responsibilities."

It is not necessary for me to repeat the long litany of trajectories that we have been carried along to reach the point where the Minister made his statement yesterday. Suffice it to say that Cleveland county council was in the first tranche of the rolling programme of reviews announced on 3 June 1992 by the former Secretary of State, the right hon. and learned Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard). Because they were in the first tranche of reviews, their case will be settled before others. It is right and proper, and indeed inevitable, that when the draft orders have been through a final consultative procedure—a final turn of the wringer—an order should be laid to enable the Government's stated intention to be met.

The terms of the order should be such that, first, the districts can begin the preparatory work leading to the creation of the new authorities and, secondly, there can be certainty among the work force of the existing Cleveland county council as to their personal future.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): Is not it absolutely essential that the local authorities are under some compulsion, particularly Cleveland county council, to co-operate with the planning process before the new authorities are established?

Mr. Bell: The question of compulsion in a democracy rests uneasy with us all. What we always seek is a consensus. What we hope we will see in this situation is a consensus approach to the problems of the four new authorities when the time comes.

From a party that still believes in a fundamental and irreversible shift in the balance of wealth and power to workers and their families, it will hardly surprise the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment that we place great store on the future of the Cleveland county council work force. We are aware, as no doubt he is aware, of the serious uncertainty over job security during the review of local government overall, which is having a corrosive effect on staff morale and, indeed, employee relations. That uncertainty helps, rather than hinders, those who wish to resist change.

The Association of District Councils takes the view, as do the Association of County Councils and the Local Government Management Board, that the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 will make it impossible in practice for outgoing authorities to dismiss staff not placed in posts by vesting day, and such staff must be transferred for the successor authorities to deal with. It is my understanding that the Secretary of State for Wales and the Welsh Office are coming independently to a similar conclusion with regard to local government reorganisation in Wales.

It is, therefore, in my view and in the view of my hon. Friends on the Front Bench, incumbent on the Government to give urgent consideration to making a public statement accepting the need for all staff who wish to do so to be transferred to the new authorities. Paradoxically—if we can still believe in paradoxes—it would be not only in the Government's interests to be fair to the staff concerned, but in the interests of local government finance to make such a statement because the transitional costs would then be reduced.

The Opposition have always played absolutely straight on the question of local government reorganisation from the time that such reorganisation was announced. At the time the local government review was announced, Bryan Gould, late of this House and even later of these shores, stood at the Dispatch Box and said that there would be a positive response to the Government's proposals on structure, provided, of course, that the process of consultation was seen to be independent. In the case of the abolition of Cleveland county council, not only has the consultation been independent; it has also been upheld by the law of the land.

In my local press, I read that Cleveland county council has drawn comfort from judges' comments in their judgment last week with regard to Cleveland's request for a judicial review that the court had expressed doubts about the commission's public consultations.

It must have been very cold comfort indeed, since on all the counts put forward by Cleveland county council, it lost. The council said that the decision of the Local Government Commission and the Government was unreasonable. It lost. It said that the commission had misconstrued the policy guidance on joint arrangements. It lost. It said that there had been a lack of proper consultation. It lost. It said that the Secretary of State should have referred back Cleveland, as he referred Durham back. It lost. It said that it was unfair for Durham to benefit from the 1993 guidance, but not Cleveland. It lost on that, too. The court rightly pointed out that the four-district option was

supported by the majority of the local Members of Parliament. It was also supported by an opinion poll and by direct responses.

The court pointed out that in the opinion poll there was a clear preference for one-tier local government—75 per cent. were in favour. As to who should comprise that tier, 31 per cent. supported the four district councils—8 per cent. favoured two councils. Direct responses showed a majority of 49 to 41 in favour of four councils. And the court, in its wisdom—whether the wisdom of Portia or the wisdom of Shylock is a matter for others to decide—referred to the submission of Cleveland county council that the Local Government Commission had paid too much attention to public opinion or vox pop, as it is now called. In the words of the learned judge, the wise and venerable judge:

"If this amounts to a submission that democracy is not the panacea for all ills, it sounds odd coming from a county council."

It might also be as well to point out that in the dismissal of the action of Cleveland county council against the Local Government Commission and the Government, Cleveland was ordered to pay all the costs of the hearing. The costs have been estimated variously at between £175,000 and £200,000. The council conservatively estimates them at £100,000, although it does not state whether this is its costs as well as the costs of the Government. It is equivalent to a one-off payment of 65p per council taxpayer. Dipping one's hand into the pockets of the council tax payer to pay legal bills is not a matter of compunction for Cleveland county council.

Many far-fetched figures are bandied around by the council. It has said that the four-district option in Cleveland will cost £10 million a year more than the Teesside-Hartlepool option. But the Local Government Commission, the recommendations of which have been upheld by the court, estimates that the move away from the two-tier system will save between £6 million and £11 million a year. That means that the reorganisation will pay for itself within three years. That must be considered a satisfactory pay-back time to achieve a lasting basis for local democracy.

The four districts have said that savings should be passed on in full to service users as either reduced bills or improved services, with the merit that the services are both local and accountable. The basis of local democracy through the four-tier option will be the provision and co-ordination of services, the provision of a voice for local people, particularly those who are disadvantaged, reflecting the priorities of their communities and working as a catalyst to stimulate growth and regeneration in their specific areas.

There will, indeed, be a partnership between local authority, community and other agencies. There will, indeed, be shorter lines of communication. This will mean that the views and changing needs of the communities will be constantly reflected. There will be improved targeting of resources. The new authorities will serve identifiable communities. The four districts will be able to attract inward investment and co-operate on strategic issues.

Middlesbrough has already attracted more than £700 million in Government and European Union grants. This has led to the creation of 7,000 jobs. The Tees Valley Development Company will be a genuine partnership between the public and the private sectors. It will aim to provide a professional, one-step service to potential investors in our region. It will maximise and co-ordinate the efforts going on in all sectors to create employment. The Tees Valley Development Company will allow much more co-ordinated and effective marketing. The Tees Valley Development Company will be a catalyst for growth and economic regeneration. This is a vital issue of job creation.

In short, the four districts are on course, the Tees Valley Development Company is on course and, with the Government's commitment to a timetable of May 1995 elections and a new authority in April 1996, the people of Cleveland will be on course to have their wishes respected. The question is then how soon can we assure those who work in Cleveland county council that they have a future. All four districts realise and fully accept that employees are their main resources and that reorganisation must be about creating structures in which they can work to best effect.

The Local Government Commission has estimated job reductions of about 2 per cent. across all authorities. The calculations by boroughs have led to similar assumptions. The reductions can be achieved by early retirement or voluntary redundancy, but the four districts wish to stress —through me on the Floor of the House—that they will be concentrating on job retention not job shedding. The four authorities fully recognise that they will need staff commitment and experience to make a success of their new authorities.

We are anxious about jobs, not redundancies. There is no doubt, however, that concern has been expressed about the current redundancy package envisaged. It is essential for there to be a fair and mandatory system of compensation. That is essential to complete the local government review successfully in Cleveland and, indeed, elsewhere.

I would, therefore, ask the Under-Secretary of State to consider carefully the outcome of the consultations that are taking place between various parties in local government —members, managers and employees alike—to smooth their local government review and to settle staff uncertainty.

As I said earlier, the Opposition have never played politics with local government reviews; nor do they seek to do so now. We are anxious that the review of local government should extend beyond Cleveland to cover the whole of shire England, within the framework laid down on 3 June 1992 by the then Secretary of State for the Environment.

We do not regard local government as "The Cherry Orchard" of Anton Chekhov—no cherry picking there please. Just as the journey of 1,000 miles begins with a single step, so those Cleveland Members of Parliament who support the four-district option expect the order to be laid before this House at the earliest convenient moment, with appropriate powers given to the districts to create the new authority, and that the dates of May 1995 for elections and April 1996 for the new authority will be strictly adhered to.

As an Opposition, we shall also be looking over and beyond the boundaries of Cleveland, to be sure that there is no gerrymandering of commission recommendations for narrow party political advantage. We are glad that, in the case of Cleveland, full start-up elections will be held at the beginning of the shadow period for all new councils—as well as those in Cleveland, including those based on existing district boundaries.

Since a good point is always worth repeating, as Lloyd George might have said, we say again that the vast majority

[Mr. Bell]

of staff should automatically be transferred to the new councils and satisfactory compensation provided for any not transferred.

It is true that we live in a world where reality and the perception of reality become intermingled and where the perception of reality becomes more important than the reality itself. I am sorry to say that Cleveland county council has long passed that point. It must be in the interests of the work force of Cleveland county council for appropriate arrangements to begin to be made for their transfer to the new authorities. It must be in the interests of the people of Cleveland that the business community rallies around the Tees Valley Development Company.

There must be full officer co-operation on the ground between the four districts and the county council, so that there is a straightforward and homogenous transfer of services, in the interests of our local community. And there is the ultimate—respect for the sovereignty of Parliament, for this House and the other place. The Government have announced their intention to lay the appropriate order for elections and for the new authorities. The will of this House, in the event the order being carried, is not something which can be dissipated before courts, before judicial reviews, before delaying tactics, before obfuscation and distortion.

The people of Cleveland will demand no less than the fullest co-operation from those councillors who may themselves be candidates for the new authorities, and who may wish to submit themselves to the people of Cleveland on the principle that to be elected to the four districts is to serve, rather than to rule.

Cleveland county council cannot now be saved. It has fought a long and arduous battle for survival. It still has dignity and respect for the work that it has done during its existence. It would be sad for the work force, members and officers if it were now to lose that dignity and respect. It is a case of those who have ears, let them hear.

10.35 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tony Baldry): I welcome this debate on the future of local government in Cleveland, and I welcome the support of the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) for reorganisation in Cleveland and for the decision yesterday that the new unitary authorities should be established on 1 April 1996.

I am also pleased to see in the Chamber my hon. Friends the Members for Langbaurgh (Mr. Bates) and for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin), who have been tireless champions in favour of unitary authorities for Langbaurgh and Stockton respectively.

It may be helpful if I set out briefly how we have reached our current position. In July 1992, the then Secretary of State for the Environment issued a direction to the Local Government Commission to undertake a review of Cleveland and County Durham.

The commission must make its recommendations having regard to the need to reflect the identities and interests of local communities and to secure effective and convenient local government. I believe that in many ways these two criteria are mutually reinforcing. One of the best ways of ensuring that local government is effective is having local authorities that people identify with and feel committed to.

The commission submitted its final report to the Secretary of State last November. The commission's main recommendation was that Cleveland county council should be abolished and there should be four unitary authorities covering the areas of the existing districts of Middlesbrough, Hartlepool, Stockton and Langbaurgh. In Cleveland, a survey by the commission had shown a massive 75 per cent. of residents supporting the principle of unitary authorities. The survey had also shown that of the various options offered to them, the option of four unitary authorities had the greatest support among local people. This option also proved the most popular among those who responded to the commission's consultation.

In January, we accepted the commission's main recommendation of abolishing the county council and establishing four unitary authorities. This amply fulfils the criteria set out in the 1992 Act; that is, that there would be effective and convenient local government and that the identities of local people would be reflected. I believe that this decision has been widely welcomed in Cleveland.

We hope that the local authorities involved will work together to plan future services. It is important to make it clear that there can be no place for continuing trench warfare by those authorities that will disappear as a consequence of the review and, as the hon. Member made clear, of the decisions of Parliament. Such behaviour is to the detriment of local people and to the detriment of local government as a whole, and there is no place for that.

The Government's decision to abolish Cleveland county council was widely welcomed. However, there was and is one organisation that did not welcome it—the county council itself. As a result, it instituted judicial review proceedings against both the Local Government Commission and the Government.

The county council put forward various grounds for its legal challenge. As the hon. Member for Middlesbrough has said, the High Court has given judgment against the county council and condemned it in costs. As the judges in the High Court suggested, there was nothing wrong with the commission's recommendations or with the Government's decision to accept them; it was simply a case of the county council not liking what the commission proposed.

Mr. Michael Bates (Langbaurgh): I endorse fully what the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) said. Many of us find it deeply repugnant that one of reasons why the case was taken to the High Court, at the expense of the local taxpayer, was brought to light in the judgment. It said that the council had accused the Local Government Commission of paying too much attention to local opinion.

Does my hon. Friend recognise that when four times as many people support the commission's recommendation as favour the Teesside-Hartlepool option, taxpayers resent deeply the idea of having to contribute between £175,000 and £200,000 of their money for something with which they do not agree? I advise my hon. Friend of my intention to take this matter to the district auditor at the earliest opportunity.

Mr. Baldry: Everything that my hon. Friend said is absolutely right. As I said earlier, a survey conducted by the commission showed that a massive 75 per cent. of

residents supported the principle of unitary authorities. The fact that Cleveland county council could seek to pray in aid, against the commission, the fact that so many people supported the commission's proposals underlines the comment of the hon. Member for Middlesbrough that the county council has long since ceased to be able to distinguish between reality and imagination.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State had originally said in May that his provisional decision, subject to the outcome of the judicial review, was that reorganisation should go ahead from 1 April 1995, with the elections to the new unitary authorities in May 1995. That timetable was certainly achievable and the district councils were keen to pursue it. There could have been a smooth transition with sufficient time for planning change so that there would be no risk to the delivery of services. The length of the legal proceedings, however, means that there is now a relatively short time between making an order and a start date of 1 April 1995.

Those circumstances have led us to the conclusion that it would be wiser to put back implementation to April 1996. However, and it is an important however, the elections to unitary councils will still be held in May 1995, giving the newly elected councils almost a year to prepare for their new functions. I know that some hon. Members had been concerned about having elections to the new authorities after they had been set up and I am sure that the new timetable will satisfy their concerns.

The hon. Member for Middlesbrough raised understandable concerns about the implications of reorganisation for local government employees. We are totally committed to a fair treatment for staff. The Local Government Staff Commission was set up in England in May 1993 to advise my right hon. Friend on staffing issues arising from reorganisation. The staff commission has visited all the authorities in the first tranche of the review to listen to their concerns and those of their staff. It has since issued a circular, which set out the rules for deciding which employees will be transferred to the successor authorities by staff transfer order. It describes the scope for open competition for senior posts and defines which employees will be eligible for prior consideration appointment to posts.

The majority of the county council's staff will, of course, simply transfer to successor councils. The staff commission will be advising on those categories of staff to be covered by automatic transfer. We expect that these will include almost all operational staff who provide services direct to local people, for example, teachers and care workers.

For those staff who do not transfer by transfer order, it will be for the district councils, in consultation with Cleveland county council, to decide whether any of them will nevertheless transfer on 1 April 1996 under existing employment legislation.

We have also issued further guidance to the staff commission, drawn up in consultation with the local authority associations and the staff commission itself, in order to provide as level a playing field as possible for staff of outgoing authorities compared with those of the continuing authorities.

Last month, we also issued a consultation paper which set out the Government's proposals for redundancy schemes specific to local government—

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock, and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned accordingly at sixteen minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 8 July 1994

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

United Kingdom (Inequalities)

9.34 am

Ms Joyce Quin (Gateshead, East): I beg to move,

That this House expresses concern at the growing inequalities between richest and poorest in Britain today and draws attention to the recent report of the Institute for Fiscal Studies entitled 'For Richer, For Poorer: the Changing Distribution of Income in the United Kingdom 1961-1991'; expresses its belief that gross inequalities contribute to economic inefficiency; draws attention to the inequalities which particular groups including the disabled experience; believes that a whole range of measures and policies are needed as well as a change of direction in existing government policy if the problems of inequalities and lack of opportunities are to be rectified; and calls on the Government to introduce urgent policies of a fiscal, economic, social and educational nature in order to bring such a change in direction about.

Having been given the opportunity to introduce a motion of my choice, there are two reasons why I decided to speak about inequalities in Britain, lack of opportunities, and the huge and growing gap between richest and poorest in our society.

First, recently, a number of excellent and telling studies on the subject have been published. My motion refers to one of them—the report of the Institute for Fiscal Studies entitled "For Richer, For Poorer", which received considerable publicity and attention when it appeared a month ago.

My second reason is more fundamental and is rooted in my role as a Member of Parliament. It relates to my experiences in my constituency in the area, where I was born and grew up and which I have represented 15 years —first in the European Parliament and, since 1987, in the House. Witnessing the growth in inequality and poverty in my constituency is the more fundamental reason for tabling my motion. I see more poverty and inequality today in my constituency than I remember at any other period in my life. Unemployment and poverty seem more deeply rooted now than at any time since the 1930s.

I am sure that all right hon. and hon. Members are profoundly attached to their constituencies. That feeling can turn to anger and frustration if we feel that the living and working conditions in our constituencies, or in the country as a whole, are worsening.

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): Perhaps the hon. Lady could set some parameters. What is her benchmark of poverty today, bearing in mind that living standards have increased substantially over the past 10 years?

Ms Quin: I have only just begun my speech, and I will answer that point later.

When one sees, as I do, constituents who are constantly finding it difficult to make ends meet, for whom the day-to-day business of living is financially difficult and who are never able to afford treats or extras, that is close to poverty. The relentless grind that many people have experienced probably since the first recession in the early 1980s is difficult for them to tolerate. If, after I have developed my argument, the hon. Lady wants to intervene again, I shall be happy to allow her to do so.

The facts of the growth of inequality in Britain cannot be disputed. The Institute for Fiscal Studies report revealed that poverty has trebled during the years of office of this Government. It is described as a widening of the gap between rich and poor which is unprecedented in modern times. Inequality in the distribution of incomes increased dramatically during the 1980s, having previously fluctuated over only a small range since the early 1960s.

During the past 15 years, the richest 10 per cent. became almost twice as well off. The number of people in Britain with an income below half the national average more than trebled, to 11.4 million—one in five of the population. That occurred even though between 1961 and 1967 that category fell numerically and there was a drop in inequality in that particular era.

Perhaps not unexpectedly, there has been a growth in poverty among those out of work, especially among the long-term unemployed. When people are dependent on benefits which are then squeezed, their position becomes even more difficult. However, what has been most staggering during the 1980s has been the growth in poverty among those in employment. Many of us are deeply worried about that phenomenon.

The problem of low pay is well documented by various organisations with a remit to study the matter, such as the Low Pay Unit and the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux. I commend their work. As we know, the global figures translate into local examples. Over the past two or three years, I have had contact with my local jobcentres to see what sort of jobs were available. What I discovered was quite alarming. For example, a year ago there was an advertisement for a security guard on a 70-hour week at a rate of £1.85 per hour. What sort of wage is that for anyone to keep himself on, let alone a family? The job of a security guard is often difficult, if not downright dangerous. I am not sure how many hon. Members would want to do such a job for such long hours and for such little pay.

Of course, it is not just the level of pay that is at stake; it is the difficulty that such people then have in trying to contribute towards a better future for themselves. I do not know how people in such employment can find the money to pay into a personal pension scheme. The problem is that not only is someone working for low pay here and now, but he has little financial security to look forward to in the years ahead. That greatly worries many of us. Another job advertisement in the same batch a year ago was for an assistant hairdresser—a 39-hour week for £35, which is less than £1 per hour.

This week, I took the opportunity to find out from the same jobcentre to see the current jobs on display and it did not appear to me that matters had improved. One of the advertisements, again for a security guard—although without experience—quoted a wage of £1.40 per hour. It was for full-time hours with night shifts to be arranged. Another advertisement for a security guard, on the slightly better rate of pay of £2.30 per hour, said that the guard would have to work throughout the north-east and that the duties included patrolling, gatehouse duties and retail shops. It said that the preferred age was 30-plus. Many of us do not like age discrimination in job advertisements.

[Ms Quin]

Someone over 30 would be a mature worker, yet all that was being offered was £2.30 an hour. Such wage rates are unacceptably low, do not give people any job security and cannot be defended. I hope that they will not be defended by Conservative Members.

Those local examples are backed-up by the work of organisations such as NACAB, which has produced a series of brilliant reports over the past three years describing the problems of low pay and insecurity in employment. One report entitled "Hard Labour" was published in 1990; another entitled "Not in Labour" deals with the discrimination experienced by pregnant women in employment; and there is another, more general, report on unequal opportunities. All those reports would make excellent reading for hon. Members.

The "Hard Labour" report gives examples of various cases that have come to the attention of bureaux throughout the country. I shall cite two of them. The first is from a bureau in Yorkshire, which had a client who worked in a video shop from 10 am to 8 pm with no meal breaks. That contravenes the Shops Act 1950, but the woman was too scared to do anything about it in case she lost her job. That is a real threat, especially as the rules governing unfair dismissal are very much loaded against the employee who feels that he has been unfairly dismissed.

The second case comes from a bureau in Dorset. A supervisor in an amusement arcade was continuously on duty, without an assistant, for a shift of 13 hours. Not surprisingly, during that time he needed to use the toilet. While he was away a window was broken and his employer made a deduction of £40 from his wages, probably in contravention of the Wages Act 1986. When the NACAB client challenged the deduction, he was dismissed without notice.

It might seem incredible that those examples can be found in a civilised country, but they are really only the tip of the iceberg in that NACAB report. There have been some changes to employment protection since the report was published—I shall refer to those later—but nevertheless we know full well that the problems of low pay and sometimes appalling working conditions still very much exist, as is shown by the advertisements in my local jobcentre this week.

People on benefits and out of employment have also felt the pinch during the past 15 years. Pensioners, especially those who are entirely dependent on the state pension, have lost out because of the breaking of the link between pensions on the one hand and prices and incomes on the other— *[Interruption.]* Conservative Members are expressing disagreement, but it has been calculated that the Exchequer saved £5 billion from the breaking of that link.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): For the sake of accuracy, will the hon. Lady remind the House that, although it was a Conservative Government who broke the legal link between the two factors, it was the Labour Government who found themselves unable to honour their link? Is it not more honest to have a system that we can live up to and pay for rather than introducing a link to push pensions up and then having to break it? If the hon. Lady doubts the accuracy of my remarks, she will find that they are well attested.

Ms Quin: The purpose of my motion is to show that inequality in Britain has widened dramatically over the past 15 years. The Government sat back and allowed that to happen. I do not believe that a Labour Government would have presided over a growth in inequality such as there has been over the past 15 years.

I am sure that, like me, the hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) has to confront many articulate pensioner groups who know very well the records of both the last Labour Government and this Government and who feel that they have lost out dramatically over the past 15 years.

Mr. Gary Streeter (Plymouth, Sutton): Does the hon. Lady think that pensioners were better off in the late 1970s when inflation was running at 25 or 26 per cent. and the value of their savings plummeted, which meant that many of them were left in abject poverty?

Ms Quin: Given the overall situation at the time, I think that pensioners were better off. The pensioners to whom I speak strongly confirm my impression.

Conservative Members are simply unwilling to face reality. I do not claim that all previous Governments' record on equality was excellent, but the growth in inequality has been flagrant in the past 15 years and it seems to have been pursued as a deliberate act of policy.

In many ways, people face a kind of nightmarish board game in their personal lives. A single, unemployed person might go three places forward on discovering that his local council has, after all, found him accommodation, but might go back four places when the Department of Social Security says that it cannot lend him any money for the basics that would enable him to become established in that accommodation. An old person might go forward three places on discovering that he is eligible for a bus pass and can travel around, but back four places because he is too frightened to go out. A parent might go three places forward on discovering that he has been granted access to his child at weekends, but back four places when he discovers that he simply cannot afford to see his child. That is particularly topical following our moving debates on the Child Support Agency and its effects.

Many young people find it difficult to enter full-time education. They might go three places forward when they are given a place on an education course, but back four places when they learn that no grant is available, that they will have to take out loans because of their straitened financial circumstances or that they will not have access to housing benefit. They may go back even further if they believe that a life of debt faces them, particularly as employment opportunities are so limited for many students.

The growth in inequalities in Britain has not been reflected in other European countries. The extent of the growth of inequality in Britain is well out of line with other countries. Earlier this year, an interesting article by Andrew Glyn of Corpus Christi college, Oxford appeared in *The Guardian*. It said that the years of Conservative Government in Britain had seen an increase in inequality which is striking not only in itself but which seems larger than in any other European country. He supported his argument with an interesting table comparing United Kingdom and European inequality in employment rates, unemployment rates, unearned to earned income change, the ratio of women's pay to men's pay—the gap is

significant and larger than the European average—the definition of poverty according to Council of Europe standards and how that works out in terms of the percentage of the population, the top income tax rates and the changes in top income tax rates and in the share of the top 20 per cent. of incomes in the past 15 years.

Lady Olga Maitland: The suggestion that gross inequality exists in Britain compared with the rest of the European Community is extraordinary. Does the hon. Lady accept that this country has more people in jobs than any other European country?

Ms Quin: As part of my motion is about the poverty of people in employment, the hon. Lady's intervention hardly undermines my argument. Our unemployment rate between 1979 and today compares unfavourably with most European countries. Some countries, such as Germany, have experienced recession in recent years, but, none the less, in the past have had far lower unemployment than us.

Germany has undergone huge economic turbulence because of reunification with East Germany. Three per cent. of GDP was transferred from one part of Germany to another. The hon. Lady, if she is fair minded, will agree that we have not had to deal with such an economic transfer. Credit should be given to Germany for managing to cope with that.

The hon. Lady seems to imply that there are no data to back up my arguments comparing United Kingdom and European inequality, but I was quoting from a detailed article containing plenty of evidence by an academic at Oxford university. The hon. Lady may contest it if she wishes, but she would have to do so in as detailed a way as the article, which would not be possible in an intervention. I am not sure whether she will be able to do it if she wishes to speak later. The article contains a detailed, worked-out argument with many references and it cannot be dismissed lightly.

Andrew Glyn concludes:

"But the greater inequality, apart from an appalling human cost, represented not economic efficiency but the systematic squandering of economic potentials manifested, for example, by unemployment, by the growth of low productivity employment encouraged by low pay, and by manufacturing industry failing to invest while dividends rocketed."

Those issues can be taken up later.

Wages differentials have widened dramatically in Britain, whereas they have remained constant or have fluctuated only marginally in other European countries. On many occasions in the House, we have been told about the tremendously inflated salaries that are paid to people at the top of the scale while a growth in low income has occurred at the bottom of the scale. So many examples are already well known, some of which—those involving chairmen and chief executives of privatised water companies—have hit the headlines.

Only yesterday in *The Independent* I read yet another couple of examples. The contract of John Bellak, chairman and chief executive of Severn Trent Water, was terminated this year, but he received £512,000 in compensation and pension contributions, according to the company's latest annual report. He also received £226,000 in share options and £230,000 as company chairman. Bob Thian, chief executive of North West Water, where some employees face cuts of up to £6,000 a year because of job restructuring, received £674,000 when he left the company recently.

Such examples will hardly encourage a belief among people, particularly those on low incomes, that the Government are committed to wage equality and wage fairness. Ministers have failed to speak out against such irresponsibility and find it particularly difficult to speak persuasively against boardroom excesses which offend the British people's basic sense of fairness.

Many ex-Cabinet Ministers are among the beneficiaries of such decisions: Lord Tebbit, as Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, privatised British Telecom and he is now on its board; Lord Walker, who, as Secretary of State for Energy, privatised British Gas, is now on its board. There are many other examples, including Lords Young and Lawson and, indeed, the former Chancellor of the Exchequer, the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont).

In view of that record, it is very difficult for Conservative Members to speak out against such excesses, but I hope that some of them will do so because they set a terrible example to the rest of the country, especially when the Government are so keen to promote wage restraint, although some of the people at the bottom of the scale need immediate help in the short term instead of being subject to wage restraint or wage reductions.

At key moments, the Government have appeared deliberately to foster the growth in inequality. I well remember the public's reaction to the Budget introduced by Lord Lawson in 1988, which seemed to promote inequality through the huge tax relief given to people at the top of the scale. The British people's reaction was hostile. The growth in inequality was bad in itself, but the Budget was also disastrous economically because it helped to fuel an inflationary import-led boom and, I believe, bore a great share of responsibility for the recession into which we plunged before our European partners.

One glaring weakness in the Government's arguments over the past 15 years is that if deregulation, low wages and poor working conditions are prerequisites for economic success, how was it that, after 10 years of that unpleasant economic medicine, we were the first in Europe to plunge into a lengthy recession? That fact is all too frequently forgotten when Conservative colleagues extol the advantages of a deregulated, low-wage economy.

There is an extraordinary contradictory belief that giving people at the top more money will encourage them to work harder, but only by giving people at the bottom less money will they be encouraged to work harder. That is a logical absurdity, and one which most people appreciate.

The Government still appear to believe that the trickle-down theory works and that if the majority of people are better off, it will automatically help those at the bottom. However, the theory has been shown not to work. During the United States presidential campaign, when people fortunately recognised that the theory did not work, trickle-down economics were described as "voodoo economics".

I refer the House to another article by Andrew Glyn of Corpus Christi college, which also appeared in the national press. It was entitled

"Why an unequal Britain is paying the price for the 'efficiency' fallacy".

It is an important article which disproves the link between low pay and economic success. It refers to the fact that, across the industrialised countries as a whole, there is no macro-economic evidence to support the argument that greater equality is detrimental to efficiency. If anything, the article says, the opposite is true. It states:

[Ms Quin]

"The fastest growing economies in the 1980s were also the more equal societies. We all pay for inequality—in higher taxes, poor health and high crime. From education to inheritance, from cradle to grave, inequality is a burden we cannot afford. . . . The problem is that while the medicine of inequality has been applied, the disease of economic underperformance has got worse."

Growth under this Government since 1979 was lower than that achieved under Labour in the 1970s.

Andrew Glyn's arguments are very telling. That we all pay for inequality is proved by the fact that so many people who are in work but on exceedingly low incomes can make ends meet only by getting support from the state. The state recognises that, but we all have to foot a substantial bill because many employers pay such low wages. In the end, therefore, such policies are self-defeating, or even worse.

It is absurd to continue to peddle the belief that Britain can compete only through deregulation and that cutting wages and removing social protection will enable us to compete on cost with low-wage economies such as China and India. I do not believe that such crude deregulation is the way to deliver a high-wage, high-skill economy, which is what I hope that we all want. Slashing prices by cutting wages, training and investment may appear to deliver some kind of short-term advantage, but only at the cost of long-term economic and social decline. Our economy has been described, rightly, as a "closing down sale in a bargain basement".

The United Kingdom is in danger of having the worst of both worlds—the worst of the high levels of unemployment currently to be found in Europe, but also the worst of the US-style low-wage employment and rising in-work poverty, which is why I believe the problem of inequality is so severe today.

Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Cirencester and Tewkesbury): The hon. Lady has tried to paint a dismal picture of this country's performance over the past 15 years and has produced a great many statistics to try to back up her argument. Surely, however, the real measure of success is the number of consumer goods that people have in their homes. Why is it that in 1979 only 39 per cent. of the bottom decile—or 10 per cent.—of the population had central heating, which is generally regarded pretty much as a bare necessity, whereas today a very respectable 69 per cent. of that bottom 10 per cent. has it?

Ms Quin: I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman refers to heating in a debate on inequality, especially when the Government's decision—

Mr. Clifton-Brown: Answer the question.

Mr. Streeter: Answer the question.

Ms Quin: It is true that many homes have central heating and regard it as a basic necessity, but I refer both hon. Gentlemen to the fact that, since the Government imposed value added tax on domestic fuel, many people can hardly afford to run their heating systems. If they would care to come to my constituency surgeries and listen to those who cannot pay their fuel bills, they might not take refuge in average figures. The Government's decision to charge VAT on domestic heating has a much worse effect in the less warm parts of the country. In my experience, the people who have most difficulty with heating bills tend to live in poorer, draughty accommodation, which makes the problem even worse. In some parts of the country, people have to have their heating on for almost all the year, or certainly for nine months at the very least. No matter how many times hon. Members care to take refuge in average figures, I can assure them that there is an enormous problem in the country as a whole because people cannot afford to run their heating systems.

Lady Olga Maitland: Does the hon. Lady accept, first, that fuel costs have been reduced because of privatisation and, secondly, that pensioners have had an increase written into their new pension rates for VAT on fuel?

Ms Quin: As the hon. Lady knows, the Opposition were keen to ensure that the measures taken to help pensioners and those on benefit should be as generous as possible. We do not think that they are. I am sure that the hon. Lady understands that there is also a real problem for those who are above benefit level but who are still badly off, such as the people I have described today who live on low incomes and who find it extremely difficult to meet any increases in fuel costs. I should like the Government to do a great deal more than they have done in creating jobs in energy efficiency and in ensuring that so many of the draughty homes which are lived in by some of the poorest in the land are made much more energy efficient. That would mean that those people would not have to fork out the large amounts that they are trying to find at present.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: I am sure, therefore, that the hon. Lady will give a warm welcome to my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor's Budget in which he doubled the home energy efficiency scheme to help precisely the people whom the hon. Lady is describing —the poorest and pensioners who live in low energy-efficient households.

Ms Quin: I welcome any change, but I believe that the measures do not really meet the scale of the problem. Until they do, and until I no longer come across constituents who face the problems of high fuel bills in draughty accommodation, I will continue to raise the issues I am raising today.

The growth in unemployment and in long-term unemployment have contributed to real social divisions. I come from a part of the country where, at one time, a few staple industries provided employment for the majority of the working population in the area. Many of those industries have collapsed since 1979, particularly in the first recession which we experienced from 1980 to 1983. Although there was a kind of boom, a rather inflationary boom, after 1983, many parts of the country did not really benefit from that upturn in the economy. I refer particularly to the areas that were dependent on the older staple industries and where, although some new industries have come in—I strongly welcome that—there have not been enough new industries to take up the slack in employment opportunities.

In certain estates and certain urban areas, the majority of people have been out of work for 10 years or more. Children are growing up in households where there is no experience of employment. That is deeply worrying. It has contributed to the growth of what we call the underclass —an unpleasant term in itself. That lack of employment has contributed to the growth of certain types of crime. Before Conservative Members jump up and ask whether I am saying that the unemployed are criminals, I say that the answer firmly is no. I see too many unemployed people

who are the victims of crime rather than the perpetrators of crime. However, we all know that where there are deep social divisions, where there is high unemployment and where there is a growth in inequality, as can be seen in many countries across the world, one has a society in which, unfortunately, certain types of crime, such as theft and car crime, tend to flourish.

Lady Olga Maitland: Does not the hon. Lady agree that, far from people committing crimes because of poverty, crime is often related to factors such as greed and trying to fuel a drugs habit?

Ms Quin: The salaries and pay-offs to which I referred earlier illustrate the concept of greed rather more than do my comments about the least well-off in society. Although Conservative Members are always resistant to the idea of there being a link between crime and social divisions, that view is, fortunately, not universal. I remember reading a speech by Baroness Denton in which she said that there was a clear link between social division, social decay and crime levels. I welcome the fact that some Conservatives are prepared to look at the issues as they are rather than as they would like them to be.

An unequal society in which there are gross inequalities of income distribution generates ill-health, not just for the people who are least well off. As has been proved in various studies—I refer to the article by Richard Wilkinson—unequal societies are often more conflictual and more stressful societies. That adds up to a considerable cost to the health system.

It is depressing, but not surprising, that Britain has increasingly suffered from many of the American-style social problems that accompanied the rise in wage inequality in that country. We have rising drug-related crime and rising lawlessness in our inner cities, infant mortality rates higher than those in comparable countries and more spending on ill-health and crime prevention as a result. All those issues need to be taken very seriously.

I am not surprised that one or two hon. Members who have intervened have implied that I have been talking on a gloom-and-doom basis. I am rather surprised that no one has yet used the time-honoured words, which Conservatives so often like to use about the Opposition, that I am talking Britain down. I do not believe in talking Britain down, but I believe in looking the problem in the face. The problem is not that we are talking Britain down, but that the Government are letting Britain down. They are letting the people of Britain down by their actions and by the way in which they have allowed inequality to grow in the past decade and during the whole time in which they have been in office.

Recent decisions have made things worse. The Government's decision to abolish the wages councils, for example, has reduced wages in various sectors. The Low Pay Network, in a fairly detailed study accompanied by a survey, concludes that the abolition of the wages councils has resulted in a substantial drop in pay rates across various sectors of the economy. The study refers to the retail sector, hairdressing, the clothing industry and the hotel and catering industry. The Government must pay particular attention to that study if they are to do something about the problem of low pay.

Lady Olga Maitland: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mr. Roger Evans (Monmouth): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms Quin: I will not give way again to the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland). I have given way to her on four or five occasions. She seems to be a regular attender of Friday morning debates so she will, I am sure, hope to speak herself. In view of the number of interventions by the hon. Lady and the possibility, if she catches your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker, of her being able to make a speech, she will have ample opportunity to make her views heard.

Mr. Roger Evans: The hon. Lady has strikingly referred to her area as having once had a number of staple industries which provided a lot of employment. She said that they had declined and that they had been replaced, but not adequately. Can she explain to me, in terms of her motion, how what she is recommending would do anything to promote economic prosperity and more jobs for her region? What is the link?

Ms Quin: I am glad that the hon. Member for Monmouth (Mr. Evans) made that intervention. I am coming to those points shortly.

I have referred to VAT on fuel, so I shall not make further reference to it. I also referred briefly to the Child Support Agency. After we had our debate on Monday, a constituent came to my constituency office. He is an example of a classic case in which the CSA has simply proved to be the straw that breaks the camel's back. I implore the Government, therefore—we have here today the hon. Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt), who is the Under-Secretary of State for Social Security with special responsibility for the CSA—to listen to all the cases that we have brought to their attention and to realise that we are talking not about an isolated number of cases, but about a huge number of cases in which people really feel that the CSA is the last economic straw that they can bear. I am not surprised that not only have there been suicides, but many people have felt suicidal as a result, including a constituent who came to my office this week. He would want his case to be referred to as one that shows the kind of hardship that the CSA creates.

Inequality affects many different groups in Britain today. Inequality affecting the disabled has exercised the attention of the House on many occasions in recent weeks and it is possible that other hon. Members will want to refer to that issue again today. I repeat the frequent demands of Labour Members that the Government accept the private Member's Bill, the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill, currently before the House, that they do not block it further and that they give the disabled, who have been subject to gross inequalities over a long time, some hope of opportunity for the future.

There is also gross inequality between women's and men's average incomes, as I am sure all hon. Members recognise. That is especially true of many women in part-time and poorly paid jobs. Indeed, surveys show that if we continue moving towards equality for women's pay at such a slow rate, we shall almost be near the beginning of the 22nd century before it catches up with the average pay for men. I have also referred to the difficulties that men encounter in areas of the country such as mine. Indeed, in the intervention by the hon. Member for Monmouth,

[Ms Quin]

reference was made to the fact that not enough new industries have replaced the older industries, which have declined in areas such as mine.

It is interesting to consider some of the industries that have come to the north-east, especially Nissan in Sunderland, which is close to my constituency. It has brought some welcome jobs to the area and I am encouraged by the fact that the management of Nissan do not accept the deregulated, low-wage approach of the Government. Indeed, in evidence to the Select Committee on Employment, Nissan said clearly that it believed that the low-wage, low-skill approach to the economy was the route to economic disaster. It is also greatly encouraging that Nissan believes that the provisions of the European social chapter would not present it with any difficulties, because, in all cases, it already exceeds its provisions.

There is a great deal of hidden employment as well, especially in an area such as mine. Many women would like to work, but do not register as unemployed because either they do not have the possibility of working, due to lack of child-care facilities or being unable to afford those facilities, or because they live in areas of high unemployment and the chances of employment are so poor that it is not worth registering.

Let me also refer to the discrimination and inequality experienced by people from ethnic minorities. It remains true that wages and unemployment rates among members of ethnic minorities are highly unequal. Unemployment rates for ethnic minorities are more than twice the rate of the white population and the wages of some minority groups are persistently lower. We must look at that problem closely.

I imagine that Conservative Members may well say that we must aim for flexibility of work. I strongly support flexibility in the workplace, as do many Labour Members, but we do not support the situation where flexible working practices—part-time working and so on—amount to a lifetime of penalty rather than a lifetime of opportunity. In the right circumstances, flexible working, part-time working and different work patterns can be a tremendous opportunity for people, but, all too often, especially in the constituency cases with which I have dealt, people in such new employment patterns seem to be badly paid. Indeed, they are not only badly paid, but, as I said earlier, have few pension rights and entitlements and little financial security to look forward to.

What should be done about this situation? One of the most important things to do is simply to recognise the extent of the problem. There is a real problem in Government circles of people failing to appreciate the scale of the difficulties that are experienced by people out there, across the whole country.

I well remember an impressive report prepared by the Church of England entitled "Faith in the City". It was greeted by the then Prime Minister as Marxist and its contents were dismissed. I believe strongly that those working in churches are in an excellent position to experience the extent of the problems of inequality in our society because they tend to be based in inner-city areas where they encounter such problems at first hand. It is not only a few turbulent priests in the Church of England who are criticising Government policies in that respect. Recently, the new president of the Methodist Church made similar comments, as have members of the senior establishment of the Catholic Church. It is such a common pattern that it cannot be dismissed as the rantings and ravings of a few ideologically motivated clerics.

We also need a much bigger job creation package than anything we have seen up to now. *[Interruption.]* Indeed, it was extremely welcome that, after 10 years of saying nothing about full employment, we managed to get some kind of commitment to it from Ministers. That was a welcome change and we had not heard it for a long time from the Government. My hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) has, for example, called for a new environmental task force for young people which could combine training with environmentally based community projects.

I feel strongly about jobs in the environment. An enormous number of jobs can be created in environmentally related projects, partly in tackling pollution. It is sad that, despite the fact that the Government gave the privatised water companies a green dowry at the time of privatisation to bring our water standards up to European Community standards, there has been a failure to spend that money to bring the water quality up to the required standards as quickly as we would like and, more astonishingly, we have seen an attempt by the Government to repeal the European quality standards which they gave the privatised companies money to meet.

Lady Olga Maitland *rose—*

Ms Quin: I am sure that the hon. Lady will have an opportunity to speak later.

Therefore, jobs in energy-saving projects and jobs in producing environmental technological equipment are also important. One of the areas in which Britain is failing to create jobs is in trade with the newly democratic countries of central and eastern Europe. Trading between those countries and our country is miles behind the volume of trade that the Germans, the French, the Italians and even the Dutch have managed to build up with those new countries. One important area of work would be in helping those countries, in a kind of trade and aid package, to meet some of the higher environmental standards which they need to meet in future.

One almost needs an environmental Marshall aid plan to tackle some of the problems in those countries. Such measures could create jobs in Britain because, as we know, many firms are capable of producing environmentally friendly equipment, such as equipment to curb emissions from power stations. Government Departments, especially the Departments of Employment and of Trade and Industry and, perhaps, also the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, should look at that area together much more closely than they seem to have done.

We must make fairness the central principle and guiding light of social security and tax policy. The Labour party is committed to progressive taxation, which is important for the future. *[Interruption.]* We need a fairer tax system so that we can bring an end to pensioner poverty and discrimination and improve public services. It is— *[Interruption.]* I hear the cries that are so frequently emitted during debates of this sort.

Mr. Nicholls: How much?

Ms Quin: Exactly. Conservative Members want to know exactly how much money is involved, as if I, in

introducing a Back-Bench motion, could give a detailed account of a Labour Government's first Budget. Conservative Members know that such an expectation would be entirely unrealistic. I shall not get worked up about that.

Mr. Roger Evans: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms Quin: I merely say—

Mr. Nicholls: Just answer the question.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Seated interventions are not helpful. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to intervene, he should do so in the proper way.

Ms Quin: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. As I have given way on many occasions, it is rather difficult to put up with so many seated interventions. I have extended to hon. Members the courtesy of allowing them to intervene. I am anxious to bring my remarks to a close.

It is extraordinary that Conservative Members should ask where the money is to come from. When the Government took office, they enjoyed a tremendous windfall from North sea oil. Previous Governments had not received such revenue and did not expect it. None of us knew that that would happen. The Government have had huge opportunities, especially when they ran tremendous Budget surpluses—they have been frittered away—to put into effect many of the measures that we are calling for 15 years later. There have been 15 years of wasted opportunity when money was available. That is extremely frustrating for those of us who have been putting forward the policies that I have outlined for so many years. It is absurd for Conservative Members to talk about money not being available when they had money and failed to use it to tackle the problems that I am describing. Indeed, they have presided over a period when the problems have become much worse.

I have talked about the problem of poverty and work, low pay and poor working conditions. I admit, however, that there have been some improvements over the past two or three years. Almost all these improvements have come about because of commitments arising from European directives. There are European directives that give employees the right to a written statement setting out their terms and conditions. Although the Government tried to water down the directive on maternity rights, it has helped some women at work in Britain. There was the recent and very welcome court judgment that the Government's policy towards part-time workers unfairly discriminated against women. Some of the extraordinary and glaring inequalities that faced part-time workers must now be redressed. Those are three examples of improvements that have been made or are being made. That has happened or is happening because of our European commitments.

It is no coincidence that the Government, having been forced to sign directives and, having failed to implement them, want to escape from the European social commitment so that, presumably, they will not be forced to introduce modest improvements in future. That is a disgrace.

Mr. Streeter: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms Quin: I am concluding my remarks, so I shall not give way again.

Mr. Streeter: I want to ask a question that arises from the hon. Lady's remarks.

Ms Quin: No.

There has been a great deal of rhetoric from the Government over the past 15 years. It has been designed to try to appeal to people. The Government have sought to persuade them that they are committed to a better society. We all remember the previous Prime Minister, Lady Thatcher, who even compared herself to St. Francis of Assisi when she assumed office. The present Prime Minister talked about a country at ease with itself. He has talked also about a classless society. Yet after 15 years we have a growing and alarming crisis of inequality in our country. If the Government are not prepared to convert their rhetoric—it is entirely unconvincing in the light of their record—into reality, they should resign and give way to a Government who will.

10.33 am

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): First, I congratulate the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms Quin) on bringing the motion before the House. I do not make a point of being in the Chamber on Fridays, but it struck me that she had tabled an interesting motion, and a brave one. I congratulate her on choosing the subject in the first place.

I do not entirely accept the hon. Lady's conclusion. I am sure that that will be a relief to her and no surprise. I am pleased that she has brought the subject before the House so that we can debate it.

The logic that runs through the hon. Lady's remarks is that in some way inequality, which is avoidable, runs through our society and permeates it. She suggests that it is almost built into the very structure of society. I do not accept that analysis.

We have a Prime Minister who was brought up in circumstances of some poverty. He went to a grammar school, but did not go to university. My right hon. Friend is now the Prime Minister. Shortly, he will be joined, as it were, by a new Leader of the Opposition. The hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair)—assuming that it is he—was public-school educated. Both men—I say this in an unpartisan way—will be holding their offices because of their conspicuous talent. The fact that they came from different walks of life did not hold them back in our society and prevent them from fulfilling tasks that matched their abilities. The idea that inequality runs through the whole of British society in some avoidable and structured way is one that I cannot accept.

I completely part company with the hon. Lady when she says that she believes passionately and sincerely that if we could only bring about total economic equality, we would suddenly have paradise on earth. She referred repeatedly to the gap that exists between rich and poor. She made the classic error of saying that the Government have given tax handouts to the rich. I know of no tax handout from the Government to the rich since 1979.

The Government have certainly enabled the rich to keep more of their own money than hitherto. The idea that taxing the rich by levying 89 per cent. income tax on earned income and 98 per cent. on unearned income—in one inglorious year the Labour Government imposed a surcharge, which meant that on the top slice of income the rich paid 104 per cent. income tax—benefits the poor is potty.

[Mr. Patrick Nicholls]

The hon. Lady does not have to take my word for that assertion. I am sure that she will not do so. I invite her to study the Inland Revenue's statistics, which show the proportion of the tax take that is contributed by the richest members of our society. The figures are straightforward. In 1979, the top 10 per cent. of rich people—the wealthiest 10 per cent.—paid about 35 per cent. of the total income tax take. This year, they will be paying about 45 per cent. There is no magic about that. If we tax people at punitive rates, they will avoid tax, go abroad or not work.

When I started my working life as a lawyers' clerk, there were some barristers who I would seek to instruct, only to be told, "Mr. So-and-So is not available on Thursdays and Fridays." In my youthful naivety, I asked why that was. I was then told, "Mr. So-and-So does not work on Thursdays and Fridays because it is not worth his while to do so. He works only on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays." That is what happens when you overtax the rich. The result is that the rich contribute less to the total tax take.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Before the hon. Gentleman becomes completely carried away with the problems of what the super-rich do with their money, perhaps he will explain why in the past 15 years the number of homeless people has risen, why the poorest 10 per cent. of households are 14 per cent. worse off than they were in 1979 and why 3,000 people sleep on the streets of London every night because they have no homes to go to?

Mr. Nicholls: As for the hon. Gentleman's last assertion, he well knows that it is not true. The rough sleepers initiative has cut dramatically the numbers of people sleeping rough on the streets of London.

Mr. Corbyn: That is because the Government stuffed them in hostels.

Mr. Nicholls: The hon. Gentleman always phrases his remarks in such eloquent terms. I shall leave that point for the moment.

I was dealing with the far more serious arguments that the hon. Member for Gateshead, East was advancing. She says that because the gap may have increased between rich and poor, that is a bad thing and something that bears down heavily on the poor. Some years ago, I was involved in a venture to ensure that a heart operation was carried out on a child from a third-world country. The father of the child was a naval commander in the navy of his country. He had an engineering degree. In terms of what that country had to offer, he was one of the rich people in it. In his country, the gap between that man's life style and the life style of those at the bottom of the heap was immeasurably greater than any gap in this country. The problem was that it was completely impossible to have a life-saving operation performed on his child in that country. He simply could not afford such an operation and there were no surgeons there capable of performing the operation anyway.

That man's child had to come to this country because, no matter how relatively poor one is in this country, there is a free national health service. It would have been complete nonsense to tell that man that the gap was in some way relevant to the welfare of his child.

Poor people do not have to use the gap to pay for the things that they need in their lives; they need money in their hands. What matters to the poor is not the difference between the rich and the poor, but how much money the poor have. However one considers the statistics, the position of the poor in this country, relative to their previous position, has never been better. That is because sufficient tax is generated within our economy to leave an incentive for the rich to earn and pay their tax and to generate enough tax to be spent on social benefits across a wide range of necessary items.

The hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms Quin) tried to make her case by referring to inequalities in respect of a security guard earning £1.85 an hour. That is obviously a low wage. However, a great many people know from experience that low pay is better than no job. Many people who experience a period of low pay move on to better-paid work in the end.

The hon. Member for Gateshead, East must face up to the fact that some people who earn low wages of the kind she referred to simply do not have the talents to offer to earn more. Let me give the hon. Lady what I hope she will feel is a perfectly fair example. Like all of us in the Chamber, the hon. Lady receives a Member's salary of £30,000 a year. Some people would say that that is not a great deal of money, but to the sort of people who come to my surgery and who go to the hon. Lady's surgery, £30,000 a year is a staggeringly large sum.

The hon. Member for Gateshead, East could certainly do a job which paid £1.85 an hour. However, I am not automatically or axiomatically convinced that someone earning £1.85 an hour could do her job as well as she certainly does it. That may seem a harsh and unkind thing to say, but it is realistic.

That leads me to another point. The hon. Member for Gateshead, East referred to the earnings link for pensions. She talked very eloquently about how the Government have broken the earnings link with regard to old-age pensions. She seemed to be holding out to pensioners the prospect that a Labour Government would one day produce an earnings link. However, there used to be such a link. It was introduced by the previous Labour Government—and what happened? In three of the four years in which the Labour Government had an opportunity to apply the link, they broke it.

When the Labour Government were criticised by their own Back Benchers for breaking that link, I recall that Lord Ennals, who was then Secretary of State for Social Security, was pinioned at the Dispatch Box for having failed to honour the legislation which his Government had introduced. He fell back on a statement which, even among us politicians, sounded lame in the extreme. He said, "My obligation in law is to consider the figures. My obligation in law is not to get it right." Honest politicians are led to that kind of subterfuge and double talk when, for the very best of reasons, they try to produce a structure which the country is simply unable to afford. That again is something which the hon. Member for Gateshead, East must face up to.

We live in a country where, under this Government at least, one recognises that inequalities will exist in the sense that talent is unequal. I think that I am right to say that the hon. Member for Gateshead, East has degrees from two universities. That is excellent and it says something about her academic attainments. I do not have degrees from a university. I did not go to a university. However, what

unites us both is that we have been brought up and live in a society in which, irrespective of our talents, we can make the most of them.

We can all think of particularly hard cases—and that is hardly surprising in a population of 55 million—among our friends, relatives and the people who visit our surgeries. We can think of cases in respect of which life seems to have treated people very unfairly. If one comes from a stable home, of course one has a much better start in society than someone who does not come from a stable home. All those hard cases do not for a moment alter the fact that we live in a society of which we should be proud.

We live in a society in which, from the cradle to the grave, we have universal health care. We live in a society in which, whatever we may think about its standards from time to time, we have universal education. We live in a society in which the poorest members have benefits provided for them at a level which would be unthinkable for many of the richest people in other countries. It is about time that we faced up to those facts and admitted that one of the reasons for all that is that we do not pretend that the equalisation of people, with a range of diverse talents, is something that can be achieved or, if it could be achieved, would benefit the people in our society.

One need only consider the situation that used to exist in the former Soviet bloc countries to understand what happens to the very poorest, the most inadequate and the least talented members of society when one tries to produce that kind of economic straitjacket. I do not accept the idea that inequality runs through the system in this country in a way that damages the poor and which could be prevented.

However, there is a sense in which there is inequality in our society. There is a paradox. The Government have been in power since 1979. They have done many things which people thought were inconceivable. It would have been remarkable if anyone had said in 1979 that the trade union movement could be confined to barracks and to those tasks it should perform instead of trying to take over the governance of this country, but that has happened. There has been an explosion of home ownership under this Government. Council house sales have taken off. For the first time in their lives, ordinary people have been given the ability to earn, to build up capital, to build up their own homes and have tax rates which give them an incentive to work and not to cheat. All that amounts to a remarkable transformation.

The Labour party's current pitch is no longer red in tooth and claw socialism. It is, "We are Toryer than thou." There can be no finer compliment for what the Government have achieved than the fact that the future leader of the Opposition is trying to convince everyone, to the terror of people like the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), whom I greatly value, that he is really a Tory at heart.

Mr. Corbyn: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Nicholls: I will give way to the hon. Gentleman in a moment.

There can be no finer tribute to the Government than that. The paradox is that, while all that has been happening on a national stage, the vice and cancer of political correctness has been beavering away. The inequality is that, in some peculiar way, the views, standards, decencies and common sense among the vast majority of people in this country, which are never articulated, but exist none the less, are being subverted by a tiny group of people who take unto themselves the right to set a political agenda without any reference to what people want.

That inequality runs through many strands of our national life. We can see it in the way in which language is used. We are no longer supposed to refer to chairmen. It probably says something about the incipient sexism of the left that it thinks that the title "chairman", which actually links women to humanity, should be replaced by addressing them as a piece of furniture.

Even if we move beyond the nonsense of non-sexist manhole covers and the fact that the Equal Opportunities Commission has been described as having its base in Personchester, we reach a stage where, in respect of language, the views and attitudes of the majority are thought to be inferior and have to be replaced.

The hon. Member for Gateshead, East referred to discrimination against black people as another example of the inequalities in society. An advertisement, placed I think by Greenwich borough council, appeared recently in a newspaper. It read:

"Black Social Worker
Specialist in Adoption.
The Adoption Team is seeking qualified and experienced Black Social Worker to contribute to the good Adoptive Services offered by the Agency."

I toyed with the idea, but in the interests of good order did not do it, of reading that advert out and using the phrase "white social worker", and then saying that I saw nothing improper in that, simply so I could then bask in the howls of indignation from the Opposition Benches. However, on looking more closely, I realised my error and saw that the advert referred to "a black social worker".

If anybody dared to place a newspaper advertisement calling for a white social worker, there would be an outcry, and the Commission for Racial Equality, as quick as a flash, would create absolute mayhem. Of course, it does not matter because the advertisement was for a black social worker. Can hon. Members imagine the damage that is done when the host community see such advertisements? What good does it do the ethnic minority to have fear inflamed among the host community?

Mr. Corbyn: What host community?

Mr. Nicholls: I will give way to the hon. Gentleman in a moment.

That inequality is far more dangerous than anything that we heard about from the hon. Lady.

Mr. Corbyn: The hon. Gentleman's remarks are becoming extremely offensive to a large number of people in this country. *[Interruption.]* I am not bothered personally, I just think that the hon. Gentleman is offensive to many others. Perhaps he would care to reflect for a moment. He used the term "host community". A large number of black people were born in this country. They are second or third generation of their parents or grandparents who migrated to this country. They would find it offensive that the hon. Gentleman uses terms such as "host community".

The hon. Gentleman should understand that local authorities of all political persuasions advertise for black adoptive parents because of the problems of racism, the alienation of black families and black communities, and the feeling that black people, when talking about adoption or black children, would like to be able to talk to a black

[Mr. Corbyn]

social worker. Is that really so wrong or so bad? Should not we at least recognise the depth of racism and the alienation that exists among people in those communities? The hon. Gentleman's arrogance seems to know no bounds.

Mr. Nicholls: The hon. Gentleman is the genuine and uncleaned-up version of the unreconstructed left. All that he has to do on Monday is to read *Hansard* and substitute the word "white" for the word "black" and then wonder about the matter. Here we have the typical attitude of the left in trying to ban even the use of certain words. The hon. Gentleman criticised me for using the words "host community" because it might offend people of second and third generation. He must understand the damage that such an advertisement would cause in a country of perhaps 22nd-generation people, who know—and they are right —that if it said, "White social worker required", it would cause outrage. That is inequality, and it needs to be dealt with.

Let us consider what has happened in other ways. For example, I refer to the legislation which first decriminalised homosexual acts between consenting adults in private, which was introduced for perfectly decent and tolerant reasons—that what adults do in the privacy of their own bedrooms which does not cause damage or offence to anybody else should be no business of anyone else. That was the aspiration, but what has happened since? We now live in a society in which even some Conservatives seem to be frightened of saying that a homosexual couple living together, be they male or female, are not in a normal, stable situation which is not in any shape or form comparable with a heterosexual marriage.

What sort of unequal society are we living in when a High Court judge can think it appropriate to grant custody to a lesbian couple who, although they represent themselves as a couple, both claim lone parent supplement? How can that contribute to equality in society when the views of the minority are imposed on the majority? I cannot think of a more unequal way of proceeding. It is very dangerous indeed.

For example, I now refer to the inequality that arises when what one might call minoritarianism is dumped on the country. What on earth is happening when 90 per cent. of people in this country who identify themselves as Christians—not card-carrying Christians; not people who are on social terms with the Bishop of Birmingham, but people who regard themselves as Christians—suddenly find that Christianity is to be taught in schools only in conjunction with the teaching of a number of other faiths? Yes, that is appropriate in certain areas, but why on earth have people in rural areas such as Teignbridge to be told that the faith which they have held dear and which their grandparents and forebears have held dear for hundreds of years are to be taught in the wilds of Devon, together with Buddhism, Sikhism and so on?

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): I find the hon. Gentleman's line of argument rather interesting and extraordinary, but I want to make sure what he is saying. He referred to the judge who made the controversial decision on what he thought was the best interests of a certain child. Is the hon. Gentleman saying that the interests of a minority should not be protected at law because they might be unacceptable or strange to the social customs of the majority?

Mr. Nicholls: If any society which has any confidence in itself, and this society should have sufficient— *[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman might not agree with me, but I am sure that he will want to give me a hearing. A society should have sufficient confidence, in the way in which it rules and regulates its own affairs, to make certain judgments. This House exists to make certain judgments about the way in which we conduct ourselves. I will now answer the hon. Gentleman's question directly. I find it truly stunning that a lesbian couple should be treated as though they are running a unit which is equivalent to a heterosexual marriage. I find that deeply offensive, and the vast majority of people in this country would also regard it as bizarre. Not many people have this forum or my arrogance or confidence to make that point, but I have no doubt how people are thinking about that matter.

We need a number of things. We certainly need Ministers such as my hon. Friend the Minister who have the confidence to resist the siren move toward acceptance of ideas such as lesbian couples being completely normal. We need Ministers who, when working within the system, can make sure that they can resist the loving embrace of the civil service. We need hon. Members who realise that the standards of morality that they bring from their constituents, friends, relatives and supporters can be carried through into legislation. We need hon. Members who are prepared to articulate that interest.

We need police who have the confidence to believe that when they apprehend criminals those criminals will be treated properly. We must abhor the situation in which, years after the murder of PC Trevor Blakelock, when there were 200 witnesses to a murder that was committed by 12 people, the only people before the criminal courts in relation to that monstrous crime are the two policemen who investigated the original offence.

We need a society, a political system and a governing body with the confidence to say that we have been brought up in a fine, decent country which, even now, is probably the finest place in the world to live. We need the confidence to assert the standards of morality that enable us to savour that. That is the sort of equality that I look for, not the economic mishmash of the hon. Member for Gateshead, East.

10.56 am

Mr. Denis MacShane (Rotherham): I am not quite sure of the protocol, Madam Deputy Speaker. There is to be a statement at 11 o'clock. Will I be able to resume my speech after that?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Yes. The debate will be interrupted at 11 o'clock for the statement, but the hon. Gentleman will then have the right to continue his speech thereafter.

Mr. MacShane: We have had an extremely interesting debate so far. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East (Ms Quin) for the terms of her motion, and I look forward to hearing a Conservative Member address the issues that she has raised. I look forward also to hearing the Minister, one of the rare Ministers who knows of life from north of Watford to Oxford, inform and entertain us.

I draw attention to page 4049 of today's Order Paper on which a motion stands in my name for debate in October. The subject of that motion is relevant to today's debate. Line 5 of the motion refers to a

"ballet of their non-managerial employees".

The correct word is "ballot". I am grateful to the Clerks for their help in wording the motion. Of course, ballots are dear to Opposition Members—they are the quintessence of democracy; they allow everybody to be equal in an organisation or before the law. Of course, Conservative Members are practised in and at home with ballet. There is a considerable difference between the two words. I hope that before the motion comes before the House it can be reworded.

I shall try to begin my speech by referring to the earnings dispersion league table in the report of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development on employment outlook published in June last year. That showed a considerable increase in earnings dispersion in the United Kingdom since 1979—a date chosen by the statisticians of the OECD, who were unaware of any events that might have taken place in 1979. The OECD report shows that whereas in the United Kingdom there has been a dramatic increase in—

It being Eleven o'clock, MADAM SPEAKER *interrupted the proceedings, pursuant to Standing Order No.11 (Friday sittings).*

Sports Council

11 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for National Heritage (Mr. Iain Sproat): With permission, Madam Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the future of the Sports Council of Great Britain.

On 9 July last year, I told the House that we were suspending proposals to replace the Sports Council with separate United Kingdom and English bodies while we took a fresh look at structures for the future administration of British sport.

We have reaffirmed the conclusion of our 1991 policy review that the combination of Great Britain and England functions in the current Sports Council hinders their effective development. We, therefore, intend to set up two new bodies to be called, respectively, the United Kingdom Sports Council and the English Sports Council. England will thus be in the same position as Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The UKSC will consist of 10 members: an independent chairman, the chairmen of the four home country sports councils, one representative each of the British Olympic Association, of amateur non-Olympic sport, and of professional sport, and two independent members with strong sporting credentials, one from a professional and one from an amateur sporting background.

The UK Sports Council will be very different from what we rejected last year: different in its relationship to the home country councils, in its functions and in its size. On the international scene, it will represent the UK; it will seek to increase greatly the influence of the UK in international sport; and it will co-ordinate policy for bringing major international events to the UK. In national affairs, it will not have a supervisory remit, but it will oversee those areas where there is a need for UK-wide policy—for example, on doping control, sports science, sports medicine and coaching. Home country councils will, however, be responsible for the delivery of those policies.

We should like the UKSC, among its early tasks, to see whether it is sensible to identify possible further areas where sports policies may have application across the UK as a whole; where there may currently be areas of unnecessary overlap and duplication; and whether it may be sensible to administer, in consultation with the home country councils, grant programmes for bodies or policies that have a UK or GB remit. The Government also wish to see the establishment of an effective British confederation of non-governmental sports interests. We shall invite the UKSC to consult the various interests and to bring forward proposals on the subject.

As to the national lottery, the home country councils will be responsible for distribution, but the UK body will offer expert advice on applications of UK importance under the directions that Ministers have issued, or will issue shortly, to their respective councils under section 26 of the National Lottery etc. Act 1993.

A small permanent staff will provide a secretariat and lead policy working parties of home country representatives. Drawing in that way on the expertise of the home country councils, and resourcing them accordingly, I envisage a staff for the UKSC of about 20. That contrasts with the proposed staff of the abandoned UK Sports Commission of 180.

[Mr. Iain Sproat]

I now turn to the new English body. The English Sports Council will have 15 members: an independent chairman, five ministerial appointees from the regions, three representatives from the membership of the Central Council of Physical Recreation to represent an Olympic, a non-Olympic and a professional sport, and six independent members.

The present Sports Council spreads itself too thinly and operates in a series of areas more appropriate to other agencies. The new English body will have a sharper focus, concentrating its resources on an increased programme of direct support to the governing bodies of sport, to help the grassroots, and on services in support of sporting excellence, including the national sports centres currently administered by the GB council.

There will be a substantial redeployment of resources away from bureaucracy, and away from programmes that do not reflect the new focus. In particular, the new body will withdraw from the promotion of mass participation, informal recreation and leisure pursuits and from health promotion. Those are laudable aims, but they are secondary to the pursuit of high standards of sporting achievement. In due course, those changes will allow us to give much greater help to our most important national sports. It will be for the new body to decide those sports, but I would expect it to concentrate, although not exclusively, on about two or three dozen.

In return for greater financial support, governing bodies will be required to prepare clear plans with specific targets for the development of their sports, from grassroots to the highest competitive levels. Those plans must include programmes for strong and effective links with schools and youth organisations, to make the most of the talent of young people. That will reinforce the Government's wider initiative to re-establish sport in schools, and lay the foundations for future sporting success. We shall also seek to ensure that the bodies make strenuous efforts to involve private finance in their funding plans.

Reform is also needed in English regional organisation. We want to see continuing working relationships at regional level between the Sports Council, local authorities and other agencies. But the present structural relationship between the Sports Council's regional offices and the regional councils for sport and recreation—RCSRs—gives rise to confusion over roles and responsibilities, and to concern on grounds of financial accountability, bureaucracy and duplication.

The regional offices of the Sports Council should be more clearly identified with the implementation of national sports policy. It is also very important that there is a clear distinction between them and other regional organisations currently in membership of the RCSRs which may be applicants for national lottery funding. The present formal linkage with the RCSRs will, therefore, cease and Ministers will no longer make appointments to them. To secure the necessary regional dimension to the formulation and implementation of the policies of the English Sports Council, Ministers will appoint independent nominees in each region, as previously they appointed the RCSR nominees. Five of those ministerial nominees will be appointed in rotation to serve on the English Sports Council, thus strengthening the two-way flow of advice and understanding between the Sports Council nationally and in the regions. I am sure that local authorities will still wish to develop wider regional leisure strategies with other regional interests, and will, therefore, want to set up such future machinery to this end as they judge appropriate.

I shall appoint consultants to examine the entire range of the current Sports Council's functions in the light of the broad policy framework that I have set out today, and to make detailed recommendations for the structure and staffing of the new bodies. In reviewing functions, I shall ask consultants to identify those that should be discontinued and those that are suitable for market-testing or contracting-out. We will take a decision on the precise timing of implementation in the light of those recommendations, but I should expect that to take place during the next financial year. The costs of new arrangements will be met within present planned provision.

The Secretary of State has today written to the chairman of the Sports Council inviting views on the proposals by 30 September. A copy of his letter has been placed in the Libraries of both Houses. I have also written to the British Olympic Association, the British Sports Forum, the Central Council of Physical Recreation and the local authority associations seeking their views.

Mr. Tom Pendry (Stalybridge and Hyde): The Opposition breathe a sigh of relief that, at long last, a statement on the future of the Sports Council of Great Britain is being made. The sporting world has waited an almighty long time for it to be born; its gestation period beats that of an African elephant, which is a mere 22 months. The sporting world has waited three years for the delivery. Nevertheless, the Opposition welcome what the Minister has stated today.

We do not appreciate, as the House does not appreciate, that, once more, a statement on sport has been made on a Friday, interrupting an important debate, when many hon. Members from both sides of the House who care about sporting issues are on their way to, or in, their constituencies, oblivious of the fact that a statement is being made. I at once absolve the Minister of marginalising sport by both making the statement so late and making it on a Friday. It is more likely that his ministerial colleagues in the Treasury and the Cabinet Office are more culpable than he.

The Opposition start from the basic premise, and we are joined, I am sure, by the sporting world, that the time has come for a new sports structure. The present structure is ill-defined and in many ways confusing. Having said that, and before I refer to specific proposals, I think it right to compliment Sir Peter Yarranton and his staff at the Sports Council, who have undergone a difficult period and laboured in trying circumstances in the past three years. Morale must have been difficult to sustain.

The Opposition welcome the UK Sports Council. We have argued for one for many a long year. We may argue about its precise size, but we are certainly disappointed that the Minister chose to disregard the advice of the noble Lord Howell and myself that the Minister himself should chair the new council and give the necessary direction to that new body, not as a hands-on Minister but as a directional Minister who could ensure that the new council fulfilled the objectives set by him and by the House. What kind of chairman, in his absence, is the Minister after? We hope that he intends to appoint someone of international reputation. Will he be a professional? Will he be paid?

We are pleased that the composition of the English Sports Council will recognise the CCPR, Olympic and non-Olympic sports and, for the first time, professional sports. Perhaps the Minister will elaborate on that matter. Perhaps he will also elaborate on his point about the Sports Council spreading itself too thinly. We are pleased that the regions' role will be strengthened in his proposals.

In view of the poor track record of the Government on their appointments to non-governmental bodies, will the Minister assure us today that his appointees will be appointed on their merit and not on their political affiliation?

Will the hon. Gentleman elaborate on the role in the United Kingdom Sports Council of the doping control unit, the National Coaching Foundation and sports science expertise, which come under the current Sports Council? We should like to know how the Minister intends to avoid duplication in each of those matters, with home country sports councils running separate services.

Will the Minister state where the central policy unit will be housed? We believe that it is an important unit. Is the Minister satisfied that the good work of the current Sports Council in preparing for the distribution of the lottery funds will not be disrupted by his statement today and that an effective mechanism for the distribution of funds to sport will be in place by the end of the year? How many redundancies does the Minister envisage will result from his proposals? Will they be voluntary?

Does the Minister accept that his statement will be a great disappointment to those engaged in children's play? They were looking to him in his statement today to reinstate the importance of children's play and to reverse the downgrading of it by his predecessor some time ago.

Finally, I hope that the Minister will extend his consultation period beyond 30 September. After all, we have waited three years for a definitive statement and we are already in the summer holiday period. That makes it difficult for the sporting world in a mere 83 days to have a meaningful dialogue with the Minister in that period.

Finally, finally, Opposition Members welcome much of what was contained in the Minister's statement, but regret the missed opportunities that I have mentioned. I hope that, on reflection, the Minister will adjust his sights accordingly.

Mr. Sproat: First, I thank the hon. Gentleman very much for the general welcome that he gave to so much of what we propose in this fairly radical restructuring of the Sports Council. As he said, it really was needed. I am grateful for the all-party support that he has given. Of course, I share the hon. Gentleman's views about making the statement on a Friday. The fact of the matter is that, as I am sure all hon. Members will understand, at the end of the summer term, when so many statements have to be made, I had the choice of making an oral statement on a Friday or not at all. So I thought it better to have a Friday statement than none at all.

The hon. Gentleman said that a long time had been taken for a statement to be made. It is almost exactly a year since Friday 9 July last year, when I announced the abandonment of the old UK Sports Commission. It has taken a year because I have used the intervening time to go round every sports region to speak to every member of every sports region, as well as to meet in my office the British Olympic Association, the CCPR and so on. It has been a thorough review. I hope that we have used the time well.

I should like to say how very much I agree with the kind words spoken by the hon. Gentleman about Sir Peter Yarranton as chairman of the Great Britain Sports Council. He and his colleagues have done a marvellous job. I congratulate them on what they have achieved.

The hon. Gentleman asked what kind of chairman of the new UK and English Sports Councils we shall be looking for. We will look with an open mind at everyone whose name is put forward. As for the pay, which the hon. Gentleman properly raised, it is our intention to pay the chairman, as Sir Peter and his deputy are paid. We are certainly looking for someone who has a high-quality name, who will be recognised nationally and will help to achieve what I want to see. I want this country to be influential again in international sport.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned professional sport. He welcomed my putting professional sportsmen on both bodies. I believe that the time has come to do so. It is ludicrous, when professional sport is so dominant in Britain, that we do not have people on the boards who can specifically speak for professional sport. We have had one or two individuals before such as Trevor Booking, the chairman of the current eastern RCSR, but we want them on the bodies specifically to represent professional sport and the attitudes of those involved in it. That is an innovation which will be widely welcomed.

I believe that the Sports Council has spread itself too thinly in the past, partly because Parliament has laid too many different jobs on it. When one considers that the current spending of the Sports Council is about £50 million a year and that local government in England alone spends £1.25 billion, one can see that the Sports Council money is small by comparison. Therefore, it has to be concentrated.

The ministerial nominees will certainly not be appointed for political reasons. I have not the slightest idea how any of them votes. I have never asked them and I do not care. I want people who will drive forward the cause of sport in this country. The new UK Sports Council will examine sports medicine, sports science and coaching, because it is clearly important that they are co-ordinated across the United Kingdom and that there is no duplication. That will be a prime job of the new UK body.

The lottery will not be disrupted. The lottery part of the new GB Sports Council is already up and running. It will not be interrupted. It will continue into the English body.

The number of redundancies will not be known until the consultants have a look at the particular parts of the current GB Sports Council and what will be transferred to the new English Sports Council. I hope that it will be possible to make the redundancies voluntary.

Children's play is but one element of the work of the current Sports Council. We will consider whether its continuing role in the Sports Council fits in with the more sharply focused view that I want the Sports Council to take. Certainly many people say that the role of children's play is not suitable for the Sports Council, but we will look at it carefully in the light of what I have announced today.

The hon. Gentleman asked me to extend the consultation period. It will go up to 30 September for formal consultation, but, thereafter, we shall have further consultation on the points that are made by various bodies with members of the Sports Council and others.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Madam Speaker: Order. After those initial exchanges, I now look for brisk questions and for brisk answers from the Minister.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): My hon. Friend's statement is a welcome clarification of the situation. He will be aware of the uncertainty felt, not only by staff of the Sports Council but by many outside—something which I am sure he has heard plenty about from Sir Peter Yarranton, to whom I also pay tribute. I am pleased by the leaner and fitter format that he has proposed, which is very welcome. I especially welcome what he said about the regional councils and regional sport—

Madam Speaker: Order. When we have a statement, the whole idea is that Members can question the Minister.

Mr. Tracey: On the national lottery, my hon. Friend said that the present work will continue. Can he guarantee to the House that it will not lack staff to deal with the many applications that will undoubtedly be made for national lottery funds? I hope that the Sports Council will be able to set an example to the various other organisations distributing national lottery funds, which will be considerable.

Mr. Sproat: I thank my hon. Friend for his welcome. Yes, the lottery division of the present Great Britain Sports Council will proceed fairly seamlessly into the English Sports Council. There will be no difficulty.

Ms Kate Hoey (Vauxhall): I welcome very much the setting up of the streamlined United Kingdom Sports Council. Can the Minister clarify whether there will be any more resources for school sports associations, which are keen to get sport going among our young people? Why does he not think that the Minister should chair the new forum? That is the only way in which we will get it to be really accountable to this Parliament.

Mr. Sproat: I thank the hon. Lady for her kind welcome, which I very much appreciate. Her first question is very important. I said that we would be asking governing bodies to make absolutely clear in their business plans what proposals they have for links between schools, other youth groups and sports clubs outside schools, but in the community. We may be saying rather more about that if and when we make an announcement about sport in schools.

On the hon. Lady's very kind suggestion that I should be chairman, which the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) also mentioned, without undue modesty I can say that the fewer politicians and ministerial nominees, the better. I look to the new chairman to provide firm and strong leadership for British sport.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): I welcome my hon. Friend's statement. Is he aware that I am the president and chairman of two school sporting bodies, and that I took five coaching certificates and coached in five sports in addition to academic teaching for 23 years? I have a great interest in the field—all amateur, unpaid.

Will more top sportsmen come from schools and clubs as a result of my hon. Friend's excellent work—the Brian Laras and Sebastian Coes of this world—and will it give a special opportunity for all children to enjoy and take part in sport? Will he support the payment of teachers who coach, as well as putting money into clubs to coach children, as the Select Committee on Education, Science and the Arts recommended two or three years ago?

Mr. Sproat: My hon. Friend's qualifications are extremely impressive—I did not know the depth of the detail—and I will undertake to add him to the list of people I consult on the details of this statement.

As for more sportsmen coming through schools, that is my aim and I believe that it will be helped by the statement. I will consider my hon. Friend's third question.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): I do not have a CV and I do not want to interfere in the love relationship that the Opposition Front Bench and the Department of Heritage have entered into this week. How will the six independent members of the Sports Council be appointed and whom will they be independent from?

Mr. Sproat: They will be appointed by the Government and be independent from the Government. They will also be independent of vested interests in sport. For example, the British Olympic Association will, quite rightly, have a member, and amateur non-Olympic sport will have another. By independent members, I mean people who are independent from those particular sections of the sporting community.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): My hon. Friend referred to ministerial appointees. Does he plan to use their talent in particular ways and perhaps to use it more than it has been used in the past?

Mr. Sproat: That is a very interesting question. Yes, is the short answer. When I got this job, I was struck by the fact that I did not know what the ministerial nominees were supposed to be telling me, or what I was supposed to be telling them. When I went round the regions I was extremely impressed by their talents. As a minimum, first, I want to get five of them on to the English Sports Council, so that we have proper regional influence in that council at a national level and a two-way flow of information and experience. Secondly, I want to meet all the nominees in each region and also to meet all of them together at least once a year, so that we can have a two-way flow of advice.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): Does the Minister see, as a result of the changes, more money going to the regions for the provision of sporting facilities and involvement in sport? Does he see a role for the Sports Council in providing a replacement for Wembley stadium, which would provide this capital and the country with a national stadium worthy of the 21st century?

Mr. Sproat: On the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question, I certainly see more money going to grassroots sport in the regions. One of the troubles with the present Sports Council—terrific as it has been in so many ways—is that too much money has been spent on publications, pamphlets, conferences and seminars and too little has been going directly to sport. I want to change that and focus the money going to sport in the regions.

I have received representations about Wembley stadium. I will consider them and make an announcement on another occasion.

Mr. Michael Stephen (Shoreham): Can my hon. Friend explain whether national lottery funds will be available, through the new United Kingdom Sports Council, for both the revenue side and the capital side of sports projects?

Mr. Sproat: The money will be distributed not by the UK Sports Council, but by the English, Northern Ireland, Welsh and Scottish councils, but the UK Sports Council will obviously give expert advice on matters that have a United Kingdom-wide application.

On my hon. Friend's important point about capital and revenue, there will be an opportunity for revenue funding to come from lottery funds, as long as it is part of a capital project. There cannot be such funding from the lottery where no capital sum has originally gone into a project.

Mr. Andrew Miller (Ellesmere Port and Neston): Last week, while you were enjoying the air at Wimbledon, Madam Speaker, I had to put up with the recorded version of that great event because I was at an athletics meeting in my constituency, where a very important question was raised which is appropriate to this statement. In my region, one of the concerns that have been expressed is that the previous body failed properly to evaluate the strategic needs within the regions and to identify areas where gaps in provision existed. Will the Minister confirm that part of the work of the new regional body will be to undertake that strategic review and fill in those gaps, wherever possible?

Mr. Sproat: Yes. The hon. Member makes a very good point. Almost the main reason why I want ministerial nominees to continue, but to be attached to the sports council for the region, is exactly that—so that there is a direct flow of information up to the national body from the grassroots about what is needed there and back again, to ensure that national policy is practised in the regions. That is a very good point and I hope that I have met it by what I have proposed.

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): May I congratulate my hon. Friend on his moves to re-establish sport in schools? It is certainly desirable that our children should be fitter, healthier and more competitive. Where will the headquarters of the new sports councils be located and where will the English Sports Council be located? Will he consider moving it out of London?

Mr. Sproat: I thank my hon. Friend for her comments on the importance of competitive team games in schools. The headquarters of both the United Kingdom and English councils will be in London—but in different buildings, so there will not be too cosy a relationship. My hon. Friend's interesting suggestion that the English Sports Council's headquarters might be moved out of London in future is certainly possible. I will look to the council to come forward with proposals, if it so wishes—provided that they are cost effective.

Mr. Edward Garnier (Harborough): To whom or to what will the real estate and other properties of the present Sports Council be transferred?

Mr. Sproat: All the national centres in England will, as my hon. Friend would expect, go to the English Sports Council. The centre in Wales, at Plas y Brenin, will also go to the English Sports Council because of a complicated legal ownership arrangement. It will be up to the English Sports Council to say in future that it does not want to run national centres but to privatise or sell them. It is up to the council to make proposals in due course.

Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Cirencester and Tewkesbury): I welcome my hon. Friend's announcement that he will consider private finance in relation to the new councils' funding. How does he expect to ratchet in private finance to ensure the best value for every pound spent of public money?

Mr. Sproat: As my hon. Friend knows and emphasises by implication, we are extremely keen to attract private finance on every possible occasion. A good example is the current sponsorship scheme whereby the Government match pound for pound up to £3.5 million, grossing £7 million, to be pumped into sport. That is a paradigm of what we would like to see in the new body.

Mr. Gary Streeter (Plymouth, Sutton): I congratulate my hon. Friend on his statement and on the proposal to reduce the number of bureaucrats in the new UK body from 180 to 20. Can he assure me that the money saved in that way will be pumped back into grassroots sports?

Mr. Sproat: Yes, I certainly can. My hon. Friend makes an extremely important point which goes to the heart of our attempts to concentrate, target and cut out peripheral activities in leisure and recreation—important as they are—and concentrate on sport. We will cut the money out of bureaucracy and put it straight into sport itself.

Madam Speaker: Thank you all for your co-operation.

United Kingdom (Inequalities)

Question again proposed.

11.31 am

Mr. MacShane: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for allowing me to rejoin this important debate. We heard a fine speech from my hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East, who constructively set out the problems that worry many Labour Members and which have certainly concerned me since entering the House two months ago. If I had to sum up the root cause of the pain and distress that come to my attention at my surgeries or in correspondence from my constituents, it would be growing inequalities in our country.

Next Thursday, 14 July, the French will celebrate the 205th anniversary of their revolution, which inscribed in world history the concepts of liberty, fraternity and equality. These days, I yield to no one in my admiration for attacks on political correctness, but perhaps we should use the word "solidarity" instead of fraternity.

The Government have been taking our liberties, destroying our solidarity and increasing inequality. We are all born unequal, live unequal and die unequal—but some are more unequal than others. For 15 consecutive years, it has been the Government's project to increase inequality. Some people—including my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn)—may passionately believe that a fully equal society can be created on Earth. I do not share that opinion.

Mr. Michael Stephen (Shoreham): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that God has clearly not been reading the socialist manifesto, as He continues to create people unequal?

Mr. MacShane: If the hon. Gentleman returns as regularly as we all should to the Book of Genesis, he will find a paradise created on Earth, which for thousands of years has set the guidelines for socialism and equality.

I share the view expressed earlier that Britain is a far richer and more productive society than ever before. Why are those increased riches and productivity so unequally shared? Why have other countries that have become richer and more productive in the past 15 years been able to ensure a fairer and more equal sharing of their increased riches?

Before the statement, I referred to the OECD report, which was a forerunner to the Institute for Fiscal Studies report to which my hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East, referred. That report, published in "Employment Outlook" in June 1993, shows that whereas there has been a decrease in earnings dispersal—a technical term meaning who has the cake and the butter in our society—in Japan, Germany and the Netherlands in the 1980s, the sharpest increase ever in OECD history was recorded in Britain. It is interesting and important to note that societies that set a goal of equality in their policy framework turn out to be high-performing economies.

The earnings of Britain's top 10 per cent.—the deciles, to quote the new word that has crept into economic discourse—between 1980 and 1992 increased 51 per cent., while the bottom one tenth, or poorest, saw their earnings increase just 11 per cent. That shows a 4:1 ratio between the top one tenth and the bottom one tenth, which is a clear statistical indication of growing inequality in Britain. Also in the 1980s, although the years do not match exactly, in Italy and Germany the gap between the bottom 10 per cent. and top 10 per cent. of earnings stayed constant or even narrowed.

It is not simply a question of economics. We must move the debate beyond statistical exchanges on deciles, poverty, absolute poverty, and whether or not more households have central heating. I am delighted that there is more central heating in the homes of Britain, but I remain worried about the one third of the population who are without it. I would find it hard to believe that any hon. Member has not seen constituents at his or her surgery who cannot meet their fuel bills. To have central heating in one's home but to be unable to afford using it is an expression of the inequality that worries Opposition Members. There is inequality also in education and in the absence of adequate nursery provision. We have the same number of people going to university as our leading competitors, but in the Netherlands—which produced Mr. Ruud Lubbers, the would-be President of the European Commission, according to the Prime Minister—49 per cent. of the work force have technical or craft qualifications whereas the figure in Britain is only 27 per cent.

Lady Olga Maitland: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. MacShane: I am sure that the hon. Lady will have a chance to make a speech. Given that the statement and questions lasted 40 minutes, I do not want to take up too much time. I may give way later, but it might be more helpful if I were to finish, to give other hon. Members a proper chance to speak consecutively, in joined-up sentences.

Korea and Malaysia devote 22 per cent. and 18 per cent. respectively of public expenditure to education, while the UK spends only 12 per cent. UK Government spending on education as a percentage of gross domestic product declined from 5.4 per cent. in 1979 to 4.8 per cent. in 1991. At the same time, Government support for private school fees increased from £3 million in 1982 to £76 million in 1992. That is an example of the growth in inequality in education.

There is inequality in the way that we are governed. There are now more Tory placemen and women appointed to Government-established quangos than there are democratically elected local councillors.

There is inequality in our very political structure. Long gone are the days when Conservatives sat for northern or industrial seats—the Minister, the hon. Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt) is an exception—or, indeed, had any real knowledge of poverty and inequality. Gone are the days when service in the armed forces at least facilitated some contact between the ruling classes and the ordinary people.

The hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) referred to the trade union movement as being confined to barracks. I am not sure whether he served in the armed forces, but that expression refers to a punishment—to a denial of rights because of some breach or dereliction of duty. Not a great deal of passion has been aroused in this debate, but I have to tell the hon. Gentleman that some of us find it deeply arrogant—and oh so typical—that the 7 million members of our trade union movement should be considered to be people on punishment parade, confined to barracks and not allowed to play a part as equal citizens in the labour market and the world of work.

The inequalities in our government, education and economic systems relentlessly feed upon themselves. We must deal with the important question of what produces inequality. Although I would argue—and my hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East correctly asserted—that, in part, it is a deliberate Government policy, some market, global and technological changes are also having an enormous impact. In 1992, 4,000 employees at the General Motors Vauxhall plant in Luton produced 170,000 cars. That is a doubling of output per worker since the 1980s, which I welcome. However, their wages have not risen by anything remotely like the increase in productivity.

In the United States—the figures are roughly comparable with those for the UK—productivity grew between 1980 and 1990 by about 4 per cent. per annum, but the real take-home pay of workers in the manufacturing sector decreased by 3.5 per cent. In theory, any decline in the wages of workers in industrialised countries should be offset by an increase in the wages—the purchasing power—of workers in the newly industrialised countries, especially in Asia. Investment and technology have poured into countries such as Mexico, but the purchasing power of Mexican workers has declined by up to 50 per cent. In Malaysia, a country which is rocketing up the productivity and output tables, the take-home pay of the industrial worker is stagnant or even declining.

That is an important point in the debate on inequality, because, throughout most of the 20th century, whether under Conservative or Labour Governments, there was a narrowing of the gap in equality because increases in productivity were matched by increases in pay. To put it

crudely, workers have been able to buy what they make or use the services that they provide. Now, the productivity-pay link has been broken, partly because of globalisation factors and partly because of technological change. As yet, we have not found a method to pay everyone in employment sufficient to sustain a decent standard of living.

I accept that this country has a lower level of unemployment than some of our competitors, but all the new jobs are part-time. *[Interruption.]* The majority of those jobs are part-time and at pay rates insufficient to sustain a full and normal family life. Indeed, I seem to recall that either the Secretary of State or the Minister made just that point in an important speech recently and said that the absence of a male breadwinner was having a serious impact on the quality of family life. We have to find the mechanisms to deal with that. It will be as great a problem for the next Labour Government as it has been for this Government, or should have been had they ever sought seriously to deal with it.

It appears to me that we tackle the problem of inequality through a mixture of policy, precept and example. The steel industry is of great concern to my constituents, who read with some shock this week that the chairman of British Steel has been awarded a 54 per cent. pay rise. That takes his pay this year to 33 times the average earnings of a steel worker. Of course, a steel worker gets reasonably good money—about £15,000 a year or £310 a week—but the Latin American ratio of 33:1, which is increasingly evident in pay rates, will corrupt and corrode the sense of community and relationship needed to make our work forces perform competitively and with team spirit and co-operation.

Mr. Alan Duncan (Rutland and Melton): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that such pay rises give young people entering the industry the ambition to become the chairman of British Steel? Does he further accept that in his ideal economy such a large industry would be nationalised, whereas it is in fact in private hands and contributing to taxation and revenue to help the very poor people whom he says he wishes to help? Those nationalised industries that used to be a drain on the nation's resources are now contributors—the blood suckers have become the blood donors.

Mr. MacShane: I could enter into a debate about how to make a great deal of money in a very short time through contacts, knowledge—

Mr. Corbyn: And property speculation.

Mr. MacShane: I leave it to my hon. Friend to deal with the unpleasant remarks of the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan).

The hon. Gentleman was quite wrong in his assertions. In 1960, Italy's gross domestic product was half that of Britain. Since then, there has been wide public ownership in Italy while Britain has privatised its great industries. Italian GDP has now moved ahead of Britain, which is slipping down every international comparative league table for the rich, the middling rich, the-not-so rich and the poor alike.

As I said, the chairman of British Steel has had a 54 per cent. pay increase—bringing his earnings over the steel workers to the Latin American ratio of 33:1—while his employees have had to be content with 3 per cent. That may encourage the one man or woman in a million who aspires to be the chairman of a great company, but it will do absolutely nothing for the thousands of people in Rotherham who would rather work in a small, middling or large company, have a good job, apply their skills and talents and have a wage sufficient unto their needs.

The figures for Rotherham are extremely stark. We are told that Britain is back in the middle of an economic boom and is out of recession, that Britain is leading the way and Europe is in the doldrums. Yet between May 1992 and May 1993 the number of income support claimants in Rotherham rose from 33,000 to 37,000. Children receiving free school meals—that necessary but unpleasant aspect of charity, as some boys and girls line up to be identified as the new victims of Tory policies—has risen from 7,000 in 1991 to 9,000 this year. No parent likes to mark their child out by claiming free school meals, but that is the record of growing inequality in just one constituency.

Rotherham has adopted an anti-poverty strategy and it has proved to be one of the most impressive in Europe. [*Laughter.*] Conservative Members may laugh and scorn, but their natural supporters in the chamber of commerce and business community of Rotherham—there were only 2,000 Tory voters in Rotherham at the last election, but that was an aberration; they will come back—support the anti-poverty strategy.

On a tiny budget of less than £250,000, the anti-poverty unit has been able to undertake a wide range of initiatives. It has set up a credit union, encouraging local savings and loans clubs in the poorer areas, and the Rothercard, a discount scheme which allows low-income households to benefit from high street shopping, low-cost sport and recreation. It has initiated community projects such as a newspaper in Canklow, a community advice centre in Ferham and a "community chest" fund in Dinnington in the constituency of my good and hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron). It has taken redundancy action and other concrete, small-scale initiatives to help to combat inequalities in my constituency. I commend this approach quite seriously to the Minister.

Such problems will continue for many years, so I invite the Minister to organise a European conference to examine other and similar initiatives. I know that my friends in Rotherham would give the Minister a warm welcome if he would care to cross the Pennines to see an example of South Yorkshire initiatives in action.

It is a Rotherham problem and a national problem, but the debate must be set in a world context. The hon. Member for Teignbridge referred movingly to a man from the third world who had to bring his child to Britain for an operation, but his country might be able to afford its own national health service if its debts were cancelled and the banks took their fangs out of the third world and allowed it to develop properly.

If the third world were given fair terms of trade and encouraged to develop, more doctors and professionals would stay in their own countries, rather than many of them having to come to the north to find a good job and adequate income. Growing inequality will continue in our country while we have growing inequality in the world.

We need a social clause for the new World Trade Organisation so that world trade contributes to a win:win situation, enriching all those who participate, rather than, as world trade has for the past 15 years, increasing wealth

[Mr. MacShane]

for the north with some increasing wealth for take-off countries, but worse inequality and poverty for many countries in the rest of the world.

We may not make the poor rich by making the rich poorer—I see smiles on the faces of the rich on the Conservative Benches—and the failure of communist countries proves that quite conclusively, but we can make the poor a lot less poor by making the rich accept that they are part of a community with equal responsibilities and equal duties even if they have unequal privileges.

Mr. Nicholls: We have already heard, and it is a well-known fact, that when tax rates are reduced, the amount that the rich contribute to the tax take increases. Surely what is important is the amount of money available, not the size of the gap. That is the case that the hon. Gentleman must answer.

Mr. MacShane: If the hon. Gentleman had listened to my speech he would know that that is precisely the point that I am seeking to make. Every economy that seeks to keep the ratio between what the top and bottom earners as narrow as possible, such as Japan—

Mr. Duncan: Why?

Mr. MacShane: I shall answer that. The top executives of Sony, Nissan and other great Japanese companies earn between seven, 12 or perhaps up to 15 times as much as their workers.

Mr. Roger Evans: Is the hon. Gentleman aware of recent economic papers on the effect of the Laffer curve on Japan and how it is believed in Japan that those penal rates of higher taxation are depriving the Japanese economy of a chance to keep ahead in the longer term of South Korea and Hong Kong, where tax rates are much more equal?

Mr. MacShane: What is worrying Japan is that, by the year 2020, about 40 per cent. of the population will be 60 or over. It is facing the problems of a maturing economy and demand for social provision. Less than one in five houses is connected to a mains sewer. Hon. Members who have visited Japan will know how crowded and inhospitable much of ordinary life is in Japan. That is what is concerning policy makers in Japan. I study Japan quite closely, but I have yet to see any strong evidence that anybody seriously involved in Japanese policy making is concerned about tax rates, which are lower than most of those in west Europe.

Perhaps the most dominant feature of Japan, Singapore, Korea and the successful economies of the past 50 years has been their much narrower ratio between the earnings of the broad mass of employees and the top bosses. It is a culture of fair pay and investment rather than the rentier culture which increasingly dominates our unequal society.

Mr. Duncan: As someone who lived in Singapore for two years, I can bear witness to how successful its economy is. We should watch it as we consider how to structure our own. The hon. Gentleman has already admitted that one does not necessarily make the poor richer by making the rich poorer, yet everything else that he has said today conflicts with that admission. Should not he be mindful of the fact that if the spontaneous order of a society is interrupted and if equality is forced on that society, it inevitably reduces that country to poverty, as history shows? Perhaps he should remember that Shakespeare said

"untune that string,
And hark! what discord follows".

Mr. MacShane: I am also an admirer of much that has been achieved in Singapore—it is strong on discipline, clear about chewing gum, utterly opposed to smoking and very keen on short hair. They are all values which Singaporeans enforce with some vigour. Of course, Singapore is a society shaped by the great secretary of the Fabian society at Cambridge, Lee Kuan Yew. For some of us who know that country, we see it as a Fabian society on earth with slightly better food, but, alas, with a cultural and moral order with which I am not sure that Conservatives could live. I am surprised that the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton managed to live there for two years, and I congratulate him on giving up his Toryism, his Englishness and his sense of spirit and fun. However, I know that Conservatives will go to any corner of the earth to earn money.

You asked me for concrete policies and pledges—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I was not being asked. I think that the hon. Gentleman has perhaps forgotten the rule.

Mr. MacShane: Forgive me, Madam Deputy Speaker. I believe that I heard such calls from the Conservative Benches, and I refer them to my ten-minute Bill on page 4049 of the Order Paper. However, I suggest the following general remedies. Yes, let us copy countries that are currently more successful—

Mr. Streeter: Cuba.

Mr. MacShane: For God's sake, the hon. Gentleman is driving Britain to Cuba. There are parts of my constituency where I suspect that the quality of life is worse than in Cuba and certainly a lot less warm. As Conservatives create an unequal Britain, they may find that they are met by a revolt such as that which swept Mr. Castro, a friend of my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North, into power 30 years ago. Let us copy and learn the lessons of the most successful countries such as Germany, Japan and the dynamic Asian countries. In each of those countries, one finds that the notion of preventing inequality where possible is built into public policy.

Let us link the future of work and the time spent at work to the technology necessary to produce what our country wants. If we want to ensure that earned income provides the economic wherewithal for the majority of citizens, we need a new concept of pay, productivity and output. We should use the market as a servant, not a master. Taxation should be based on the ability to pay, but let us set a target for equality.

I was delighted to hear that, in a speech to the Trades Union Congress on Tuesday, the Secretary of State for Employment, in what was otherwise a rather vacuous speech, referred to full employment as something which the Government should support. I invite the Under-Secretary of State for Social Security to join the Secretary of State and add equality to full employment.

Above all, we must avoid the Latin American road down which we are going, and even the north American road. In the cities of north America, as in Latin America, no one can walk the streets at night. Drug taking,

prostitution and criminality are the norm. We must also avoid the creation of a handful of super-rich and a middle class that often lives in anxiety and insecurity.

The hon. Member for Rutland and Melton quoted Shakespeare. In response, I shall quote Francis Bacon who some say may even have written the quotation used by the hon. Gentleman. Bacon said:

"Of great riches there is no real use, except it be in their distribution; the rest is but conceit."

Conservatives are arguing for inequality, presiding over a country growing more unequal; in inequality matched only by their conceit.

I conclude by joining in the hope expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East that there will soon sit on the Government Benches people who have learned the lessons of successful economies, and will put the building of equality back into public policy and make Britain a fairer, better and wealthier place for us to live in.

12.5 pm

Mr. Gary Streeter (Plymouth, Sutton): It is a pleasure to participate in this important debate. Having listened to the speech of the hon. Member for Rotherham (Mr. MacShane), it is refreshing for us to learn that even the gilt-edged face of the new Labour party speaks just as much nonsense and waffle as the old, unreconstructed face of the Labour party sitting directly behind him.

The hon. Member for Rotherham spoke of a target for equality. I look forward to that thought being developed by the Labour party in the next two years, but I stand before you, Madam Deputy Speaker, as a disappointed person this morning. Having read the motion tabled by the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms Quin), which refers to a range of measures and policies that are needed and a change of direction in existing Government policy, I thought that we would hear from her a list of well thought-out, constructive proposals as to how we might deal with the problems facing some people in the country.

I place on record the fact that I accept that some people require help and that we should give that help with compassion and understanding. However, the important thing is not simply to stand up in forums such as this and utter fancy words; the important thing is to suggest proposals, policies and measures that can help.

I noted down carefully the five solutions that the hon. Lady suggested to help the people whom she described as living in deprivation and suffering inequality. She said that recognising the extent of the problem was the first step. I agree that the first step is always to recognise the problem, so let us give her that one for the purposes of a quiet life.

The hon. Lady's second solution was a job creation package, but what does that mean? What are her specific proposals? How much would they cost? Is she suggesting a programme to be funded by national Government out of taxpayers' income? What is a job creation package? She gave us no idea.

Thirdly, the hon. Lady talked about creating a new environmental task force, but she did not say who would fund it, how much it would cost, what it would do or how it would create jobs or help people on lower incomes. It was a fancy phrase with nothing behind it.

The fourth solution was to help south American countries more. She called for some kind of Marshall plan, but did not say how it would help the people of Britain. As one of my colleagues rightly said, such a programme would surely cost us money and be a greater burden on our taxpayers, thus enabling us to do less for our people. It did not make sense.

The pièce de resistance was the call by the hon. Member for Gateshead, East for fairness in our social security policies. She gave no specifics and she did not explain what she meant. She did not say how we could better target help or resources. I am afraid that it was the same old meaningless platitudes. We have not heard a single solution this morning.

Much of the speech by the hon. Member for Gateshead, East was a discussion of the whole issue of what she called "wage inequality". In other words, some jobs pay more than others. She did not tell us this morning who should decide how much each job should pay. What should we do about wage inequality? The market says that a certain job should pay a certain rate. What should we do to equalise that with other jobs which the market says should be paid at a lower rate? The hon. Lady gave us no answer.

Was the hon. Lady talking about direct Government intervention? Does she believe that we should say to an employer, "No, that is not the right rate for the job. You must pay more or less. You must be in line with other professions and other trades"? What was the hon. Lady talking about in terms of the solution to wage inequality? I am afraid that she did not say.

Mr. MacShane: The hon. Gentleman spoke of the Government setting wage limits. How can Railtrack and the unions come to any agreement when the Government have interfered quite crudely in setting the wages that railway signal workers will earn?

Mr. Streeter: The hon. Gentleman knows very well that that point is a world apart from what I have just described—the suggestion that the Government should intervene to decide what every job or sector of job should be paid. We are talking about the Government being prudent with taxpayers' money in insisting that public sector employees should not be paid more than they can earn in increased productivity.

Ms Quin: Does the hon. Gentleman consider that the Government are prudent with taxpayers' money when they give so much of that money to people who are on such low incomes from their employers that they are forced to claim state benefits? Does he think that it is fair to subsidise employers who pay Scrooge wages?

Mr. Streeter: It was important that family credit and other forms of social security payments were put in place by this sensitive and caring Government to ensure that every person and every family who can at present attract only a low-paid job have their income made up to a reasonable level by the taxpayer. I consider that to be a reasonable and right response, which is far better than the response at which the hon. Lady hinted, although she did not describe it clearly, of a national minimum wage. Opposition Members must begin to live in the real world. A national minimum wage would undoubtedly cause unemployment for thousands of people because employers could not afford to increase their wages to that extent.

I place on record my strong support for the outstanding speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls). In many respects, it was the speech that I had thought about making myself. He spoke about the great inequality being perpetrated on the majority of people

[Mr. Streeter]

by tiny minority interest groups. The tail has been wagging the dog for far too long. We are now entering a time when the dog wants to respond. Over the past 30 years, the pendulum has swung in favour of those minority groups, who are a tiny fraction of the nation. The pendulum has swung too far and will return with interest.

Let us have no more empty rhetoric such as the motion. Let us have firm and constructive policies which seek to deal with some of the remaining issues. Over the past 15 years, our Government have a record of which we can be proud. Ordinary families on average earnings are now £83 per week better off than they were in 1978-79, after tax and inflation are taken into account. Real incomes are up sharply for vulnerable groups, including 40 per cent. real income increases for pensioners. As has already been said —this is important—the top 10 per cent. of taxpayers now account for 45 per cent. of the income tax take, compared with 35 per cent. in 1979. That is a record of which we can be proud.

The issues of inequality need to be addressed. I believe that the philosophical approach to the subject is as follows. We must put in place opportunities for people. We must remove barriers which might prevent access to that opportunity. We must encourage people to seize that opportunity, but then each one must decide for him or herself. We cannot live people's lives for them. What does this mean in practice?

First, in practice, we are talking about access to decent education. The Government reforms of the past few years have been striving to create an improved education service and there are now many signs that this important policy reform is beginning to bear fruit. The national curriculum is now widely accepted as improving standards. We have stressed the importance of assessing pupils at regular stages and the importance of parental choice. We have pursued the popular policy of allowing good schools to expand. We have delegated to schools the way in which they spend their budgets through LMS—local management of schools. We have pursued the important policy of grant-maintained schools which allow parents, teachers, governors and headmasters far greater choice and a far greater say in how schools are run. Access to education is improving under this Government.

Secondly, our reforms of health care are designed to improve access to health care free at the point of need. They are beginning to work. Some 1 million more patients are being treated than ever before. We all know that there is no bottomless pit of resources, yet demand for increasing health care is infinite. The Government are responsible in seeking to bring to the surface the costs of various types of treatment and in seeking to improve efficiency in the health service. Those are very necessary reforms which guarantee the survival of the health service free at the point of need. To go blindly on pouring in more and more taxpayers' money without reforms of efficiency and careful costing would lead to the service's ultimate demise.

The third point is access to a reasonable job. It is important for any Government to get the economic framework of the country right. How we rejoice, therefore, in the fact that, since December 1992, 300,000 people are now back in work. How important it is that the Government proceed with the reforms in industry and in business to deregulate, to improve competitiveness and to continue the revolution with our supply side reforms. Those factors are important in creating jobs. Today, we can congratulate ourselves on our low interest rates, our low inflation and our competitive pound. We have in place an economic framework that is likely to produce the sustained economic growth which will be so important to people over the next few years.

Fourthly, there must be access to decent and affordable homes. Over the past three years, 170,000 new social homes have been created by housing associations. Housing associations are now the major provider of social housing and we are revitalising the private sector at the same time. For all those reasons, we have a record of which we can be proud in terms of offering opportunities to people. We have given them access to the things that they really care about—a job, a home, education for their children and health care in times of need.

There is a whiff of hypocrisy in the air this morning. The motion, which calls for greater equality, simply does not ring true. There is not much equality in Monklands district council. There was not much equality for pensioners in the late 1970s when roaring inflation at 26 per cent. ate into their life savings, forcing many of them to live in abject poverty. There was not much equality of opportunity for council tenants when the Labour party fiercely opposed the right for them to buy their own council houses, which was a great success. There was not much equality of opportunity in access to health care when the previous Labour Government had to cut their hospital-building programme when they ran out of money.

Fine words are simply not enough. What is important is that any Government run their economy efficiently and competently, creating access for their people to opportunities of housing, jobs, education and health care. In all those areas, the Government can be proud of their record. We, at least, have practical policies to enable our citizens to gain access to opportunity. How much more they respond to that than to the empty, meaningless platitudes which drift across the Chamber from Labour Members.

12.20 pm

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East (Ms Quin) on moving the motion. There is no doubt that it raises issues of genuine importance which are, to be fair, although one would not guess it from some of the speeches, of concern to the whole House and, indeed, to the country. My hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East put her points with clarity, ability and sound sense.

The distinguishing feature of some of the speeches is their sense of unreality. There has been a lot of charging at windmills; setting up targets which are purely imaginary. I ought to make it clear that very few Labour Members —I shall not be dramatic and say none, but few individuals, certainly not the party as a whole—believe, as Conservative Members seem to think that we do, that we should have equality of income. Of course, there is no question that the Government should regulate everyone's wages so that everyone was paid the same or that that should even be the theoretical, desirable end to our economic life. There is no question of that at all.

Similarly, it is sometimes suggested that we do not believe in the importance of individual initiative or the duty of individuals to better themselves and, in doing so,

to help better society as a whole. Of course that is important, but we argue—it is closely related to poverty—that, if one looks round our community, one sees that we have created circumstances, and the situation has worsened greatly in recent years, whereby people cannot exercise individual responsibility because they are trapped, either financially or, very often, socially, in situations which literally destroy life chances. That means that people of genuine ability and aspiration cannot make progress in society. It is not an abstract argument about salary levels or resources in that narrow sense; it is an argument about opportunity in society and what happens when that opportunity is left to the unregulated market, when people cannot better themselves. I want people to better themselves. I am consciously struck almost every time that I am in my constituency by the number of people who do not have that opportunity, and it is against that lack of opportunity that myself and my hon. Friends are protesting.

Mr. Duncan: One of the concerns among Conservative Members is that the well-meaning beginnings of the hon. Gentleman's thinking convert into a practice which ends up malign. A fine example of that is in Labour-controlled local authorities, where one sees his kind of dogma put into practice. Would he therefore comment on today's *Evening Standard*, which cites an example of that dogma put into practice, about which the social services inspectorate has said:

"Children in care"—

the sort of people that the hon. Gentleman most cares about—

"were prey to paedophiles, pimps, pornographers and drug-pushers because of the political dogma"

in the local authority of Islington?

Mr. Dewar: No, I would not care to comment in any way on a caried story in the *Evening Standard*, which is a synopsis of a report I have not read. Of course, if there is abuse in any part of the public service, it is a serious matter and ought to be eradicated.

On the statement on the health service and the complaints procedure yesterday from the ombudsman, the Prime Minister fairly said that if there are problems and there are feelings, we ought to address them. The same applies in any other part of the service. In my local authority—it is typical of many—the struggle is not to create inequality, but to try to overcome it. It is a matter of trying to provide participation, mixture of tenure and opportunity for people who live not only in houses in the public sector, but often in poor housing conditions in the private sector.

I turn briefly to some of arguments that have been adduced. As the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan) has intervened, may I say to him—no, it was not him; I apologise. He will be terribly insulted and I fear that I shall him hurt him terribly because I have confused him with the hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls).

Mr. Duncan: He is a good thing, too.

Mr. Dewar: Well, that is another disagreement that we shall pursue on another occasion.

It seems to be important to make the point that the fact that the present Prime Minister came from modest financial circumstances or that exceptional people in exceptional circumstances can move to the top is not a complete answer to the problems that I have been outlining and, therefore, it is irrelevant to the main thrust of the argument. I do not want the debate to sink in a welter of statistics. To the credit of some Conservative Members—the hon. Member for Teignbridge is an example—who have spoken, may I say that there has been no real attempt to say that the gap between rich and poor has not been widening in recent years. That gap is self-evident to anyone who looks at the facts—and, strangely enough, there are people who still try to do so.

I remember a report of an interview in the *Glasgow Herald* on 4 March 1992 given by the Prime Minister. It lives in my memory and I have used the example on a number of occasions. He was asked specifically about poverty in Scotland, although no doubt his reply would have been the same about every part of the country. His reply was "Poverty, what poverty?" He went on to say—I hope that I am not presenting the argument unfairly—that, of course, poverty was relative, that the definition of poverty was shifting and that, as the Government increased income support and benefit rates, they increased the number of the poor. Therefore, the Prime Minister said that it was unfair to charge them with growing poverty levels because they were, in that sense, the victims of their own generosity. I do not accept that argument.

I heard the Prime Minister repeat that argument on "Channel 4 News" on—I think—8 June. It was put to him by the interviewer that, under his Government, the rich had got richer and the poor poorer and it was suggested that that was an inescapable conclusion from the facts. The Prime Minister showed every wish to try to escape from that conclusion and, indeed, described the evidence for such an assertion as very suspect. I have a little passing sympathy with that because, of course, most of the evidence comes from Government statistics. However, on the whole, I am prepared to accept them.

The Under-Secretary of State will be familiar with, for example, the annual survey of households with below average income, which his Department produces, which suggested that, if one took the bottom 10 per cent. of households—I am sure that he will deal with it and put his gloss on it—there was some evidence to suggest that there has been an income fall in real terms for the bottom 10 per cent. of households since 1979 after housing costs. It was a much more modest fall, but still a fall, if one takes the income figures before housing costs.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East properly referred to the evidence produced by the Institute for Fiscal Studies. It suggested that there had been—the word is fairly used—a "dramatic" increase in the number of families whose income is less than half the national average. Even if we move away from the dramatic edge of poverty to mainstream Britain, that suggests that there are many people who have fallen back and are in a much less comfortable position than before.

If Conservative Members were defending a situation in which the gap between rich and poor had opened because of a genuine free market—for example, if individuals had shown exceptional ability and had capitalised on it without any artificial aid or assistance and had pulled away from the ruck—that would be one state of affairs, although we might wonder about the desirability of it. That, however, is not the state of affairs. The reason for many inequalities is the Government's deliberate fiscal policy.

We are talking about something that has been created as an act of policy and not as the natural order of events. Fiscal traffic has been moving in the wrong direction. That

[Mr. Dewar]

suggests an indifference to the distribution of income at best, or possibly a malevolent interest in it. That is unfortunate. I shall not engage in a volley of statistics, but if we consider the direct and indirect tax take from the wealthiest 10 per cent. of people since 1979 as a percentage of gross income, it is clear that it has fallen. As for the bottom 10 per cent., the take has risen quite sharply.

It is right that income tax as a percentage of income has fallen, but that is not true in terms of total tax, even before the big hike of recent times—the dramatic reversal of election promises. Even before that hike, the tax burden as a whole had increased under the Government. It has increased disproportionately for those who were already at the bottom of the heap. That is unfortunate. That is not the natural order of Adam Smith economics; it is the result of a social policy that has had unfortunate consequences. That is why Opposition Members are entitled to protest.

Mr. Roger Evans: As the hon. Gentleman agrees that the top 10 per cent. of income tax payers are now paying more as a proportion—

Mr. Dewar: Less.

Mr. Evans: No. As I understand it, as a matter of income tax revenue, the top 10 per cent. of income tax payers are now contributing more revenue as a proportion of income tax to the public purse. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it would be self-defeating for any Government of any political persuasion to increase the 40 per cent. tax band? If he does not agree, will he explain why?

Mr. Dewar: I am much more interested in what we do about the bottom than about the top. The gap is an important factor, and I am interested in the social consequences of it. We should be worried about the additional burdens which have had to be faced by those at the bottom of the heap.

I have not heard the hon. Member for Monmouth (Mr. Evans) speak before, except for his interventions this morning. I suspect that he is interested in marginal tax rates. He will know that in 1993-94, according to the Department of Social Security, there were 230,000 lone parents in work and 270,000 married couples who were paying 75p in the pound or more as a marginal rate in tax deduction and benefit loss. If I were to suggest that we should introduce a top marginal rate of 75p in the pound, I suspect that the hon. Gentleman would be burning the pews in the Chamber and declaring the proposal to be one of the greatest political outrages committed by doctrinaire socialists that there has ever been. He is happy, apparently, to live with a system that imposes such a rate of taxation on some of the poorest in society as a disincentive to bettering themselves, which we all want them to have the chance to do. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman should worry slightly more about that.

It is not the Labour party alone which is worried about these matters. I do not know the reading habits of the hon. Member for Monmouth, but I would guess—this is to his credit—that he reads the *Financial Times* fairly regularly. If so, I recommend to him Tuesday's leader—he may have read it—which was headed, "The wages of inequality". It refers to an excellent piece of research work that was undertaken by the Institute for Fiscal Studies. I apologise for the technical talk, but the institute took the 90th percentile of the distribution of income and compared it with that of the 10th. It was found that the gap between the two had widened significantly.

Conservative Members may say that that does not matter, but the *Financial Times* believes that it does. I suspect that the Government are beginning to have some conscience about it. If so, that is to be welcomed. The *Financial Times* is suggesting that steps must be taken to do something about that problem. No doubt the hon. Member for Monmouth enjoyed the point made in the *Financial Times* that, in those circumstances, the Labour party's minimum wage proposals might become defensible. Perhaps we had better do something about the problem before the hon. Member for Monmouth has to embrace the minimum wage as a means of dealing with the issue. I know that the hon. Gentleman would find that ideologically uncomfortable, to say the least.

Mr. Duncan: The hon. Gentleman made an appeal to the House as though the *Financial Times* was some great Tory capitalist paper. He may recall that, at the last general election, the *Financial Times* called on people to vote Labour. It is not only pink in colour; it is often pink in its views.

Mr. Dewar: I am glad to know that the hon. Gentleman, who I am sure reads the *Financial Times*, does that only to know what the enemy is saying. His was an interesting theory. Whatever else the *Financial Times* is, it is a sensible and sophisticated commentator on such issues. I merely pray it in aid to suggest that the problem of the growing gap, and possibly even the growing absolute poverty, in this economy is not something which sensible people want to sweep away in the way suggested today.

The gaps are not just appearing in work. There is undoubtedly evidence, which I welcome, that retired people are on average now enjoying many more resources and a higher quality of life. That is largely because of the maturing of state earnings-related pension schemes and occupational schemes and because of such things as approved private pensions. It is not happening because of direct help from the Government.

As the Minister is aware, the basic state pension, as a percentage of average male earnings in November 1979, was 20.4 per cent. It was 15.9 per cent. in April 1993 and it is probably below that now. Even if there has been a general increase, sadly a large number of pensioners, probably about 1.6 million, are having to depend on income support, a means-tested benefit which is often resented, as a means of keeping body and soul together.

I sometimes think—and this may be a comment on me—that I have never had to do what so many of my constituents whom I meet have to do, and that is hope that I do not have an unexpected bill of £30, £40 or £50. My constituents just cannot find such sums. That is an inhibition and a cause for worry, the like of which I have been fortunate enough never to experience. However, I am aware of the fact that things that I would take in my stride as a minor inconvenience or irritant become towering problems for a large number of my constituents who are living, in that practical sense and applying that practical test, in the very shadow of poverty.

Lady Olga Maitland: Would the hon. Gentleman be kind enough to give us a benchmark to show what he means by poverty, bearing in mind that, up and down the country, people living on income support and benefits still

have microwaves, televisions, freezers and so on in their homes? Does he agree that it is a problem not so much of people living on a set income, but of how they manage their budgets? A person in one flat may manage perfectly adequately while someone else may not. Surely we need to teach people the art of household management.

Mr. Dewar: The hon. Lady cannot rely on the fact that some people are feckless and do not manage a low income skilfully or that they are not graduates of the Micawber school of economics in the way that the hon. Lady would like.

I accept the point made by the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) that one could refer to a range of benchmarks, some of which are open to counter attack. We could refer to income support level and then say that we could raise income support which would bring more people into poverty. We could refer to half national average income, but national income changes and shifts and may be too generous. The hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam may think that this is odd, but I like to consider the drift. We must consider the problem in social terms.

With regard to income support levels, for a husband and wife with two children under 11, if we consider income support levels as a percentage of average earnings in this country, that family would be living on one percentage point above one third of average earnings. I believe that the figure is 34.2 or 34.3 per cent., according to the latest parliamentary answer that I have seen. The figure has been declining because, of course, it has been tied to the retail prices index and not to average earnings, which, on the whole, have been out-pacing it.

More than 15 per cent. do not reach income support level because they are repaying social fund loans or for a variety of other reasons. In my experience, that is a very tough level at which to live; it leaves very little room for comfort.

One worry—I am sure that the hon. Lady will worry about this matter when she thinks about the figures—is that several things that the Government are doing will make the situation worse for people who are living on benefit. One simple headline figure is incapacity benefit. Of course, some savings will come from excluding from benefit people would have received invalidity benefit under the old system. Even those who climb through the hoops and jump the hurdles and receive the new benefit will find that they have a much lower income level than they would have had in the old days.

We are not talking about pennies, as the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam will know. There will be savings of £415 million in 1995-96, £1.2 billion in 1996-97 and £1.7 billion in 1997-98. Those substantial sums are being taken out of the limited pool of resources for helping those who are not in work and who are certainly living in poverty. That is of considerable concern for me as a constituency Member.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dewar: I shall press on because I must stop very soon.

My concern is not about playing the numbers game—many ingenious people play it better than I would and with considerably more staying power—but about the social fallout that I see around me. I pray in aid as evidence a speech that was made by someone whom I do not normally call to my help on such occasions, the right hon. Member for St. Albans (Mr. Lilley), the Secretary of State for Social Security.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Alistair Burt): Hear, hear.

Mr. Dewar: I hear loyal noises from the Conservative Front Bench about the right hon. Gentleman's excellence and worth. The hon. Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt) might have been present when the Secretary of State spoke at the Birmingham diocesan conference on 20 June. He talked about social instability, in particular the breakdown of marriages, a subject in which he is particularly interested and about which he is particularly concerned. He picked out as the main economic cause of the problem the low wages that are now being earned by unskilled workers. Even people in work are now being forced on to a wage which I would regard as a very good definition of poverty if one of the consequences of it was that it produces such stresses and strains that it threatens the stability of marriage and of the family unit.

I cannot think of a better definition of damaging poverty than that if one is in full-time work and earning so little that it is reasonable to think that one will find it difficult to sustain one's family and the personal connections that are such an important part of a family unit. That is what the right hon. Member for St. Albans said at the diocesan conference in Birmingham the other day. It is remarkable testimony to the difficulties that we are in. They are not people on income support or benefit; they are above that, but are still in that position. Conservative Members have said what a wealthy society we have. That we have people in that situation tells us something about the social damage that has resulted from our fiscal and social policies.

I have with me a newspaper cutting—it is perhaps a little out of date—which I came across by chance when I was cleaning out some papers, and, knowing that I would speak in this debate, I kept it. It is a report in *The Guardian* of 6 January 1993. I do not necessarily endorse it, but again I remind the House of what others think. The article stated that Professor Brian Robson

> "The Government's leading adviser on urban policy warned yesterday of a 'nightmare scenario' in which inner cities became ghettos of poor and disadvantaged people guarded by armed police while better-off neighbourhoods hired their own armed guards."

I do not endorse the language. If hon. Members say that when people like me draw attention to social dangers we are exaggerating, they should think of statements such as those made by impartial figures who are considered worthy of being placed in positions of importance and being made consultants by the Government.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: When the hon. Gentleman is devising his future benefits policy, will he target what will inevitably be limited resources specifically at groups in society who need those resources or spread them thinly among every conceivable group?

Mr. Dewar: I have made it clear in the past that I recognise that targeting is bound to be part of social policy. We cannot implement the policy in any other way. There are certain sectors where one does not target, except in a narrow sense—clearly, child benefit is targeted because people have to have children before they can receive it, but that is playing with words. I defend the principle of child benefit. I defend the principle of a universal state pension

[Mr. Dewar]

as the foundation on which we should all build for security in retirement. If the hon. Gentleman is asking me whether I would target for other special interest groups, of course I would. It would be silly not to do so. It is attractive to talk about a basic income for every citizen, but the arithmetic is harsh, and I do not think that many hon. Members would see that as a practical proposition.

Exciting changes are on their way, we understand. I suppose that it would be too optimistic of me to think that the Under-Secretary of State might give us a glimpse into the future. A barrage of briefings is taking place among the heavy press. The Secretary of State for Employment is committing the Government to full employment—a plank of policy that has been derided over the past few months when it has appeared on Labour party platforms. Last Sunday, *The Sunday Times* said that the policy was purely in response to the Labour leadership contest. If so, it shows that democracy in the Labour party has desirable spin-offs in other places.

We are also told—perhaps the Under-Secretary knows about this more directly—that, at a cost of about £1 million, family credit is to be extended to childless couples and single people. We are told that there will be wage top ups and wage subsidies. We are told that there will be changes in the national insurance contribution system that will do something about the weighting in favour of those who are better off currently built into the banding of the system. Those changes are designed to help those at the bottom of the scale.

Judging from what I have heard this morning, I know that such changes will come as a deep shock and will be anathema to Conservative Members. I hope that what we have heard is true, not because I endorse the proposals in principle and detail now—I do not know exactly what will be produced—but if the proposed changes constitute moves to tackle the sort of problems that my hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East has properly drawn to our attention, I welcome them. I look forward to receiving further details, and perhaps a few more tasters and trailers, from the Under-Secretary over the next few minutes. The subject is of great interest to us.

I am not concerned with deciding whether Mr. X, Mr. Y or Mrs. Z gets so much money. I want to get away from a definition of poverty that destroys life chances and leaves people with self-fulfilling prophecies of failure in terms of education and employment and which, on occasions, literally shorten life expectancy. It is no exaggeration to say that.

The hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam may be interested to know that a year ago—the picture has not changed—a report from the Greater Glasgow health board, in whose area my constituency falls, stated that the mortality rate for males between 16 and 64 years of age in Glasgow was 20 per cent. worse than the Scottish average. The Scottish average is considerably worse than the British average. That is an historic fact, but we still have to live with it.

I found it startling that the chief medical officer was predicting that those differentials would continue to increase for the foreseeable future. We now have figures that we used to imagine would exist only in the old eastern Europe. The chief medical officer said that the figures were caused by deprivation, poverty and the financial climate in which families had to live. I am tired of seeing such effects in my constituency. I am tired of kids—who I know are as able as kids who live two or three miles away down the road who, due to their economic circumstances and the encouragement that they receive, will go to university—leaving school at the first opportunity, never entering university and perhaps never even entering the job market. If there are signs that the Government are beginning to catch up with some of those problems, I shall be delighted. I hope that the debate will encourage the Government in doing that. However, I am cautious in my expectations because I have looked at the record and seen just how disappointing and perverse it has been over the past 15 years.

12.49 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Alistair Burt): I have enjoyed the debate so far because the subject was well raised by the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms Quin), whom I congratulate on her choice of motion. Inequality genuinely concerns all of us. I am grateful for the speech made by my hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls), the sensitive contribution of my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Streeter) and for regular interventions from other hon. Friends. I am also grateful for the speeches that we have heard so far from Opposition Members. Some I had slightly more sympathy with than others.

I shall deal with some of the comments made by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar). He rightly identified the dilemma not only for us in Britain but, I suspect, for many countries around the western developed world. In the midst of industrial progress, which has been remarkable in the 20th century, there are still in many countries which count themselves as wealthy, the leaders of which are meeting today in Naples, pockets of deprivation which are almost the same as 100 years ago, certainly in location if not in intensity. I listened with sensitivity to what the hon. Gentleman had to say.

The hon. Member for Rotherham (Mr. MacShane) raised his banner for the industrial north. I am glad to support him in that. Rotherham and Bury have many connections, mainly through tremendous battles in the 1960s between our respective football clubs. Trips to Millmoor or Gigg Lane regularly resulted in scores of 4-5, 5-4 or 4-all draws. Tremendous stuff. My father and I and many people in Bury remember those matches well.

The hon. Member for Rotherham called for me to set up a conference in Rotherham. I am ahead of him. Part of my remit in the Department has been to look after matters related to low income and poverty. I have been as connected as I could be to Poverty 3, the European anti-poverty programme, and with anti-poverty groups working in the United Kingdom. My Department sponsored a seminar held in Manchester in March this year to consider the effectiveness of those strategies. I attended a similar conference in Bath two or three weeks ago at which we discussed with the statisticians how we might draw some better conclusions and targets for that work in the future.

The problem with Poverty 3 and probably the reason why it has not yet been extended into Poverty 4 is ensuring that it does a worthwhile job. The aims and aspirations are entirely well meaning, but, as several of my colleagues

have said, we need to do more than that. The conference was designed to do that. I have no doubt that, in due course, I will be back in Rotherham at some stage. It was kind of the hon. Gentleman to make the offer.

I enjoyed the speech of the hon. Member for Gateshead, East. Her concern is plainly honest and sincere. Her rage at inequality arouses passion, but, ultimately, like my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton, I was left dissatisfied. You know me, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I hope that my concern about the issues that have been raised this morning matches that of any Opposition Member. I read *New Statesman and Society*, I am a member of Amnesty International and I am still a communicant member of the Anglican church—three institutions which are slightly leftward-leaning to a greater or lesser degree. I lean leftwards to a tiny degree within the Conservative party, but I am not a socialist, partly because of speeches like that of the hon. Member for Gateshead, East. Having been led so far up the hill, ultimately there is nothing there.

The hon. Lady did not give solutions to the problems. She dare not give the solutions because, although there are answers, they are not socialist answers.

The hon. Member for Gateshead, East spoke of wage inequality, but dare she go further and commit herself—not her Front Bench or party, because I understand the position—to a minimum wage, and say how much it should be? She spoke of the link between pensions and earnings. Dare she go further and commit herself to a restoration of that link? I am afraid that unless one follows up one's concerns, one is left very much up in the air with the rest of us.

I am tempted to say that the policies of the hon. Member for Gateshead, East are rather like some of the lists that one occasionally sees in *Private Eye*. For example, "Labour policy on inequality: No. 1, become aware of inequality; No. 2, talk about fairness; No. 3, spend money; No. 4, er . . . ; No. 5, that's it." Until we get a little more, that remains the feel.

The hon. Member for Gateshead, East dealt with a broad sweep of economic and social policy and covered some other items. She clearly feels that income inequalities are a bad thing. But one man's income inequalities are another man's pay differentials. We used to hear a lot from the Opposition Benches and the trade unions about the need to preserve pay differentials and reward skills. At what stage does recognising one man's difference in ability stop being a good thing, which is a differential, and become a bad thing, which is inequality?

Bill Jordan, the president of the Amalgamated Engineering Union, has made it clear that his union would oppose any "squeeze on differentials". He said:

"if the price of a minimum wage is wage restraint for higher paid workers, then our answer would be no".

I suspect that there is a measure of realism in that remark, as there was in the remarks of the hon. Member for Garscadden when he dealt with the subject. That demonstrates how hard it is to be precise and to tackle inequality realistically, and it is why our more practical approach is better.

Much was made of the report, which was published at the beginning of June by the Institute for Fiscal Studies, under the programme of studies on the distribution of income and wealth sponsored by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. It examined changes in the distribution of incomes between 1961 and 1991. The House will not be surprised if I make a few comments on that and try to provide, not a gloss, as the hon. Member for Garscadden suggested, but some greater clarification of statistics that are difficult to interpret.

Alongside that report, Dr. Stephen Jenkins of Swansea university published a further report on income in the 1980s. Both studies draw on the same data as the Government statistical service report on "Households below Average Income", published in July last year and covering the years 1979 to 1990-91. As the Central Statistical Office announced on 30 June, the new edition of those statistics will be published next week, on 14 July. That brings the comparison up to 1991-92.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies report indeed describes a widening of the gap between the top and the bottom of the income distribution in the last decade, as compared to previous decades, and discusses the factors behind it. The general thesis is not new, although the IFS has provided some useful new insights into what has driven the changes. Members on both sides of the House have given their views at length.

To my mind, the key finding in the report is not the change in income share of different population groups, but the massive increase in average earnings in the past decade, compared with the preceding 20 years.

Page 19 of the report shows that, in 1961, the average household income was £140. In the 10 years to 1971, it had crept up to £165—a growth of 18 per cent. In the decade from 1971 to 1981 average income, on that measure, grew even more slowly—by 13 per cent. From 1981 to 1991, however, average income soared to £258—a growth of no less than 39 per cent. in a single decade. Put another way, the report tells us that average incomes grew by more in the past 10 years than in the whole of the previous 20.

That is a significant achievement—the product of successful economic and fiscal policies. It is the context in which all the study's findings on changes in income distribution have to be seen. During a time when there was such a dramatic rise in average income, it should come as no surprise that the income of different groups grew at different rates. The Government make no pretence of that fact and do not try to hide it.

The report by Professor Stephen Jenkins, published alongside the IFS report as part of the same research programme, goes into more detail about incomes in the 1980s. It shows that average incomes grew in real terms for all types of family in the population. Growth was not confined to particular groups. Couples with children saw their income rise 34 per cent, while that of pensioners went up 38 per cent. The hon. Member for Gateshead, East was asked by one of my hon. Friends whether she really believes that pensioners were better off in 1979 than they are now. Loyally, she said yes—but in her heart, she knows that she is wrong. On average, pensioners as a group are 42 per cent. better off in real terms, and 54 per cent. better off after housing costs, than in 1979. Sixty one per cent. of all pensioners and 69 per cent. of recently retired pensioners have an income from occupational pensions. The life of pensioners has changed. One has only to travel around the country to see some of the things that pensioners are now able to do.

More telling is the fact that the bottom decile of income distribution 20 or 30 years ago included a fair whack of pensioners, but today they are moving out of it. That is not to deny poverty, but whereas 20 or 30 years ago we thought of the pensioner as a single unit—always poor and in difficulty—that is no longer true. That group has changed

[Mr. Alistair Burt]

dramatically and the distribution of wealth within it has grown significantly. Pensioners are a key group in terms of the past 20 to 30 years.

Unemployed families saw a growth in their income of 30 per cent. I repeat that last point. The independent research found that the incomes of families with no full-time worker rose 30 per cent. The incomes of less well-off pensioners and those in work with relatively low levels of pay have also gone up in real terms. An unemployed couple on income support with two children are better off in real terms by £22 a week than with equivalent benefits under the previous Labour Government.

I will expand on other aspects of the IFS report which the hon. Member for Gateshead East did not emphasise. The report is clear about the importance of the social security benefit system in reducing inequalities in income. It shows that the social security system in the 1980s contributed more greatly to reducing inequalities than in previous decades.

The report also recognises that information about incomes at the very bottom of the income scale is uncertain. I hoped to provide that clarification to the hon. Member for Garscadden, with whom I discuss so much. I am sorry that he is temporarily absent, but no doubt he will read my remarks and we shall discuss them next week. The difficulty of interpreting statistics at the bottom decile is at the heart of the argument. Determining the living standards of that group is particularly difficult, and there is some reason to believe that those low incomes understate true living standards. We have been making that point for some time.

Income alone is not an accurate measure of living standards. As the official "Households Below Average Income" statistics show, between 1979 and 1990-91 the possession of consumer durables among the least well-off increased dramatically—nearly three quarters have central heating, more than half have video recorders and almost one half have cars.

Both the HBAI and the Institute for Fiscal Studies point out that self-employed people who report nil incomes or losses are a significant factor in widening inequalities because they are heavily represented in the bottom decile. They also reduce the apparent level of income in the bottom 10 per cent of the population. If the self-employed are excluded, the income of the bottom decile is raised 8 percentage points.

The numbers in that group have risen dramatically since 1979 because of changes in employment, but the majority of that growing group with apparently no available cash are still able, on expenditure measures, to spend more than the national average. The picture is distorted. If one sets up a business, one may declare no income the first year, so the statistics show no income—but one's expenditure continues through normal drawings and everything else.

Who are the people in the bottom 10 per cent? Earlier this year, the authors of the IFS report gave a lecture brilliantly and imaginatively entitled, "Why Peter Lilley Was Right". [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I commend that sentiment to the House. In that lecture, they gave illuminating figures about the occupations of people at the very bottom of the income scale. They showed that more than 100,000 of them were farmers, 40,000 were taxi drivers and an amazing 12,500 were chartered accountants. That is just fantastic. It shows that if we extrapolate numbers from a small sample and multiply them across the country, we get the sort of distortions I mentioned. The figures for low income and their composition must be treated with caution. The one factor that people in those occupations have in common is the ability to control the presentation of their income.

The clear message in all the income analyses is that the vast majority of people in the United Kingdom have enjoyed dramatic increases in their incomes since 1979. Incomes have grown at different rates, but that is consistent with a society that rewards individual endeavour and where everyone has the opportunity to do well.

There are some extreme examples of problems with that. The hon. Member for Gateshead, East referred to water board officials and one or two other cases. I do not like what happened. That is my personal view and it may not be shared by my colleagues. Some things give a sense of aspiration a bad name. Sometimes, something is seen to be so chronically unfair that it is hard to justify. That does not mean that a market society is wrong; that people should not have legitimate aspirations to do well; or that people in business, who sometimes operate under a high degree of risk, should not prepare a secure future for themselves and their families. Nevertheless, there are sometimes sets of figures that just do not make one feel right. I do not know much more about the case raised than what I have read in the newspapers, but it made me feel uncomfortable.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: Does my hon. Friend agree that people should be able to earn whatever is considered reasonable in the circumstances provided that their companies are successful, but that what are not acceptable are large severance payments where the companies under their management have actually declined?

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Burt: My hon. Friend puts the point well and it is obvious that his sentiments are shared by many of our colleagues. It says a little more about the market system than does the case raised. Some people feel that the system has its boundaries.

At the beginning of my remarks, I said that I hoped I cared and felt as strongly about these issues as does any Opposition Member. How would I respond to the difficulties raised by the hon. Members for Gateshead, East and for Garscadden? Recognising the diversity of human talent and ability, I believe that it is right for societies to develop so that talent and ability are used for the good of all.

A proper system of reward for endeavour which benefits the whole of society inevitably means that people are rewarded differently. Therefore, a society that must be unequal in that sense is acceptable provided that, first, all people have the opportunity to take part in that society. There will be occasions on which Government intervention is necessary to ensure that those opportunities are provided. Secondly, all people should be able to participate in the increasing wealth of society, even if not equally. I am offended if the latter does not happen.

I believe in and support the sort of policies that the Government follow because we are determined to ensure that issues such as persistent unemployment, which deny people the opportunity to participate, are seriously and

genuinely tackled. It is because the Government's policies can tackle matters in the way that I have described that I believe we can do the job better than the Opposition could.

Let us consider what the Government have done and how they have tackled some of the important issues that are symptomatic of the problems raised by the hon. Member for Gateshead, East. Many of the income statistics quoted today reflect the damaging effects of the recession and, above all, the rise in unemployment. However, that is not a British phenomenon; it occurs in all OECD countries. Who is coming out best? Who is working hardest to overcome the problems? Our Government's economic policies are delivering growth and low inflation. Unemployment has fallen by more than 300,000 since 1992 and continues on a downward trend. Inflation is at a 25-year low. Interest rates have halved since 1990, helping industry and providing an extra £37 a week for the average mortgage-holder. We have created a flexible labour market.

Much was said about wages. The hon. Member for Rotherham mentioned the excellent speech of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment. He would have no difficulty in lining me up on his side on that issue. At the same conference, Howard Davies, director general of the Confederation of British Industry, was asked to go through the issues that he felt were crucial to creating full employment and, of course, he tackled wages, saying:

"In the number three slot, the graveyard of English batsmen over the years, and perhaps the graveyard of this point, I put wages. As William Brown says 'hopes of full employment . . . are forlorn unless labour costs per unit of output can be kept in line with those of our competitors'. And even now, wages are rising more rapidly here than in most other developed economies."

The OECD also, crucially, raised wage flexibility.

I say to the hon. Member for Gateshead, East that that poses her party more problems than it poses us. We recognise that jobs count and that having a job is better than not having one. We recognise that, at difficult times, jobs might be created offering low wages as a lead on to something else. None of us wants a perpetual, low-wage economy—that is not Britain's future—but, if we are to fight off foreign competition and build a better society in which more people have a part, it is essential that the wage and job structure remains flexible to market needs. The sort of equality and help that the hon. Lady wants at the lower end cannot be produced artificially. It will be produced only by industries staying in business, doing better and giving more rewards to all their employees.

Mr. MacShane: I am grateful to the Under-Secretary for giving way. I agree with Howard Davies's statement, which he repeated at the Trades Union Congress conference on Tuesday. It was central to the argument that I advanced. Although wages from full-time employment in Britain in the 1980s rose far more dramatically than in other OECD countries, our unit labour costs rose far more significantly than those of our main industrial competitors. Baroness Thatcher introduced free collective bargaining, and, in the absence of pay policy, inequalities have risen dramatically.

Mr. Burt: I am not particularly sure what line the hon. Gentleman would like me to go down. I am not sure whether he is arguing for pay policy.

Mr. MacShane *indicated assent.*

Mr. Burt: There we are. We are beginning to build some planks of Labour's next election manifesto. Pay policy is back and I wait with bated breath for my long-time colleague, the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), to give his version of the manifesto and to tell me how many votes he will give the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) in the forthcoming election.

Artificial constraints on labour markets will not provide the sort of society that hon. Members want. The OECD highlighted the flexible labour market being pursued by Britain as one of the key policies that would contribute to growth in wealth in the next 20 or 30 years. We have sought to improve wage flexibility, to strike a balance between job security and the pressures of the market and to move from passive income support to more active measures to help unemployment.

Those matters are particularly within my remit and touch on some of the comments of the hon. Member for Garscadden, who looked for some chinks of lights from me on how the Government might develop. One sees more chinks of light on what our policy might be in *The Sunday Times* than we ever get from the Opposition of what they might do.

It is best to consider what we have done in the past two or three years in the benefit system to try to create the bridge between dependency on benefits and getting back to work. That is proving to be a key issue. I have noticed in my two years in this job that social security systems around the western developed world have been changing. They are no longer regarded in isolation or in relation to what they do to protect the poor at a particular time, but are considered increasingly in the light of how they bring people back into the economy and how they ensure that people do not remain excluded—a term whose use I fully understand in this context—from the rest of society. If the benefit net is something into which people sink and out of which they have difficulty in climbing to get back into work, we all have problems. It has been recognised in various countries, whether they have right or left-of-centre Governments, that it is a problem to be tackled. It has been part of our job in the past few years to tackle it head on, and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has advocated such action.

A key objective of social security policy is now therefore to ensure that there is always a financial incentive to move into employment and that the transition from dependency on state benefits to financial independence is as smooth as possible. Maintaining work incentives in the benefits system is very much a question of achieving the right balance between providing for the most needy while not removing the financial incentive to work and between providing support for those working on low wages while also seeking to reduce dependency on benefits.

Our policies in recent years have been aimed at maintaining the correct balance. Before 1988, we reckoned that around 60,000 people were no better off in work than on income support—they were caught in the unemployment trap. The reforms and restructuring that we carried out then have ensured that almost everyone gets a return from work.

Since then, we have introduced a number of further measures to tackle this problem, including the restructuring of benefits paid to the unemployed and low-paid, especially those families with children. The cornerstone of those measures was the introduction of family credit. I regret the hon. Lady's reference to it, because it does not

[Mr. Burt]

depress wages. It is not paid to everyone, but only to those with families. It now helps to boost the incomes of more than 500,000 working families with an average award of £47 per week. Recent independent research showed that couples in work with family credit were on average £18 a week better off than when out of work, and lone parents were £30 a week better off.

However, not everyone is able or in a position to take up work. That is why the Government have spent millions of pounds protecting the incomes of the most vulnerable. Since the 1988 reforms, extra help worth more than £1 billion a year has been provided to low-income families with children and pensioners. Indeed, a typical unemployed family with children receiving income support has seen a real-terms increase of nearly 24 per cent. since 1979.

Ms Quin: The Minister said that he wishes to see a reduction in dependence on benefits, especially among people in work, but how does he envisage that happening, given the downward pressure on wages to which I referred? Some wages are as low as £1.85 an hour or even £1.40 an hour for security guards, for example. How does he believe that people in those circumstances can lessen their dependence on benefits?

Mr. Burt: The hon. Lady makes a fair point, but how are we to respond? If we were to remove family credit, for example, in those circumstances, I do not believe that such firms would suddenly offer higher wages. Firms will pay only what they regard as sensible, according to the sort of work in which they are involved. If we continually increase benefit levels and make it more difficult for people to move into even low-paid work, they become stuck. Improving benefit levels does not help with that problem.

Wages will rise as unemployment continues to fall and employers realise that in order to attract people to work they must pay proper wages. It would be a dereliction of our duty if we sought artificially to withdraw support and protection from people who need it. We find that family credit is working as a bridge to get people back to work. I did not hear an answer from the hon. Lady to that problem, and I do not believe that the answer that I suspect that she would favour—the introduction of a minimum wage—would do the job.

In conclusion, I should like to widen the debate slightly, as one or two hon. Members tried to do. Equality in British society is not merely a question of facts and figures and economics, although they are important. Governments must not stifle opportunity. To operate otherwise would mean imposing state controls and reducing choice which, ultimately, results in a levelling down of performance. Wherever there have been societies which have tried that approach—perhaps the hon. Member for Islington, North will be able to enlighten me if I am wrong—they have failed.

The report by the Institute for Fiscal Studies, which is cited in the motion, makes some especially telling points about the impact of pay policy in the 1960s and 1970s on reducing growth.

How do we encourage the policies that will foster equality of opportunity? Education is one method. In the early 1980s, there was growing recognition that while the brightest of our youngsters were able to achieve more than those on the continent and in the United States, our average and below-average children were not keeping pace with their European and world counterparts. This Government were determined to address that. We instituted the reforms in education which are designed to improve the abilities of all our youngsters and to help them to compete. What chance would there be of equal opportunity if those attempts had not been made?

We should remember that many of the problems could be laid at the door of the reforms of education in the 1960s when there was no measurement of what was actually achieved by pupils and thus a slow sliding down of the educational attainment of our pupils was accepted. The number of 15-year-olds who achieve five or more GCSEs increased by a quarter between 1989 and 1993. The number of 17-year-olds achieving two or more A-levels has almost doubled since 1980. A record 70 per cent. of 16-year-olds go on to further education compared with 27 per cent. in 1979. We all know what the expansion of higher education has been under this Government.

The hon. Member for Rotherham mentioned, fairly casually, that the OECD report said that we now had as many people in higher education as other countries in Europe. In 1979, we definitely did not have. We were well behind and it is this Government who have addressed that. That is real equality of opportunity.

The education reforms have done well because, we understand, the hon. Member for Sedgefield is taking a keen interest in one of the grant-maintained schools. That must be good news. To the hon. Gentleman's great credit, he has also commented favourably on a number of reforms introduced by the Government.

When the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) was leader of the Labour party, I always remember his being asked during an election campaign whether there was anything that the Conservatives and Margaret Thatcher had done that he admired. He said no. To his credit, the future new leader of the Labour party, the hon. Member for Sedgefield, has been honest enough to say yes, there are things that even he thinks are right. We think that there are a lot more. At least politics in this country is moving on if some Opposition Members recognise that changes have taken place for the good, produced by this Government. I am pleased by that.

One of the other things in which equality comes in firmly, which we have done right, but which was fiercely resisted by the Opposition, is the reform of trade union law. What equality was there when people stood in the car park and put their hands up to go out on strike? People who did not were watched, known, seen and handbagged with a bag of stones. We ensured that there were individual postal ballots which enabled the individual trade unionist to have as much power as the trade union leader. That is equality. Who fought for that? It was the Conservatives, not the Opposition.

It would be nice if the reform had been taken still further and if each Labour Member used one vote in the forthcoming Labour leadership battle. How many votes do they have? There is equality for some, but not for others. We have Jeremy "Five Votes" Corbyn and Denis "Four Votes" MacShane. That is not equality.

Mr. Dewar: That is a stupid point.

Mr. Burt: The hon. Member for Garscadden says that it is a stupid point. It is not. I reckon that if we are talking about equal societies, what is sauce for the goose is sauce

for the gander. The hon. Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) has said that he feels that it is fair to use one vote. It would do much more for Opposition Members to espouse such views than to go on at us about inequality.

Mr. Dewar: I would be rather more impressed by the Minister's remarks if there were a wider franchise for the leadership of the Conservative party. At least we have enfranchised literally millions of people who support, and who are actively involved in, the Labour movement. The Conservative party has taken no such steps. Yes, it is possible that some people have more than one vote, but at least we have a democracy, unlike the Conservative party.

Mr. Burt: Like the Labour party, we have an electoral college. In our electoral college, there is one vote for each Member. That seems pretty democratic to me.

The debate has been extremely good. In its most serious moments, we have recognised that we deal with problems in our constituencies which worry us all and to which society, over the past 100 years, has not found the answer. We have not found the answer to the problem of how, as wealth increases for the majority, we ensure that some people do not miss out for a whole variety of reasons. This Government have sought, previous Governments have sought and future Governments will seek ways in which to ensure that everyone is included in society. We will keep working on that.

Most crucially, the Labour party has tried to use selective figures from a number of sources to paint a too-depressing picture of a divided British society. The facts do not support its pessimistic view. Through policies adopted by this Government, the vast majority of people have seen their incomes rise, the less well-off have shared in that prosperity and the vulnerable have been protected. That must remain the aim of a Conservative Government: to see as many as possible in work; to protect those who cannot; to strengthen individuals so that they are better able voluntarily to give their time to build communities; to develop an economy that is determined to recognise the real world—not hide from it—and to prepare their people through training and education properly and honestly for that world. Any arrogance or conceit that goes with wealth is not part of that philosophy, for we are all equal in the sight of God, nor is any artificial bar to the legitimate aspirations of families and individuals to prosper. It is because there are better answers to the problems illustrated by the motion of the hon. Member for Gateshead, East that, although I listened to her argument with interest, I failed to be convinced by it.

1.25 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): The Group of Seven industrial leaders are meeting today and over the next few days in Naples and I should like to think, although I suspect that it is a faint hope, that they will leave the conference hall for an hour or two to visit the slums of Naples, to see what inequality is about in what is supposed to be a successful western European economy. I also hope that, in their deliberations, they will think about some of the effects on the poorest people in other parts of the world of the policies pursued by a very small number of industrial countries—the way in which poverty is visited on sub-Saharan Africa by the GATT deal and the imposition of poverty wages on countries that are trying to get out of the debt crisis.

The debate is about inequality in Britain and I suppose that we have seen the two faces of the Tory party. The hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) is a sort of Old Testament figure in political thinking. He positively glories in inequalities between the rich and poor in the country. Then there is the rather more sympathetic approach of the Minister. But the two faces add up to exactly the same thing, because they have supported a Government and their policies which have deliberately created further divisions in the country in the past 15 years. There is no mistake about that.

When I leave the House at the end of this debate, I shall go to my constituency, I shall hold my weekly advice surgery and I shall see a sense of desperation on the faces of those people who come to see me. Will they ever manage to get out of a one-bedroom flat where they are trying to live with three children? Will the council ever be able to offer them another flat? Will they get a transfer to a housing association place? Like councillors and others, I shall do my best to try to help them, but I know that, at the end of the day, the chances of many of them ever being able to get out of their problems are very slight because no houses are being built for rent. The private rented sector is simply closed to them because the rents have been decontrolled and a one-bedroom flat costs at least £150 a week in a poor area of London. They are in the ghetto trap; they are in the poverty trap.

In my surgery, I shall also be able, as could any other person, to look at the health inequalities which exist. Why do children from poor working-class families tend to have more bronchial problems than children from middle-class families? Why is the life expectancy of a company director 10 to 15 years greater than that of someone who sweeps the roads or who collects the refuse from our homes? Why is there a growth of inequality in our society? When I intervened earlier on the speech of the hon. Member for Teignbridge on the question of the people sleeping on the streets of London, all he could say was that a lot of hostels are being built, so that those people may be taken off the streets of London. Frankly, it was due to the embarrassment of the Government that those people were taken off the streets of London—it was nothing to do with solving the housing crisis. We have a terrible housing crisis and a terrible sequence of inequality of living in our society at the present time.

There are other areas of inequality—not only in health or housing, but in education and expectations. Anyone who goes, as I do, around schools often, will meet children of eight, nine, 10, 11 and 12 years old who are full of optimism, hope, ideas and expectations. They want to be doctors, lawyers, vets, meteorologists, physicists, engine drivers, bricklayers or carpenters—they want to do all sorts of things in their lives. In other words, they want to achieve. Similarly, their parents want them to achieve. When these youngsters reach the age of 14, 15 or 16, they find themselves living in a community where at least a fifth of the working population is registered as unemployed and where many others are not even allowed to be so registered. It is then that the sense of despair and hopelessness begins to set in.

The ideas are formed that perhaps there will not be a job, that perhaps they will not be able to afford to receive a university or polytechnic education, that perhaps that sort of life will not be available for them. There starts the spiral of decline and despair. That is followed by a rise in crime

[Mr. Jeremy Corbyn]

generally, drug addiction and prostitution. Anyone who lives or works in an inner city area, or represents one, is aware of that and understands it only too well.

The complacency with which the Government present their case is breathtaking. They are entirely out of touch with the reality of life for so many people, who are leading a worse and worse existence with higher and higher levels of unemployment.

What are the prospects for those who get jobs? They are faced with the deskilling of the economy. We have lost so many skilled jobs, including jobs in engineering, over the past 15 or 20 years. The privatisation programme has made British Steel a phenomenally successful private enterprise company. But who is paying the costs of unemployment? Who is paying the costs of redundancy? Who is paying the social costs? We all know the answer—the rest of the community.

The Government talk about incentives. Apparently, the heads of the privatised industries require phenomenal salaries to do their jobs. They need the incentive of being able to earn £300,000 a year plus share issues, performance bonus payments, a free car and a free home. They probably do not even pay their water rates. Such people need incentives to work and produce.

On the other hand, there are those who sweep the streets for a local authority, cook meals in a school canteen or old people's home and provide the necessary care assistance for disabled people. Apparently, the incentive of high wages is not for them. Instead, they face the stick of compulsory competitive tendering, which means that their job is sold to the lowest bidder—some spiv company—every four or five years, when local authorities are forced to put out their services to competitive tendering.

Conservative Members may smile and think that it is all rather funny. They should try to understand the feelings of someone who has given a lifetime of work in a local authority garden, for example, or tending a cemetery, looking after an old people's home or working in a hospital. Such people have given a great deal. Indeed, they meant to give a great deal. They want to continue to do so. Instead, they are told, "Sorry, you are dispensable. Your job is on sale. We shall see if anyone is prepared to do it for less than you." So the cycle of despair and decline continues.

How would Conservative Members feel if they had to suffer that indignity after they had given 20 years' service to a local authority or health service? It is an indignity. It is a disgrace. A disgusting process is being implemented. Incentives for the rich, sticks for the poor. That is the argument that Conservatives advance.

The Government tell us that high economic growth is achieved through a process of inequality. There is no evidence anywhere to sustain that argument. In Britain, employers pay less in tax and social contributions than most other employers in Europe. Wage levels are lower than those in most other countries in Europe and unemployment is high and rising.

Mr. Roger Evans: It is lower here than in most other European countries.

Mr. Corbyn: With 25-plus changes in the method of calculation of unemployment statistics, I am unsure whether unemployment is higher or lower here than in other European countries. There is no common base for the measurement of unemployment.

I do know, however, that the attacks on trade unions, compulsory competitive tendering and the abolition of wages councils, along with the removal of any sort of wage protection and the introduction by the Prime Minister, when he was a Minister at the Department of Social Security, of the actively-seeking-work formula have meant that many people are forced to work in low-paid jobs. We know that 40 per cent. of the work force is now in either short-term contracts or in part-time jobs.

We do not live in a particularly health society. The knock-on effect of that is the current level of crime, misery, hopelessness and suicides. There have been 1 million recorded crimes so far this year in London alone. While I recognise that that is not all due to unemployment and to poverty, there is a cause and an effect. There is a link and it is about time that some people recognised that.

I find it baffling when the right argues that we can no longer afford the welfare state or to sustain the present level of state old age pension. In an attempt to unbaffle myself, I read an article the other day by the president of the Adam Smith Institute, a man who glories in the name of Dr. Madsen Pirie. The article was fascinating. Dr. Pirie writes quite well. He can spell and his grammar is excellent. The former Prime Minister would be proud of him. With regard to the welfare system, Dr. Pirie stated:

"There is one central problem which lies at the heart of the system. It is this: 'Anything you do to relieve distress will instigate more of the behaviour which caused the distress.'"

In other words, if we have unemployment benefit, people will become unemployed to obtain the benefit. If we have child benefit, people will have more children to obtain that benefit. Presumably the same argument applies to disability and sickness pay. That is an extraordinary argument. Dr. Pirie then uses his argument to justify wholesale privatisation of the welfare state through the encouragement of private insurance and private pension schemes. That appears to be the strategy which the Government are following.

One might describe that strategy as successful if one believes in the objective behind it. As my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) said, in the past 15 years the value of the state pension has fallen from more than 20 per cent. of average earnings to 15 per cent. According to the Minister, it will be at a nugatory level by the turn of the century. I assume that he means it will be below 10 per cent.

That drop has occurred because of the break with earnings that occurred in the 1980s and the rigging of the retail prices index. I wish that the previous Labour Government had achieved more on pensions. I wish that they had increased pensions much more. However, the Labour Government passed the 1975 legislation, according to which the state old age pension was to be linked to prices or earnings, whichever rose by the larger amount in that particular year. That is how the 1975 legislation was worded. It was not worded in the way described earlier. However, in his first Budget after the general election in 1979, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Lord Howe, described breaking that link as his greatest achievement.

It is claimed that average pensioner income has increased by up to 38 per cent. The figure seems to increase by 1 per cent. whenever the Minister makes a speech. It used to be 33 per cent., but it has increased to 38 per cent.

in only a matter of months. I thought that the stock market had been declining, but that is the main source of the increase in the average income for pensions to which the Minister refers.

It is true that many pensioners have occupational pension schemes. Some have private pension schemes and some have savings. However, they are taxed on those savings and on that income. The Minister completely fails to appreciate the fact that many pensioners, particularly women pensioners, do not even qualify for the full state pension when they become eligible for a pension. Very few women, particularly older women pensioners, have access to occupational pensions. Desperation and poverty among older women pensioners are growing. Those pensioners are becoming more desperate.

The solution to the problem must be a much higher basic state pension. However, the Government propose to phase down continually the value of the state pension and of SERPS. They are spending £9 billion to promote private pension schemes through a process of subsidy and promotion. As a result, 1.5 million people have left SERPS and entered the private pensions industry. I am worried about the security of many of those private pension schemes and the lack of democracy in the way in which they are run; there is no democracy or guarantee in the way in which private pension schemes are run.

In addition, there has been the nonsense of the imposition of VAT on fuel. That obviously affects low income earners or low income households the greatest. It is another poll tax and it is totally unfair. The compensation system is unfair. It will result in deaths from hypothermia. It is a totally wrong form of taxation. The compensation system does not work. Two million people are signing yet another petition for the removal of VAT on fuel. I hope that they are successful in achieving their target number of signatures, and I hope also that they are successful in mounting a campaign to force the Government not to go ahead with raising VAT on fuel to 17.5 per cent. in this year's Budget, prior to abolishing it altogether. Frankly, it is wrong.

We must now consider what is happening to the welfare state. The Government suddenly say, I do not know on what basis, that we can no longer afford the present level of the welfare state, and that the economy is held back because of it. Such thinking was behind opposition to the social chapter, and it is that, in effect, we must privatise welfare by encouraging people to take out private insurance and private pension schemes and have two tiers of welfare.

The arguments that the Government use now about not being able to afford welfare are exactly the same as their predecessors used against the introduction of the state old-age pension in 1908, and they were probably used in opposition to the Poor Law before that. They were certainly used against the universal welfare state of the late 1940s. According to the Government's very own publication entitled "Containing the cost of social security —the international context", social protection expenditure by Britain is nowhere near the highest in Europe. There are much higher levels in Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Germany. If we examine the sources of contributions to social protection expenditure, we find that employers' contributions are among the lowest in Europe, and they are seeking to make them even lower in future. The Government's argument is designed to break the universal welfare state to which we have become accustomed.

Mr. Burt: The hon. Gentleman referred to Europe. He will appreciate that almost all European Union countries are taking steps to cut their welfare states simply because they realise that they have grown too much.

Mr. Corbyn: The words "almost all" and "cut" are rather relative terms. They are not very precise and not very accurate, either. Nearly all other countries start from a much higher base. In Sweden, parents are allowed 60 days sick leave a year to look after children who are ill. That is regarded as very important for parents and children. Sweden has a much more advanced system of social security than this country. In Sweden, the proposed reduction in holidays is very small compared with the wholesale cuts that are proposed in this country. The same cock-eyed economic thinking seems to imagine that all that matters is reducing welfare expenditure and that, somehow or other, everything will be all right.

The main plank of what the Government have done in the past 15 years has been to lower rates of taxation for the very rich, to increase taxation for the poor and to promote inequality to an incredible extent. The richest are 65 per cent. better off and the poorest are 14 per cent. worse off than they were 15 years ago. The idea that the trickle-down theory works is peculiar and perverse—that is, the idea that if we allow the rich to become as rich as possible, they might employ more gardeners and maids and we will solve the unemployment problem. The Government have destroyed the economic manufacturing base that the wealth of this country relied on, in favour of the speculative and spiv economy.

We will not have a more equal society and a more equal world merely by promoting the idea of a market economy. We can do so only by providing a decent level of social protection and also decent housing, education and health services for the people of this country. Reports on the way in which the health service operates show that queues are becoming longer, the quality of service in many areas is becoming worse and inequalities in health are growing.

Housing inequalities are becoming worse. Various bits of housing legislation are designed not to increase access to housing but to reduce it. More and more people now live in ghettos of very poor quality housing from which there is no possible escape. We also have an economic strategy which apparently is that if it is making money, it is probably all right, never mind the quality or what it is doing. Such thinking led to the de-industrialisation of many areas of this country.

I hope that, instead of that, we can look forward to saying that we want to live in a society where all are equal. I make no bones about that. I should like to see much higher levels of taxation for the very rich in our society. They have had an easy ride for the past 15 years. I should like a society where not as many people did not have to pay tax because they were too poor to pay it, as at present. I should like much higher levels of social investment. I should like a society that planned for its future, rather than leaving everything to the vagaries of the marketplace.

We live in a crazy world where the poorest are getting poorer and the richest are getting considerably richer. The undoubted benefits of technology are not being passed on in the way of a shorter working week or an improved life style for the poorest people. Those benefits are being used to make a great deal of money, causing inequality and alienation in our society.

[Mr. Corbyn]

Those who preach such gobbledegook economic policies find that they do not work. There was plenty wrong with the political and economic systems of eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, where plenty of mistakes were made and there were ludicrous degrees of centralisation. But those countries are now receiving, via the BBC Marshall plan for the mind and other such plans, the message that all that matters is a free market economy, with mass unemployment, beggars on the streets and high levels of prostitution. There has to be a more civilised way of organising life than the methods of the Government in this country and a number of other Governments.

Those of us who believe in equality do so because we believe in socialist values and ideas—we do not apologise for that. We believe in it because it is the only way to unlock all the talent. How many brilliant writers and scientists are wasting away because they did not get a chance at school or a college place and are living in poor conditions? The waste of talent, and human and other resources, which are used to control people rather than liberate them, is phenomenal.

Today's debate is welcome for the opportunity that it provides to discuss these issues. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East on promoting the debate and allowing us to place on record our belief that the inequalities of Britain must be removed if we are to live in anything resembling a happy and harmonious society.

1.47 pm

Mr. Roger Evans (Monmouth): We have just been reminded in clear and certain terms that the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) represents the authentic voice of the Labour party. He said that there was plenty wrong with the economies of eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. I find it deeply morally shocking that the evil tyrannies of the east should be dismissed in such trivial language.

One of the most poisoned political ideas of the 20th century has been the concept that the state has a right to enforce equality of income or equality of wealth. Before the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms Quin), who introduced the topic with charm and effectiveness, wonders why I put that so strongly, I shall tell her. No doubt she would regard the inquisition as something to do with a bleak, dark age when the organs of the state and the church enforced similarities of belief with all the force of the state. She would deplore that. Those of us who stand for liberty reject also the idea that the state should use its power and force to confiscate incomes for no other purpose than a vindictive vendetta against one section of the community.

The answer to the debate has been spelt out by my hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls). The statistics are clear. When we look at the proportion of the income tax take of the top 10 per cent., the top 1 per cent. or the top 5 per cent., now and in the late 1970s, we see clearly that the top 10 per cent. is now contributing 45 per cent. of the income tax take compared to 24 per cent. 15 years ago. That is a staggering statistic.

My hon. Friend the Minister explained that average earnings have risen. The top 10 per cent. is contributing a larger slice, and the freedom and opportunity now available to the self-employed—not just those employed by large monolithic corporations, but small business men, professionals, those in enterprise companies who work hard and expect a return—have allowed them to prosper over the past 15 years. We now know clearly what the Opposition would have to offer them if the Labour party ever came to power again—political persecution based on some perverted doctrine of the community.

The hon. Member for Gateshead, East said that the top tax rate of 40 per cent., which was introduced in the 1988 Budget, was wrong. She would not answer—understandably in her position—what rate she wished to increase it to. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), who spoke on matters which were safe Labour party topics, avoided that vital and fundamental question. Apparently, no explanations will be given if they can possibly be avoided.

What would be the purpose of increasing the top tax rate from 40 per cent. to 60 per cent., 80 per cent. or the 93 per cent. rate imposed by the Labour party on what it used to call "unearned income"? The fruits of people's life savings, money saved rather than spent, the hard work of a lifetime were traditionally called "unearned income" by the Labour party. There can be no economic purpose of raising the top rate of tax. There can be no benefit to the Government and no benefit to those who benefit from the welfare state. If we increased the rate, we would simply reduce the amount of money that the Government had to spend on the welfare state.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: Does my hon. Friend agree that the effect of increasing the top rate of tax to the sort of rates that he described would be, first, to drive businesses and their executives offshore into other countries and, secondly, to encourage the wealth creators of this country to work less hard, and thereby pay less tax?

Mr. Evans: My hon. Friend is right. Those would be the inexorable consequences of such a foolish and short-sighted policy—a policy which Labour Governments have pursued ever since they have had the opportunity to pursue them. We have the spectacular consequence that the tax havens of this world, which are nice, respectable and rich and all enjoy the protection of the British Crown and the rule of British law—I think of places from Hong Kong to the Channel islands—have thrived and prospered on minimal top tax rates. I can tell the hon. Member for Islington, North, who did not seem to be aware of the wealth of learning that has now been made clear, that some people in America and Japan are concerned at the rise of the Pacific rim countries, where, for example, in Hong Kong, Singapore and South Korea, top tax rates are much more favourable for enterprise than in Japan and certainly in Germany.

The gaping gap in the debate on the Opposition Benches is in any understanding of where wealth comes from. It apparently grows on the trees of the garden of Eden. They say that there should be more jobs, but doing what and for what purpose? Of course everyone wants to be rich or to have a well-paid job, but how does one get such a job? Who provides one? It is not the British state. It is not somehow the Workers International. It is not the trades union movement. It is individual businesses, which stay in business only so long as they provide goods and services which someone in the world is prepared to buy at a price.

If one puts up the price of something, be it a consumer durable or the price of labour, there is less money to be

spent and people buy less. The British work force has rightly had a noble tradition of valuing itself extremely expensively. That is part of the engine of driving up average earnings, but it has a social cost. It prices a section of the community out of labour. The hon. Member for Islington, North seemed to think that everyone should be paid exactly the same. That was the only socialist logic that I could discern from his description of the uncertainties of being a cemetery keeper or the managing director of a large company. If they are not to be paid the same, who is to decide what each should be paid unless it is the free market and the choice of the community? It is a community decision, whether people buy more of this or pay for less of that. That is what freedom is all about.

It is ironic that the hon. Member for Rotherham (Mr. MacShane) should have raised this particular argument. I have a copy, which I much enjoyed in childhood, of Newnes "Children's Encyclopedia of the World". It contained a graphic illustration of the eclipse of the sun of 1921 or 1922—I forget which. It depicted the eclipse as a glorious ray of sunshine across a section of northern England which it could properly describe as the richest place on the face of the earth. It was once the richest place on the face of the earth. The brilliance and success of the textile industry at that time, which was a result of enterprise, initiative and technical advance, have now been wasted. Some businesses prosper, others do not.

The motion is based on a political fallacy—the idea that the British state should control its subjects in such a way that equality would be the end. It will not work.

Ms Quin: Where is that in the motion?

Mr. Evans: The motion reads:

"To call attention to inequalities in the United Kingdom".

The hon. Lady should be drawing attention to poverty, welfare and all the important aspects of this debate that my hon. Friend the Minister and, in fairness, the Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Garscadden, dealt with.

Through the wording of her motion, the hon. Member for Gateshead, East interjected into a serious discussion of welfare matters some left-wing political nonsense about inequalities of income and wealth. She criticised the 40 per cent. top tax rate and that is why I am criticising the motion and why I say that it would not work.

Happily, we do not live in a world where one can impose socialism in one country. We live in a freer world, where trade moves around and where people can buy their goods from Singapore or South Korea and buy refrigerators from Italy. That is why such goods are cheaper than they were in the 1950s by substantial amounts in real terms.

Ms Quin: The hon. Gentleman seems to claim that I am not in favour of free trade. I defy him to find anything in my motion that is against free trade.

Mr. Evans: Of course there is nothing in the motion that is against free trade, but it is the logical consequence of the hon. Lady's argument that this place should be concerned about income equalities at the top. If she is right, presumably we have to do something about it. She is presumably suggesting that the British legislature should increase tax rates for those on higher incomes. I am simply pointing out that in a free world, where there is free trade, and as part of a European Union, which increasingly has a single market, the British Government have happily lost the power to impose socialism in one country.

Although the motion has drawn attention to some serious matters, which the hon. Member for Garscadden certainly discussed, a fundamental political error of a very dangerous variety is at its heart.

1.57 pm

Mr. Stephen Timms (Newham, North-East): I am grateful for the opportunity to take part in this debate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and welcome the initiative taken by my hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East (Ms Quin) in causing it to happen.

I apologise for being unable to be here at the start of the debate, but I wish to introduce some information from my constituency, the London borough of Newham, where I had the privilege to be leader of the local authority for four years, until a couple of months ago.

In Newham, we suffer from poverty and the effects of inequality to a severe degree. The Department of the Environment's local conditions index, which was published earlier this year, placed Newham as the local authority area suffering from the highest urban deprivation. The local authority commissioned a report entitled, "Poverty on your doorstep" which was a poverty profile for the London borough of Newham and was published in March this year. I shall draw attention to some of its findings.

The research showed, not surprisingly, that the problems of poverty are closely linked with high unemployment. Between May 1990 and November 1993, there was a 72 per cent. increase in the number of unemployed people claiming income support in the borough of Newham. In November 1993, the official unemployment rate was more than 20 per cent.—a total of nearly 20,000 people registered as unemployed—which is 55 per cent. higher than the rate for Greater London and more than twice the rate for the south-east and the whole of the United Kingdom.

According to the 1991 census, 31 per cent. of the 16 to 24-year-olds were unemployed, so unemployment was particularly focused on that age group. Since 1991, the official unemployment rate has increased considerably. Members of the Asian, African, Afro-Caribbean and other ethnic groups in Newham suffer higher unemployment than the average for the community, which is a particular problem in east London.

Household incomes in Newham are considerably lower than for the capital as a whole. Fifty-five per cent. of gross annual household incomes were below £10,000, compared with only 40 per cent. for the rest of London. In November 1993, 47,800 people were claiming income support, and 37 per cent. of Newham children were entitled to free school meals in January 1993. The borough had 9,000 overcrowded households—twice the London average.

What do the Government think about inequalities and poverty on that scale? I believe that the view is held that they are a good thing because they drive people to work harder and drive the economy. Is that the view of Conservative Members? Are we being told that inequalities and poverty are a statistical error and do not really exist, because the people on lowest incomes are really chartered accountants? Are we to believe that the figures in the Newham, IFS and other reports are statistical flukes? Or are inequalities and poverty something which the Government want to change?

[Mr. Stephen Timms]

Is it Government policy that the gap between the richest and poorest in society should stop widening? Having listened to several speeches from Conservative Members, I have not heard those questions answered.

The Minister suggested that there is not a problem with poverty because the people who show up in surveys as being poor own video recorders and microwaves. The clearest refutation of that argument are investigations into the health of the poorest. The Newham poverty profile showed that 47 per cent. of children with long-term illnesses live in households where no one is in employment. That which we describe as poverty translates into poor health among not just the unemployed head of the household but his or her children. That is the clearest indication of real suffering and measurable poor health among members of the community who endure poverty and are the victims of inequalities.

The first step is to make it an explicit Government objective to narrow the gap between the richest and poorest and not allow it to widen. Are the Government prepared to acknowledge that policy objective? If so, we can move forward, to discuss how that objective may be achieved. I welcome the change of heart among Government Members in respect of full employment, which now appears to be an explicit and realistic policy objective. For many years, we were told that it was not. I hope that reducing inequalities will also be a Government objective—not their sole objective but part of the Government's intentions.

I enjoyed the Minister's speech. He drew attention to the Government's achievements in education and suggested that the introduction of the grant-maintained system would contribute to a reduction in inequality. I strongly disagree with that view and point the hon. Gentleman towards the example of Stratford school in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks). There is no doubt that the granting of grant-maintained status has led to a radical fall in standards, to the extent that that school's level of GCSE achievement last summer was the lowest of any school in London. When the school was maintained by the local authority, it had a much higher level of achievement.

I accept that that example might be extreme, but it clearly shows why the school should not have been given grant-maintained status. Indeed, it should have been closed, as the local authority wished, to meet the Government's objective of removing surplus places. Instead, there will be significant reduction in life chances for a large number of the pupils at that school who otherwise would have been pupils at other Newham schools with much higher levels of achievement.

I endorse what my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) said about his experience of large numbers of bright young people with enormous potential, optimistic and looking forward to the future, reaching their middle teens and seeing no opportunities ahead, losing their optimism and no longer looking forward to the future. That is a terrible indictment of Government policy over the past 15 years.

It should be a specific policy objective that the gap between the richest and the poorest should be narrowed, or at least should not be allowed to widen, as it has done inexorably over the past 15 years. Full employment should also be a policy objective. Until job opportunities are provided, people will not be able to find a way out of poverty. There should be a minimum wage so that those in work can live at a decent standard.

Taking a parochial view, I must stress that east London needs investment. The local authority in Newham has developed partnerships with the Government and the private sector to work for the regeneration of our area. That has proved successful. I hope that soon the Government, consistent with their commitment to securing regeneration in east London, will give the green light to an international passenger station at Stratford on the high-speed rail link, towards which the local authority, private sector development companies and construction firms have been working for a couple of years. It will not cost the Government anything, but it will be the catalyst for the substantial new development, new jobs and new opportunities that east London so desperately needs.

There have been a number of references to the Labour party leadership election. I welcome the fact that throughout the country there is enormous interest in the issues that have been raised by that election. One effect of that is a growing revulsion towards the effects of narrow marketisation within our society. My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) said that there are signs that the Government have a worsening conscience about what has been happening to our society. I hope that that is so and that we shall increasingly agree on the need to reduce inequality in the United Kingdom.

2.9 pm

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): I have listened to the debate with tremendous interest, but, depending on whether one was sitting on the Opposition or Government Benches, one would have gained a completely different impression of Britain and of its role in the world.

I am fed up with Opposition Members bashing Britain and talking it down. The time has come for us to stand back and take a cool, calm look at where we are today and how society, across the board, has improved in terms of prosperity, standards of living and expectations.

The Opposition's talk about this country becoming "worse and worse" and their scaremongering bears no relation to reality. The striking point made in the debate that highlights the differing approaches of the Conservative party and the Opposition to social problems is that the Opposition seem to trade on the politics of envy and on resentment for one man's success. That is the most destructive element of their policies and is why I trust, hope and believe that the Labour party will never become a party of Government until it recognises that people are entitled to strive, achieve and gain reward for hard work.

In a thoughtful speech, the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms Quin) made some telling points. She mentioned full employment and asked why we could not have a new environmental task force. Another spending pledge—that typified the Labour party. How much will such a scheme cost? Who will pay for it? It will be an artificial form of providing labour, which will not build the prosperity that we need. It simply would not work.

Mr. Dewar: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Lady Olga Maitland: I am sorry but time is short and I shall end my remarks shortly.

In a caring society, parents can know that their children will receive a proper education up to university level. I

applaud the Government for ensuring that one child in three goes on to higher education. That is a big advance on 10 years ago, when one child in eight did so. I applaud the fact that children are now better fed than ever. People might criticise junk food, but improved diets have made children healthier and fitter.

The health service is treating more people more rapidly using the latest technology and is making more investment. People are now expected to live longer; hence the problems that we shall face in coping with old age pensions in the future.

We have not dealt with moral poverty. We all face the problem of the breakdown of family life. Why do couples no longer believe that they can marry and make a commitment to each other that will last throughout their children's lifetime? A spin off from that was the establishment of the Child Support Agency to chase feckless fathers, the absent dads—the people who believe in the "I want to have it" society and the "I can then dispense with it" society. We must deal with that moral poverty with a great deal of energy and diligence.

We should be clear in our minds and condemn lesbians seeking special facilities from the health service for fertility treatment. That is moral poverty; it has nothing to do with building family values.

I found it depressing that the Archbishop of Canterbury this week launched a model religious education syllabus but downgraded the Christian input. Our children cannot grow up in a moral-free and value-free society. If there is one thing that we must do, it is to ensure that Christian beliefs, culture and philosophy are included in our children's education and that they are thus enriched.

2.14 pm

Ms Quin: This has been a very useful debate in that it served to highlight many of the issues which we all think important although we approach them from different viewpoints. In order to allow progress to be made with today's business, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

Victims of Crime (Compensation)

2.15 pm

Mr. Michael Stephen (Shoreham): I beg to move,

That this House considers that:—

1.—(1) A court seeking to enforce a compensation order against a convicted criminal should have power to make a written request, signed by a Magistrate, for the following information in relation to the criminal:

(a) his place of residence;

(b) his place of work and the name of his employer;

(c) his income and capital; and

(d) his real or personal property.

(2) Any such written request should be addressed to any person or body whom the court making the request has reasonable grounds for thinking may be in possession of the information requested.

2. The Secretary of State should have power by regulation to establish an Agency to enforce compensation orders made in favour of the victims of crime by courts of criminal jurisdiction.

3. The Powers of Criminal Courts Act 1973 should be amended:—

(1) to require criminal courts to assess compensation without regard to the ability of the criminal to pay, as is already the case in the civil courts;

(2) to overrule case law which puts a time limit on the period over which money may be recovered under a compensation order, and which exempts a criminal's house from seizure for the purpose of satisfying a compensation order.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms Quin) for withdrawing her motion. I am glad to have the opportunity to speak in Parliament on behalf of the victims of crime, but I am disappointed that not one Liberal Democrat has bothered to turn up for this important debate.

I am as committed as anyone to the prevention of crime and I support everything the Government are doing in this respect, not only directly through the Home Office but in their housing, education, social security and other policies. Nevertheless, however successful the Government's policies, I fear that we shall never see the day when there is no crime and there are no victims of crime. Many of today's victims of crime are, and probably always will be, from the poorest sections of our community. We must keep faith with them and make it clear that, although we appreciate the problem, poverty cannot be accepted as an excuse for crime.

For many years, the courts have had the power to order a convicted criminal to pay compensation to his victim, but, all too frequently, payment is not made under the order, either because the criminal disappears and cannot be traced or because he has been economical with the truth when asked about his income and assets. Information about his whereabouts and assets is very often on the files of the Department of Social Security, the Inland Revenue, banks and buildings societies, but, when they are asked to disclose it, they say that they are sorry they cannot do so, because it is confidential.

I am delighted that we have a Home Secretary who is determined to roll back 30 years of libertarian attitudes towards crime and to put the victim first. The Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill is a step in the right direction, but there is much more to be done. In Britain, we can be proud of the fact that anyone who suffers a serious criminal injury will be compensated out of public funds, but anyone who suffers a personal injury valued at less than £1,000 or who is the victim of a crime involving his property or money will not be compensated out of public funds. At

[Mr. Michael Stephen]

present, there is about £100,000 worth of unpaid compensation orders made in favour of victims in every magistrates court in the land.

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): I thank my hon. Friend for making an important point about outstanding sums. May I point out that Sutton magistrates court found that there is £143,000 outstanding in compensation payments?

Mr. Stephen: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that figure, which confirms what I believe to be the situation throughout the country.

I tabled three new clauses to the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill when it was in Committee in February and the substance of this motion is much the same as that of the new clauses. I was not a member of the Committee, so two of them were moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) on my behalf. The Government responded sympathetically, but did not commit themselves to doing anything about it.

Before I deal with those new clauses, I pay tribute to *The Mail on Sunday* for its excellent work in researching this topic and for drawing the attention of Members of Parliament and the public to the serious problem of non-payment of compensation orders. I refer to two cases that the newspaper has discovered. The first is a man in Bristol who went on a rampage of violence and caused £4,000 worth of damage to his victim's home. He was ordered to pay £3,855 in compensation, but he paid nothing. He went on holiday to Australia and failed to turn up in court where he was ordered to pay compensation. He claimed to be unemployed. His victim said:

"I think it is disgusting the way that victims of crime are treated. There should be a radical review of the compensation system. Victims should not be coming out at a loss. They don't ask for their homes to be damaged or to be attacked."

The second case was in Windsor in Berkshire. A criminal stole and wrecked a nurse's £1,100 moped. He was ordered to pay compensation, but he refused to pay. He was jailed for 28 days and the debt was written off. He said:

"I had the money, but decided to go to jail instead. It was my first offence and I don't think it was fair what they gave me."

The victim's view was:

"I work long unsociable hours to support my daughter and I see this criminal walking around doing nothing all day. He is a strong man who could work if he wanted to and he should be made to pay something."

The Government have not been idle on the matter and I give credit for their work in the Criminal Justice Act 1991, the Criminal Justice Act 1988 and the victims charter, which, for the first time, focused the attention of all involved in the criminal justice system on the needs of the victim. Hitherto, attention had always been on the needs of the criminal. However, there are still 28 agencies supporting criminals and only one supporting victims—the victim support scheme, to whose work I pay tribute.

The first paragraph of my motion incorporates new clause 30 which I tabled in Committee. It would require information to be given about the whereabouts and financial resources of criminals who have failed to pay compensation orders. Departments of state, banks and building societies will not disclose such information and say that it is confidential. They sometimes pray in aid the Data Protection Act 1984. I point out that the Act is the "Data Protection Act", not the "Protection of Criminals Act". The Act should be changed so that the information can be made available to courts seeking to enforce compensation orders.

The civil rights lobby will say that it is an infringement of civil liberties to provide confidential information to magistrates courts. Of course, it is an infringement of civil liberties, but criminals are not the only people who have civil liberties. Victims have civil liberties, too, and they have every right, under law, to receive compensation from the criminal for the damage caused. If a criminal does not wish his civil liberties to be infringed, the remedy is in his own hands—do not commit crime.

It was said in Committee that it would be rather draconian to employ such a measure against motorists who had been ordered to pay compensation and who had not paid. I do not see why. In any event, enforcement is in the hands of the courts, which can decide how they wish to enforce payment. I do not see why a motorist who has not paid compensation to his victim should be treated differently from any other criminal who has not paid compensation.

In Committee, the Government suggested that legislation would not be necessary and that the objective could be achieved by non-legislative means. If that is the case, what are the non-legislative means? What precisely are the Government doing to use those means to ensure that the victims of crime are properly compensated?

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): I congratulate the hon. Member for Shoreham (Mr. Stephen) on obtaining this short debate; I realise that the seconds are ticking away. A number of Opposition Members wholly endorse the principle that people who are trying to dodge their moral obligation to pay compensation should be pursued with vigour. We look forward with interest to seeing what the Government will do to ensure that compensation is paid to the victims of crime. The failure to pay compensation is an outstanding blot on our criminal justice system.

Mr. Stephen: I am grateful to the hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) for his support. I am sure that his constituents are as concerned as mine are about the matter.

The second paragraph of the motion incorporates new clause 25 which I tabled in Committee. I believe that the courts are not well suited to the enforcement of orders. I often receive letters from people who say that they believe that the courts have gone to sleep after they have made compensation orders and that no real attempt is made to enforce them. People tell me—and it accords with my experience—that means inquiries in magistrates courts are rather like shelling peas, they are done so quickly. The whole thing is a farce. Magistrates do not have the time or the means to inquire rigorously into the income and the assets of criminals. That job requires an agency with specialised personnel and proper information technology to be able to chase the criminals. I know of the value of information technology in that area because I happen to be the parliamentary adviser to EDS-Scicon—a company working in that sphere.

The courts need to be reminded of the requirements of the victims charter. One of those requirements is that the courts must keep the victim informed of the progress of his case. Often, it turns into a dispute between the Crown and the criminal, and the victim is forgotten. In particular, the

victim should be given an opportunity to give evidence of the means of the criminal once a compensation order has been made. An elderly lady running a newsagents shop in my constituency knew perfectly well that the criminal who was ordered to pay her compensation had assets much greater than those to which he was willing to admit, but she was never given an opportunity to go to court and say so.

Sometimes, notwithstanding the 1988 Act, no compensation order is made because no application is made. I believe that the courts should normally award compensation, unless they are specifically asked not to. The prosecuting solicitors and barristers must also be reminded that, although they are formally representing the Crown in the proceedings, they have also have a duty to represent the interests of the victim and to ensure that they have the necessary information from the victim to be able to argue effectively for a proper level of compensation.

In the criminal courts, there should be the same measure of damages as there is in the civil courts. A Home Office study in 1992 suggested that awards, especially for personal injuries made in the criminal courts, are much lower than those in the civil courts. The measure of damages in either the civil court or the criminal court should not be related in any way to the ability of the criminal to pay. That is certainly not the case in the civil courts and should not be so in the criminal courts. Often, defendants in civil proceedings are people of moderate means, but that does not affect the measure of damages. Means are relevant to enforcement, not to the amount of compensation. The criminal's ability to pay will vary over time. On the day of the hearing, he may not be able to pay, but he may get a job the next week or next month, or he may be left some money, or he may even win the pools. If he subsequently has the ability to pay, he should be made to pay, and section 35(4) of the Powers of Criminal Courts Act 1973 requires further amendment.

As for the argument that if we enforce compensation orders against criminals they will go out and commit further offences, I do not think that a civilised society could ever give in to such blackmail and any criminal who thinks that he can get away with that, has got another think coming. If a criminal does not have a job, if he cannot or will not work, work must be found for him so that he may pay the compensation that he owes. It is an affront to the public and the victim for the criminal to be sitting at home, drawing benefit and doing nothing to earn any money to pay his victim. If a criminal is fortunate enough, as some are, to sell their story to the press, the money should be confiscated and used to compensate the victim and any balance should be forfeited to Her Majesty—that is the effect of my new clause 56.

Also, courts should be reminded of their statutory duty to give priority to compensation orders over fines and they should never reduce compensation orders on the ground of the criminal's ability to pay if they are, at the same time, imposing a fine. Often, when the criminal is sent to prison, no compensation order is made. That is wrong because the criminal pays his debt to society, not to his victim, by going to prison. The courts should not send criminals who are in default of payment to prison quite so often. That is an easy option for an old lag. Compensation orders should remain in force, and if it takes 20 years to recover the money, so be it. There should be no time limit on the recovery of compensation orders. We should also repeal the absurd provision that makes it legally impossible to sell a criminal's house, if he has one, to compensate his victim.

I congratulate the Government on the efforts that they are making in the area of criminal justice. There is wide public concern. Much of it has been addressed by the Government, but much still remains to be done. We must consider the victims—

It being half-past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Orders of the Day

Private Members' Bills

FINE DEFAULTERS (RESTRICTION OF POWER TO IMPRISON) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 15 July.

SALE OF GOODS (AMENDMENT) BILL [*LORDS*]

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 15 July.

TREASURE BILL [*LORDS*]

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 15 July.

RACIAL HATRED AND VIOLENCE BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Not moved.

FAIR TREATMENT FOR WIDOWERS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

PARDON FOR SOLDIERS OF THE GREAT WAR BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 15 July.

WATER (DOMESTIC DISCONNECTIONS) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 15 July.

PUBLIC CONVENIENCES (NO. 2) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 15 July.

LAND DRAINAGE BILL [*LORDS*]

Read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House. —[*Mr. Clifton-Brown.*]

Bill immediately considered in Committee; reported, without amendment; read the Third time and passed, without amendment .

CIVIL RIGHTS (DISABLED PERSONS) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 15 July.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That at the sitting on Monday 11th July, the Speaker shall put the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motion in the name of Mr. Tony Newton relating to Scottish Business not later than two hours after it has been entered upon; and such Questions shall include the Questions on any Amendments to the said Motion, which she may have selected, which may then be moved; and those proceedings may be entered upon or continued after the expiration of time for opposed business.— [*Mr. Andrew Mitchell.*]

Rural Policing

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

2.33 pm

Sir Keith Speed (Ashford): I make no apology for raising the problems of rural policing and rural crime. I do not disparage what has been happening in our towns and cities and I recognise the real problems of urban crime. Perhaps rural crime and rural policing have been less in the spotlight. I wish to focus briefly on some of the problems and opportunities.

I welcome the presence of my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Home Office. He and I march together across the Sussex and Kent borders. I am sure that in his constituency he has many of the problems that are to be found in mine.

The problems of policing generally and rural crime will be overcome only by good intelligence being available to the various law enforcement agencies. We should be targeting and seeking the criminal and not the crime itself. There are now police teams in rural areas in Kent to which one person is attached who is responsible for a specific rural area. That person must know the area. That is fine because, without the intelligence, we do not stand a good chance of catching the criminal and obtaining a conviction.

The village bobby is a particular problem in rural areas. In the old days, every village had its policeman who lived in a police house. Today, for economic and social reasons, that is not possible. Quite naturally, policemen wish to buy their own houses. Therefore, police authorities have sold village police houses as there has been no demand for them.

With the best will in the world, one cannot expect a village policeman to work 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Therefore, police teams and mobile forces are increasingly covering rural areas to prevent crime and to catch criminals.

Experiments are being carried out with parish constables in different parts of the country, including in Tunbridge Wells in Kent. Parish constables are an answer to the village bobby problem. A parish constable must be a special constable. He or she must have the training and powers of a special constable so that that person can arrest people and enforce law and order. Parish constables are part of the community and can work extremely well with neighbourhood watch schemes, parish councils and others.

I have a suggestion which may or may not be controversial. I accept that we should not pay special constables a full salary. However, we need more special constables, even in Kent where there are vacancies. We need to encourage people. Perhaps we should pay special constables a modest bounty at the end of each year's service in the same way that we pay members of the Territorial Army and the Royal Naval Reserve. That would not be expensive. In fact, it would be cost efficient as it would tell people that we are prepared to reward them for the unsocial hours they work, for their dedication and for the voluntary duties that they perform, with a small tax repayment at the end of each year. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will consider that suggestion.

Neighbourhood watches have been well established for many years. They are particularly useful in rural areas if they can work with the concept of parish constables, the local men and women who can look after a patch. Technology is also helping us. The Kent police authority has introduced a radio system which enables headquarters to contact a policeman wherever he may be. Even if he is right out in the wilds or the sticks, there can be two-way contact. That is vital.

Geography is a particular problem for rural areas. It is easy to get around in towns. If there is an incident in a town, people can get to that incident very quickly because they can use an A to Z guide. They will know precisely where they are going. It is not so easy in villages and rural areas. That is not just a problem for the police; it also affects the ambulance and fire services.

For example, to be told that there is a problem at Bramble cottage in High Halden means very little. One could spend 30 minutes or an hour travelling around High Halden trying to find Bramble cottage. That problem arises for several reasons. In many rural areas, local authorities —no doubt for good reasons—do not erect street signs. There is also the problem that, in many villages, streets have more than one name.

I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister is familiar with High Halden, which is on the A28 in my constituency. There is a street in High Halden called Man of Kent road. It is also known as American road, America road and Crompton House lane. Those are names for the same street. If there is an incident in that area, it is the luck of the draw how it is described by the person affected by that incident. It would be extremely difficult for the police car, the ambulance or the fire brigade to find that incident.

In addition, many houses in rural areas do not have names or numbers or, if the names or numbers are shown, they are right by the front door and perhaps hidden from the main road. This is essentially a problem for local authorities. I do not know whether they could adapt postcodes. However, the Kent police have mentioned that problem to me. Perhaps the Department of the Environment and the Home Office could have a long hard look at it.

Another matter might be helpful in dealing with the problem of rural crime. We have had a number of horrendous events in my constituency. My hon. Friend the Minister will recall that, a few months ago, there were 12 cases of arson in Kent, mostly in my constituency, and even in Sussex. Barns were burnt down. In fact, there were 12 cases of arson in one night. I regret to say that, so far, the culprit has not been found.

Arising out of that and other matters, the leader of Ashford borough council and I decided to institute a series of meetings to take place perhaps every three to five months, involving the leader and deputy leader of Ashford borough council and two or three of its key officers, myself as the Member of Parliament, the local representative of the Kent Association of Parish Councils, representatives of the National Farmers Union, the local police superintendent and our chief inspector of police.

Those meetings are structured in so far as we have an agenda, but they are very informal—no great papers are presented. We discuss informally the latest crime statistics, the problem of vandalism on farms, and perhaps teaching young people how to respect the land, footpaths and so on connected with the countryside. We can address the problems of towns or of the countryside and bring to bear our expertise and knowledge.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will respond to my points. Crime generally and rural crime in particular are not just for the police. Whether it is the prevention of crime or the enforcement of the law, we are all involved—

[Sir Keith Speed]

farmers, school teachers, ordinary citizens and the police. That is true all over the country, but in villages and small towns there is a real sense of community. I hope that everyone realises that it is no good passing on the other side of the road and that if we enhance the role of the parish constable, neighbourhood watch schemes and communities working together, perhaps in the informal way as in Ashford in Kent, we may bring about a rather more peaceful and pleasant countryside in which people can go about their business without the fear of being mugged, without vandalism and without car theft. It is an important problem and I hope that my hon. Friend will respond constructively.

2.42 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Charles Wardle): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Ashford (Sir K. Speed) on obtaining this Adjournment debate and on raising such important issues. As he said, our constituencies lie side by side along the Kent ditch. Were he or I to travel from Northiam to Newenden or vice versa, we would be able to meet each other on the border. The situations that my hon. Friend described apply just as much in Sussex as in the part of Kent which he represents, and indeed in much of rural England. My hon. Friend made a number of interesting suggestions. I shall talk in a moment about the parish constable initiative, and I am delighted to hear my hon. Friend's support of it.

My hon. Friend gave a wonderful description of how partnership should work—people getting together with the police, local community leaders, Members of Parliament, farmers and others, working together in partnership to ensure that we can tackle crime as vigorously as possible on every front. My hon. Friend was right to talk about the importance of local intelligence. I know what he means about that intelligence helping to pinpoint houses. I understand entirely what he means about the difficulties of trying to find Bramble cottage down America road, America lane, or whatever else it might be called by local people. It is a problem to which we shall all pay attention.

My hon. Friend also suggested a bounty for special constables. That idea has been raised before. A pilot scheme was tested by the Dorset constabulary last year and we are currently considering the outcome of that test. We shall, no doubt, have more to say about it in due course.

The Government recognise that there is much concern among people living in rural areas about policing and the effect that crime can have on their communities. All too often, the attention has been on inner cities, which is where the media tend to focus. Crime has spread into rural areas, where it bites just as much and with just as devastating an effect. I shall say more later about Government action and how the Government encourage the public to take action. At the outset, I want to place my remarks in a suitable context by talking about our commitment to the police.

The first statutory responsibility of the police is to prevent crime; that has been so ever since the formation of the police in 1829. The police have always needed the consent of the public and a partnership with the public to help them in the fight against crime. Since 1979, we have greatly increased the resources available to the police. After allowing for inflation, expenditure on policing has risen on average by 87 per cent. since 1979 to more than £6,000 million. There are 16,000 more uniformed police officers in post and a similar number of additional civilians working for the police. When we consider the number of jobs that have been civilianised, thus enabling more uniformed officers to get out from behind their desks to undertake operational duties, we realise that progress has been considerable.

Every police force has shared those increases, with an average county force tending to do better in terms of the percentage increase in expenditure than an average metropolitan force. For the current year, the total of police standard spending assessments has risen by 4.3 per cent. for the metropolitan forces, and by rather more than that —4.6 per cent.—for the county forces. On average, police establishments have risen by 8 per cent. since 1979, but some of the more rural forces have done significantly better. Kent has had an increase of 12 per cent. and Suffolk has had an increase of 13 per cent.

The vast majority of forces are a mixture of urban and rural, and it is for chief constables to decide on the allocation of resources within the areas for which they are responsible. But we are continuing to do everything possible to help them to maximise the number of officers available for operational policing. Current initiatives aimed at cutting bureaucracy, reorganising management structures and employing more civilians will help to get yet more police officers into the front line against crime. From next year, detailed central controls on force strength will be removed as a result of the measures now going through Parliament. Chief constables will be able to decide for themselves how many officers they need within the resources available to them.

I know that the Kent constabulary is well aware of the problems of rural crime that my hon. Friend described and is undertaking a number of initiatives to tackle them. The Thanet police are currently developing an intelligence-based proactive model that will be evaluated by the force and considered for use throughout Kent. It should bring advantages to my hon. Friend's constituency. The structure of area intelligence will take into account the unusual and sometimes unique nature of rural communities.

My hon. Friend mentioned the new radio system to be introduced by the Kent constabulary. It represents an investment of £7 million and will offer enhanced communications to police officers in rural areas. The police are aware of the importance of working with the community to tackle crime. To that end, police officers working in rural parts of Kent will work as members of teams under dedicated leaders. Those teams will identify with specific parts of the rural area to allow the development of a particular local knowledge. That ties in with the reforms and the Police and Magistrates' Courts Bill in terms of locally focused policing plans. The initiative in Kent will assist members of the community, in that they will be more directly aware of the officers responsible for tackling crime, but, ultimately, it must be the chief constable who decides how to deploy his resources.

There is a danger when talking about crime, and the way in which the police and the public can work together, of concentrating on urban burglary and the like. As I said a few moments ago, that is what the media seem to concentrate on. Frequently, rural crime happens and does not make the headlines. But I know, and so do the police,

that a single criminal incident in a quiet rural area can have a simply devastating and disruptive effect on the way of life of the entire community.

We are all aware of the nuisance caused to rural communities by the activities of new age travellers and other trespassers, and we are taking measures to deal with them. But other types of crime, which are also more relevant to the countryside, present their own particular problems: the rustling of animals, arson attacks, as my hon. Friend described, and the theft of agricultural machinery, which can create heavy losses. The attacks on, and mutilation of, horses in the southern counties have given a disturbing and horrific twist to our notion of rural crime.

Another worrying development is the export from urban areas of some particularly nasty crimes that have rarely been experienced by rural communities such as the armed robbery of village post offices and rural petrol stations and the violent burglary of isolated homes. These seem to become increasingly common as criminals are squeezed out of some of their more difficult urban haunts and go further afield. Of course, the professional villain can be in his car and half way across the country on the motorway network after hitting a pre-chosen target.

Again, rural communities are often better placed to report anything out of the ordinary more quickly than can many urban or suburban communities. The police rely on seemingly innocuous pieces of information that might be essential in linking known criminals to these crimes. Dealing with crime in rural areas is already a high priority for the police and for the Government. There is considerable activity across many Departments.

My hon. Friend spoke enthusiastically about the parish constables initiative in the context of rural policing. He will know that our aim is to increase the number of special constables from 20,000 to 30,000. As I shall show in a moment, we hope that an increasing number of those special constables will become parish constables. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary's parish constable initiative, which began less than a year ago, has quickly established itself as a valuable extra dimension to rural policing. I am very pleased indeed with the enthusiasm with which both police and public have greeted the initiative. There are now more than 80 schemes in operation around the country. I know that my right hon. and learned Friend hopes personally to launch the 100th such scheme later this summer.

The success of the parish constable scheme clearly demonstrates the great interest that members of the public have in helping to police their own communities. That is what matters so much. They have that vested interest. The schemes are an excellent example of what can be achieved when police and public work together in that fashion.

In practice, most of the small towns and villages taking part in the initiative have preferred the parish special constable model to the alternative parish warden model. In this kind of scheme, the chief constable agrees with the parish council or councils that a serving special constable should spend all his or her duty hours working within their area.

The special constabulary in general is an excellent example of how ordinary men and women can volunteer to help the police. Ordinary men and women from other walks of life lend their help to the police. Special constables have full powers of arrest; they are trained and supervised by the regular police, but, none the less, they give their own time as volunteers.

Until the introduction of the parish constable initiative, specials were generally used on a range of duties. Now, whether they are existing specials or volunteers recruited specifically for the purpose, they can develop a sense of identity with their local area, patrol it regularly and get to know all the local people and all the local concerns. They provide a uniformed police presence in areas of the country which the full-time police sometimes find less easy to reach regularly.

The Home Office is keeping track of the schemes. Four are being studied in detail so that we can identify good practice and spread that knowledge more widely. But for parish constable schemes to work as well as they are doing, everyone involved has to recognise that it is a locally driven initiative.

In my hon. Friend's county of Kent, eight very successful schemes are already up and running, using a mixture of experienced specials with some years of service and new recruits supervised by local beat officers. The police in Kent have begun to recruit members of the public to work as parish special constables in the county.

Those recruits will have to be trained and supervised to start with, but the chief constable of Kent has extended that imaginative approach, by ensuring that they will be trained in the parishes where they will be working, once they have completed training.

As I have said, a formal progress report on selected schemes will be published later in the year, but informally we already know that there is high satisfaction with what has been achieved. The benefits of the scheme are obvious to many. They include support for the regular police, in terms of the intelligence information that is fed through to them by people who really know their area and can detect quickly signs of trouble brewing, strangers snooping around, and any build-up of tension.

The benefits include a reassurance for local residents who may recently have felt somewhat out of touch. So often, reducing the fear of crime is just as important as preventing crime—both matter. In some areas, volunteers under the parish constable scheme have been active in keeping local police stations open and manned for some hours during the day when that might otherwise not have been possible.

Parish special constables and the alternative—parish wardens—are positive, productive examples of the type of partnership between public and police on which policing, whether it is in rural areas or inner city estates, crucially depends to achieve all its aims. I am encouraged by the success of the initiative. I look forward to its increasing success throughout the country and hope that it will give us lessons that we could build on, even in the wider context.

On other Government initiatives, I have been exploring the issue of rural crime with my colleagues on the ministerial group on crime prevention, which promotes co-ordinated action by Government Departments in the prevention of crime. The National Board for Crime Prevention is also giving the matter attention. Recently, I spoke at a conference in Gloucestershire on rural crime, with Crime Concern and other participants.

In February this year, my hon Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside announced the rural challenge initiative. That is a competition run by the Government's agency, the Rural Development Commission, with which my hon. Friend the Member for Ashford will be familiar. It is designed to stimulate

[Mr. Charles Wardle]

innovative approaches to social and economic development in less prosperous rural areas. One of the prize categories is action to combat rural crime.

We are also determined to take measures to deal with those who trespass en masse with complete disregard for law-abiding citizens. I do not need to remind the House of the disgraceful events at Castlemorton common in the summer of 1992, which were subsequently repeated, albeit on a lesser scale, in other parts of the country. The disruption suffered by local communities, the fear caused to local residents by such mass gatherings and unruly behaviour, and the filth left behind by the trespassers are intolerable.

The Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill, which is before Parliament, will strengthen existing police powers to deal with trespass on land and introduce new powers to tackle specific nuisances, such as unlicensed night-time rave parties on open land, which can cause untold misery to local residents, and trespassers who wilfully disrupt or intimidate others engaged in lawful activities on land.

The proposed new powers will allow the police to take pre-emptive action to nip disorder in the bud, rather than leave them to deal with a serious problem once it has arisen.

That comprehensive package of measures is necessary to protect the quality of life in rural areas and will be welcomed by law-abiding citizens throughout the country.

Rural areas present a special kind of challenge to the police. The types of crimes that I have mentioned are less easy to prevent and detect because of the relatively isolated nature of the areas where they are committed. The response of the police to those incidents cannot always be as speedy as they, or the public, would like. That is why there is a particular onus on rural communities to be the eyes and ears of the police and to work in partnership with them.

The rural community is more stable than most other communities, however, and that is a strength on which we should be able to develop our initiatives. Tightly knit communities can easily spot outsiders. Those who live in close communities can find it easier to work together to fight crime.

The police place considerable emphasis on dealing with crime in rural areas, both through prevention and detection. Cheshire constabulary, for example, appointed a dedicated wildlife and environment officer two and a half years ago. He has since developed a very effective county-wide strategy for dealing with rural crime.

A great deal can be achieved when the police work alongside the public and other agencies. The partnership approach is the cornerstone of the Government's crime prevention strategy, and it is being developed on a broad front. Neighbourhood watch schemes are well known, and there are 130,000 such schemes in England and Wales.

There has been a welcome proliferation of other watch schemes, many of which are relevant to rural areas—country watch, farm watch and horse watch. At the last count, there were 35 different watch schemes up and running throughout the country. They show that members of the public want to work with the police in the fight against crime and to help the police to develop a strengthened partnership at local level. That, in turn, will help the police to be more effective and responsive to the public's needs. I hope that my hon Friend agrees that, in that way, we will be able to deliver the kind of society in which we all want to live.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at one minute to Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 11 July 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Outdoor Activity Centres

1. **Mr. Jamieson:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement regarding the setting up of an accreditation and inspection scheme for outdoor activity centres.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for National Heritage (Mr. Iain Sproat): The Activity Centre Advisory Committee has now employed consultants to draw up and pilot guidelines for individual activities; those and future inspection arrangements will be considered further by the ACAC at its next meeting in September.

Mr. Jamieson: Is the Minister aware that this summer hundreds of thousands of children will go to outdoor activity centres and undertake potentially hazardous activities? Although I welcome the voluntary accreditation scheme and the limited inspection announced earlier this year as a partial solution, does the Minister share my concern that, because of the voluntary nature of the scheme, cowboy centres, working well below safety levels, will continue to put children's lives at risk?

Mr. Sproat: The hon. Gentleman makes an important point and of course we are all concerned about that. We look forward to the ACAC's recommendations on that and other points in September.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: The Minister will be aware that the Scout Association meets the standards set down by the British Canoe Union—and, indeed, standards higher than those—not only for canoeing but for other adventure activities that the association offers to young people. While giving careful consideration to standards, will my hon. Friend make absolutely sure that we do not strangle adventure activities for young people with red tape?

Mr. Sproat: We shall maintain a wise balance.

Mr. Win Griffiths: Does the Minister realise that he would be applying some common sense that everyone involved in schools and the youth movement would applaud if, ahead of any report from the advisory committee, he announced that a statutory scheme would be introduced? That would give schools and clubs the confidence to believe that outdoor activity centres validated by such a scheme would be up to standard and safe.

Mr. Sproat: I cannot agree with the hon. Gentleman. The ACAC is looking at the possibilities of a voluntary accreditation scheme.

Sports Clubs (Isle of Wight)

2. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the clubs and facilities on the Isle of Wight which have received grants from the Sports Council since 1987.

Mr. Sproat: The Sports Council has awarded grants and loans totalling £260,557 to 23 clubs, facilities and organisations on the Isle of Wight since 1987-88. I will arrange for a list of recipients to be placed in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Field: Does my hon. Friend agree that the Isle of Wight, the first unitary authority in England, provides an ideal opportunity to enhance all the sporting facilities throughout the island for the benefit of young and old alike? Will he take this opportunity to join me in congratulating the Foundation for Sport and the Arts on its extraordinary generosity to sports clubs on the island and to sportsmen and sportswomen?

Mr. Sproat: Yes, I join my hon. Friend in congratulating the Foundation for Sport and the Arts, which has given more than £500,000 to the island. That is extremely welcome. I also agree with my hon. Friend's other remarks.

Mr. Barnes: Future grants for the Isle of Wight will come from the new Sports Council. On Friday, the Minister said that the six independent members of that council would be appointed by the Government, but would be independent of them. How will he work that trick?

Mr. Sproat: It is not a trick; it is a simple, straightforward matter. The independent members of the council will be independent of the Government in any tactical decisions that they may make. They will also, and importantly, be independent of other vested sports interests which legitimately put their views—for instance, the Central Council of Physical Recreation and the British Olympic Association. That is the sense of the term "independent" in that context.

The following is the information:

Sports Council grants and loans awarded to clubs, facilities and organisations on the Isle of Wight for financial years 1987-88 to 1994-95

Organisation	*Capital* £	*Revenue* £
1987-88		
Isle of Wight Cricket Association	1,000	
East Cowes Victoria Athletic Club	5,000	
Body Tech	—	200
Isle of Wight Sports Centre	—	355
Isle of Wight Cricket Association	—	2,500
1988-89		
Isle of Wight Sport and Recreation Council	—	199
Isle of Wight Youth and Community Service	—	100
1989-90		
Nil		
1990-91		
West Wight Swimming Pool Trust Ltd.	[1]10,000	
Medina borough council	—	18,000
Isle of Wight Sports Council	—	3,000

Organisation	*Capital* £	*Revenue* £
1991-92		
Cowes Sports Football Club	[1]10,000	
Freshwater Bay Golf Club	[1]4,000	
Medina borough council	—	2,167
Hampshire and Isle of Wight LTA	—	1,700
1992-93		
Isle of Wight county council	—	1,686
Hampshire and Isle of Wight LTA	—	5,500
Hampshire and Isle of Wight Football Association	—	4,150
1993-94		
Isle of Wight county council	—	6,000
Isle of Wight County Cricket Association	—	3,000
1994-95		
Ryde Sports Club	100,000	
Isle of Wight Table Tennis Centre	75,000	
Isle of Wight county council	—	5,000
Isle of Wight County Cricket Association	—	2,000

		£
Capital total	=	205,000
Revenue total	=	55,557
Grand total	=	260,557

[1] Loan.

Deregulation

3. **Mrs. Browning:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is his policy on deregulation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sproat: My Department takes a keen interest in the impact of regulation, from whatever source, on the business sectors in which we have a policy interest. We seek to deregulate when it can be wisely done.

Mrs. Browning: May I urge my hon. Friend to hasten any measures in the pipeline and to receive with an open mind representations made by those associated with tourism, which is extremely important in my constituency of Tiverton in Devon? Those associated with tourism and particularly small businesses feel that the burden of regulations still lies heavily on their shoulders.

Mr. Sproat: Yes. I congratulate my hon. Friend on the great persistence with which she follows the interests of the tourist elements in her constituency. My Department identified 91 regulations which impact damagingly on the tourist industry. We are pursuing those with each of the relevant Departments.

Ms Mowlam: Although the Minister is not responsible for the regulation of newspaper pricing, he has regulatory responsibility for the standards of news and opinion throughout the United Kingdom. Given his Department's lead role in the Government's cross-media review, what will he have left to review if Murdoch's News Corporation succeeds in pushing some of the quality national and regional newspapers out of the market?

Mr. Sproat: We shall continue to review those and all the other newspapers and aspects of the media that are left.

Mr. Waterson: Is my hon. Friend aware of the depth of feeling of hoteliers in my constituency about excessive regulation? Will he take the opportunity to discuss those matters with the Eastbourne Hotels Association during his forthcoming and much expected visit to Eastbourne?

Mr. Sproat: Yes, I look forward to my trip to Eastbourne. Much of the evidence that has helped us so much in our investigation has come from the hoteliers of Eastbourne and I look forward to renewing my acquaintance with them.

Sports Council

4. **Mr. Dowd:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what consultations he has had with other Departments about the restructuring of the Sports Council.

Mr. Sproat: I have consulted those Departments on whose interests the review of the Sports Council touches. As the hon. Member will know, the Government announced their proposals for the future of the Sports Council on 8 July.

Mr. Dowd: Further to the statement on 8 July, what did the Minister mean by the intention for the new Sports Council to withdraw from mass and formal participation and leisure activities? Will he explain the flagrant contradiction in the role of sport as outlined by the Secretary of State for Health in the White Paper, "The Health of the Nation"?

Mr. Sproat: There is no contradistinction between what the two Departments say. I want to ensure that the Sports Council concentrates on sport. It has only some £49 million a year to spend on this, as opposed to the £1.25 billion that local authorities have. I want local authorities to concentrate on recreation and leisure and the Sports Council to concentrate on performance and excellence.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: I warmly welcome the Minister's proposals on the Sports Council, particularly giving the United Kingdom Sports Council a strategic role for a lead sport, but does he agree that local authorities and regional sports councils have a particularly important role to play in providing sports facilities for younger people?

Mr. Sproat: I agree with my hon. Friend. He will have noticed that I am asking the ministerial nominees in future to attach themselves more closely to the Sports Council in the regions, and I look forward to receiving much more direct advice from the ministerial nominees in future.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: May I welcome in general the announcement made by the Minister last Friday, when I was unavoidably absent? I particularly welcome the fact that professional sport is to be properly represented on the Sports Council, recognising that the distinction between amateur and professional is increasingly regarded as outdated. But where will responsibility for fighting the battle against drugs in sport rest? What importance does the Minister's Department attach to the continuation of the remarkably good work that has been done in the past in that respect by the existing Sports Council?

Mr. Sproat: I thank the hon. and learned Gentleman for his kind welcome in general and for his comment on professional sport in particular. It is extremely important that members of regional sports councils and of the Great

Britain Sports Council, such as Mr. Trevor Brooking, will be there not just as outstanding individuals but as representatives of professional sport.

As far as drugs are concerned, that is one of the first things that the new United Kingdom Sports Council will be looking at. We attach great importance to it. Our attitude to drugs must be seen to be the same throughout the United Kingdom as a whole.

Mr. Pendry: Further to the original question, is the Minister aware that the Secretary of State said only last year that it was his aim to put the extension of individual access to heritage, culture and sport firmly at the top of his agenda? How can the Minister square that objective with a withdrawal from the promotion of mass participation in sport? To achieve his boss's objective, will he agree to a longer period of consultation than the 70-odd that days he is allowing, after which he might see what the right hon. Gentleman is getting at and agree with him?

Mr. Sproat: No. The initial consultation that I proposed on Friday will be until 30 September; thereafter, we shall consider all the points made within that period. As for mass participation, of course we want to see as many people who wish to play sport and games playing them, but some aspects of that are better done by local authorities and some are better promoted by the Sports Council. We seek to achieve a sensible balance.

Sport (Business Sponsorship)

5. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what was the value of business sponsorship of sport in the latest period for which information is available.

Mr. Sproat: The total value of commercial sponsorship of sport in the United Kingdom in 1993 was estimated to be approximately £250 million.

Mr. Colvin: I am sure that the House would agree that the introduction of the Sportsmatch sponsorship scheme for sport will be welcome, even if it is only half as successful as the business sponsor incentive scheme for the arts. Additional funding can be made available for improvements and safety features at sports grounds through the Football Trust. What plans do Her Majesty's Government have for extending the scope of the trust to include non-league football, rugby union, rugby league and cricket?

Mr. Sproat: With regard to Sportsmatch, I very much agree with my hon. Friend. In fact, Sportsmatch has been responsible for pumping some £10 million extra into grass roots sports since it was set up in November 1992. As for widening the Football Trust's activities, clearly it is extremely important that we should try to spread the money and ensure that safety at sports grounds, which could apply to games such as rugby league, for instance, is as good as it is at football grounds. We are currently looking at ways in which to do just that.

Mr. Flynn: What is the Minister's reaction to the plea from the Heritage Select Committee that advertising for tobacco should be banned? Does he not think it damaging for young children to see business sponsorship of tobacco displayed all over the uniforms and kits of sportsmen? Would it not be better to allow business sponsorship of Members of Parliament to be displayed on our suits when we speak here so that the country can know who is filling the pockets of Members and so that the mother of Parliaments does not an the international reputation as the whore of Parliaments?

Mr. Sproat: On the first point, I know roughly what the Select Committee said. I shall be studying the report over the coming few weeks and I shall be making an official response in due course.

Mr. Jessel: When my hon. Friend studies the Select Committee report, will he pay particular attention to the point that sports sponsorship by tobacco companies tends to encourage young, impressionable and gullible people to identify healthy and glamorous activities such as sport and the hero figures in it with a habit that is likely to be lethal to some 8 or 9 per cent. of them, on present trends?

Mr. Sproat: As I said in reply to the last supplementary question, these matters are well rehearsed in the Select Committee's report, and I look forward to examining them in detail. My hon. Friend will be aware that the current voluntary agreement provides that there shall be no sponsorship by tobacco companies of events that are attended by a majority of persons under the age of 18.

Channel 4

6. ***Ms* Glenda Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what representations he has received regarding the future funding of Channel 4; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for National Heritage (Mr. Peter Brooke): I have received letters from the chairman of Channel 4, the chairman of the ITV Association, two of the chairmen of ITV companies, more than 50 letters from hon. Members on behalf of independent programme production companies, and some letters directly from independent programme producers. On 21 June, I met the chairman and chief executive of Channel 4 and listened to their views. I shall consider all those views and those of other organisations with an interest.

Ms Jackson: I thank the Secretary of State for that reply, but he did not mention a statement on the future funding of Channel 4. Will he assure the House and the country that the path of privatisation will not be pursued in that area and that the element of public service broadcasting which is integral to Channel 4 will be of overriding importance and will be protected, whatever form of future funding is eventually reached?

Mr. Brooke: The Government considered the issue of the privatisation of Channel 4 in 1989, but decided against it, and we have seen no reason to change our mind since. The White Paper that the Government issued last Wednesday was an index of the Government's support for public sector broadcasting.

Mr. Ashby: Does my right hon. Friend consider—or perhaps recall—that most Conservative Members believe Channel 4 to be a most excellent channel, whose independence must be maintained? One of the problems that the channel faces is that it has a funding agreement which is out of date and does not take into account the success that it has subsequently achieved. Will my right

hon. Friend give assurances that that will be looked at carefully because we want a well-funded, independent Channel 4 to continue?

Mr. Brooke: My hon. Friend is almost as eloquent as Sir Michael Bishop and Michael Grade were when they came to see me on 21 June—and that is a high compliment. I said in response to the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms Jackson) that I would consider the views that I had heard, and those of other organisations with an interest. That I will do.

Arts (Disabled People)

7. **Ms Lynne:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what discussions he has had recently with organisations for the disabled about support for the arts.

Mr. Sproat: My Department is in regular contact with organisations representing the interests of disabled people in the arts sector; among them, I have just announced increased funding of £43,000 to the ADAPT trust for this year. The Arts Council and the regional arts boards together spend more than £1.5 million on arts and disability each year.

Ms Lynne: Is the Minister aware that the Arts Council disability unit is due to be scrapped? Following the demise of the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill, this is another slap in the face for disabled people. The unit cost £50,000 to run. Will he consider making representations to the Arts Council, or providing extra resources for the council, to force it into keeping the unit going?

Mr. Sproat: That is, of course, a decision for the Arts Council, but I think that the hon. Lady has got it wrong. The Arts Council used to have a special unit which did nothing but look at the needs of disabled persons, of women and of ethnic minorities. It decided to scrap the unit and to share the responsibility for safeguarding those interests right across the council's work. That was the Arts Council's decision, but it seemed sensible to me.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my hon. Friend agree that words come cheap, and that the important point is that the Government have more than trebled provision for the disabled in real terms? We can take the credit for that, because we have done what the Labour party failed to do.

Mr. Sproat: Yes. As so often, my hon. Friend is exactly right.

Radio 4

8. **Mrs. Angela Knight:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what representations he has received during his review of the BBC charter regarding maintaining Radio 4 on the long-wave network.

Mr. Brooke: More than 1,700 since October 1992, but most of them were not linked to the BBC's future after 1996.

Mrs. Knight: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the variability of the Radio 4 FM frequency and how easily it can be interrupted? If I open my fridge door at home, reception ceases altogether. With that in mind, does he agree that more listeners would be better served if the usual Radio 4 programmes were broadcast on long wave and extended sports programmes on the FM frequency?

Mr. Brooke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving me outline notice of the subject that she wished to raise and I am sorry that she has difficulties receiving Radio 4 on FM, not least because of her fridge door. FM reception depends largely on having a line of sight from the receiving aerial to the transmitter. Rooftop antennae are recommended wherever possible, but I recognise that many listeners prefer to use portable receivers, even though reception is generally poorer on such equipment.

The BBC continues to build new FM transmitters to improve reception of its services. The building programme is subject to available resources and competing engineering priorities. However, the shortage of frequencies and the geography of the local terrain do not make it easy to read all areas easily. Although my hon. Friend criticises the BBC for scheduling extended sports coverage and, in particular, "Test Match Special" on Radio 4 long wave, it is for the BBC to decide what to broadcast on the frequencies available to it.

Mr. Grocott: Will the Secretary of State confirm that he quite enjoys answering questions of that kind about the regulatory framework for the BBC because it is a proper, democratic regulation about which we can ask questions in Parliament? Does he look forward, as I do, to the day when the quality and variety of programming on satellite and cable will be similarly subject to a sensible, if arm's-length, regulatory framework by the democratic process to ensure proper quality of programmes?

Mr. Brooke: The simplest answer is that I always enjoy answering questions from the hon. Gentleman. As he knows, the subject that he raises is currently under review.

Mr. Cormack: Is it not a fair bet that the contents of the fridge belonging to my hon. Friend the Member for Erewash (Mrs. Knight) would frequently be better than the contents of radio programmes?

Mr. Brooke: I am diffident about saying this, but I am not wholly familiar with the contents of my hon. Friend's fridge.

Mr. Corbett: Is the Secretary of State aware that the seemingly random tinkering with programmes between Radio 4 FM and long wave and Radio 5 Live confuses listeners and has lessened live coverage of what goes on in this place? Will the right hon. Gentleman remind the chairman and governors of the BBC of the corporation's duty to broadcast a day-by-day impartial account of events here? Does he agree that the fact that newspaper reporting of Parliament has drastically lessened makes as-it-happens coverage all the more important?

Mr. Brooke: As we indicated in the White Paper last week, we believe that the BBC should provide published objectives for each of its radio services and that the character of its services should not be changed without giving audiences an opportunity to comment on the proposals. I understand what the hon. Gentleman says about the potential confusion that can arise.

British Broadcasting Corporation

9. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he expects to publish his White Paper on the future of the BBC.

Mr. Brooke: I published a White Paper on 6 July.

Mr. Coombs: I thank my right hon. Friend for his pre-emptive strike on Wednesday against my question. I warmly welcome the White Paper, as I believe that most people have done since it was published. Does my right hon. Friend agree that the BBC will have an increasingly difficult position to maintain as a broadcasting corporation in an increasingly narrow casting world? What does he see as his Department's role in encouraging and helping the BBC to maintain its pre-eminent position in world television and radio?

Mr. Brooke: The White Paper was certainly a response to the world in which the BBC will find itself, domestically as well as internationally. The best contribution that any Government can make to the BBC is to reinforce its self-confidence, and that is what we did last Wednesday.

Mr. Sheldon: I congratulate the right hon. Gentleman on what he did last Wednesday. Will he pay tribute to Maramaduke Hussey and Lord Barnett, who, over a long period, resisted the attempts by the then Prime Minister to disband the real and essential work of the BBC and who, by playing the role of Sheherazade as they did, kept the conversation and discussion going until such time as the right hon. Gentleman was able to produce the results that he did last Wednesday?

Mr. Brooke: Some of what the right hon. Gentleman said probably belongs more to the historians than either to him or to me. I pay tribute to the present chairman and the former deputy chairman for the manner in which they managed the changes that have occurred in the BBC. While, perfectly properly, compliments have been paid to the director-general in the aftermath of the White Paper, I think that similar compliments might be paid to the govenors.

Business Sponsorship Incentive Scheme

11. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what are the latest figures from the business sponsorship incentive scheme.

Mr. Sproat: The business sponsorship incentive scheme is continuing to be remarkably successful in encouraging businesses to sponsor the arts. Since its inception in October 1984, the scheme has attracted almost £74 million in new money for the arts.

Mr. Bruce: I thank my right hon. Friend for his excellent answer. Can the principles that are being applied for Sportsmatch to get finances also be used for heritage projects? I have in mind the preservation of steam railways, such as that at Swanage, or tall ships, such as the 70 that will come out of Weymouth on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of next week. Many charities spend a great deal of money keeping those in working order for, in particular, young and disabled people.

Mr. Sproat: My hon. Friend is right. He could play his part in encouraging the Association of Business Sponsorship of the Arts to set up more offices around the country so as to encourage more businesses to participate. I am pleased that ABSA recently opened a new office in Birmingham. It also opened a new office in Halifax in June 1992, which has led to the amount of business sponsorship for the arts since then rising by no less than 68 per cent.

Mr. Pike: The Minister will be aware that preserving industrial heritage is extremely expensive, so what he has just said is welcome. Will he make it his task to encourage business to support that sort of heritage, because many of the museums will go out of business if they cannot find sufficient resources to survive?

Mr. Sproat: The hon. Gentleman makes a good point. I know that he will welcome the fact that the Department played some part in ensuring that an additional £300,000 was allocated to the Yorkshire mining museum the other day, which will help to keep that important part of Britain's industrial heritage in being.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: I welcome my hon. Friend's announcement and the fact that his Department will find £4.8 million this year for that scheme, which is cash-limited. Will he give sympathetic consideration to the problems of the Cirencester festival, about which I have corresponded with my hon. Friend, which does have business sponsorship, but, because the scheme is cash-limited, is not eligible for money from it this year?

Mr. Sproat: I thank my hon. Friend for his kind words. We do everything possible to keep raising the funding, which currently stands at £4.8 million. As he knows, we increased it by 10 per cent. last time. If he cares to write to me, I will certainly look again at the details of the scheme that he mentioned.

Opera Companies

12. **Mr. Gunnell:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what were the total number of opera performances and the total attendances for companies supported by the Arts Council in 1983-84 and 1993-94.

Mr. Brooke: In 1983-84, the total number of performances and the total attendances for the major opera companies supported by the Arts Council were 611 and 875,853 respectively. In 1993-94, those figures rose to 690 performances and 904,069 attendances.

Mr. Gunnell: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that, despite the loss of opera companies over the past decade, those increases in figures show the strength of our resident opera companies? Are not the restrictions on Arts Council funding a threat to their quality? Will he ensure that if the Government go ahead in getting rid of some of the authorities that support opera companies, the Department will put a scheme in place to ensure that funds are available?

Mr. Brooke: My answer referred to major companies. There has been a burgeoning of opera in the middle scale, with 50 companies now in existence. Together with small-scale organisations such as Pimlico Opera, those opera companies are reaching new audiences in a large number of venues that are unable to host larger-scale productions.

The comparable funding for the other companies from the Arts Council—I am including Scotland and Wales—was £16.5 million in 1983-84 and more than £38 million in 1994-95. Therefore, although funding decisions are for the Arts Council, I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will agree that there has been a steady increase in public funding.

Mr. Rowe: Is not it an extraordinary tribute to the astonishing increase in the quality of orchestral music and

operatic singers music that so many people are now interested in opera? Given that solid base, will my right hon. Friend ensure that producers of publicly supported operas will use as much ingenuity in staging economical productions as they do when seeking subsidies?

Mr. Brooke: My experience of companies funded by the Arts Council is that they concentrate on doing that which my hon. Friend suggested across the whole range of arts, and that the practice is not confined to opera.

Sport (Business Sponsorship)

13. **Mr. Lord:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what representations he has received regarding the Sportsmatch scheme to promote business sponsorship of sport.

Mr. Sproat: I receive a number of letters from hon. Members and others regarding individual applications for Sportsmatch awards, but have not received any other representations recently.

Mr. Lord: Recently, I had the honour to perform the turf-cutting ceremony for new squash courts in the village of Debenham in Suffolk. I congratulate my hon. Friend on the scheme, which is bringing enthusiasm to businesses and sports in all areas but particularly to rural areas such as my constituency, which badly need sports facilities. Will my hon. Friend give the scheme maximum publicity?

Mr. Sproat: I thank my hon. Friend for his kind remarks. It is a splendid scheme, and it has been responsible for putting an extra £10 million into grass roots sports. It does so at minimum overheads of 10 per cent., which is something that other organisations might consider. I will certainly do as my hon. Friend suggests.

National Lottery

14. **Mr. O'Hara:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he now expects the first tickets for the national lottery to be sold.

Mr. Brooke: The Director-General of the National Lottery announced on 25 May that he had selected the Camelot Group plc to run the national lottery. I understand that Camelot will launch the national lottery with an on-line lotto game in November 1994. The date when tickets will go on sale has not been decided.

Mr. O'Hara: Is the Secretary of State aware that, according to a recent report in the *Financial Times*, part of the Camelot consortium, named G-Tech, is considering using the UK lottery network in a bid for a national benefits distribution contract? Is the right hon. Gentleman further aware that, in a letter to my hon. Friend the Member for Redcar (Ms Mowlam), the Director-General of Oflot confessed that he had not known of that interest of G-Tech until he read about it in the press? Will the Secretary of State give the House an undertaking now that he will not allow Camelot or any part of it to make such use of the UK lottery network?

Mr. Brooke: That question is probably as much for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services as for me. I did see the report, and it is a subject on which I have already asked questions.

Mr. Robert Banks: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the operation of the national lottery will have an effect on pools companies? Will he carefully examine ways in which we could level up the marketing activities of pools companies with those of the national lottery, bearing in mind the excellent work done by the Football Trust? Will my right hon. Friend investigate that matter, so that a decision on advertising and other factors will be based on a level playing field?

Mr. Brooke: The levelling up that my hon. Friend described was widely discussed when the National Lottery etc. Bill went through the House, and a series of concessions were made to pools companies at that stage —sufficient to secure all-party support when the Bill received its Third Reading. The matter has already been widely considered, but I notice that it has re-emerged.

Regional Film Production

15. **Ms Quin:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what new proposals he has to encourage television and film productions in the regions.

Mr. Brooke: Following the round of consultations that I held last year with different sectors of the film industry, I am considering a number of proposals aimed at encouraging investment in British film production. I will announce the Government's conclusions in due course. However, it is for individual film and television producers to decide where they wish to make their films or programmes, and it would be inappropriate for the Government to offer financial or other inducements favouring one region over another.

Ms Quin: In his consultations, did the Secretary of State come to realise the concern that exists in the regions and in Britain as a whole about the way in which we seem to be losing out, in film opportunities, to other parts of Europe? For example, Scotland lost a film to Ireland and a film about Cornwall was shot in North Rhine-Westphalia because of German support for the film industry. Does the Minister believe that there should be roughly equal terms for film-making throughout Europe?

Mr. Brooke: I am aware of a number of the issues that the hon. Lady mentioned. I am glad to say that last year the number of films made in this country increased and the papers this very weekend contained news of the massive recruitment of extras in the Fort William area to make one film and in Barmouth, Wales for yet another forthcoming production. I agree with the hon. Lady, however, that, just as we have no interest in asserting one region over another within the United Kingdom, it would be desirable if that did not happen in Europe either.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Archbishops' Commission

30. **Dr. Spink:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, representing the Church Commissioners, if he will make a statement on the Church Commissioners' response to the recommendations of the Archbishops' Commission on the organisation of the Church of England.

Mr. Michael Alison (Second Church Estates Commissioner, representing the Church Commissioners): The Turnbull Commission is not expected to report before summer 1995. The Church Commissioners stand ready, with an open mind, to respond to its recommendations.

Dr. Spink: I thank my right hon. Friend for that answer. Does he welcome the clarification by Prince Charles, reported in *The Times* today, that he would not wish to change the coronation oath and that he supports the establishment of the Church of England? In view of the General Synod's vote in York today on the disestablishment of that Church, does my right hon. Friend think that it would be regrettable if the Church were seen to be trying to distance itself from moral issues, society and even politics at this time when we need it so much?

Mr. Alison: Like my hon. Friend, I am delighted to hear of the positive endorsement by the Prince of Wales of establishment for the Church of England. I very much hope that that Church, which, as my hon. Friend pointed out, is debating those issues in York at its General Synod, will endorse the attitude of the Prince of Wales and will underline and support the existing close and constructive links between Church and state, which bring appreciable benefits, both spiritual and material, to both communities.

Funeral Fees

31. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, representing the Church Commissioners, if he will make a statement on the future level of clergy fees for funerals and their relationship to the Church Commissioners' contribution to the overall stipend.

Mr. Alison: The commissioners have prepared a draft parochial fees order, to take effect from 1 January 1995, which will be presented to the General Synod today and which, it is believed, will result in fees representing a more realistic contribution to the costs of the Church. Fees payable to the clergy fund about 7 per cent. of the total stipend bill, but that bears no direct relationship to the annual sums that the commissioners make available towards stipends.

Mr. Hughes: The right hon. Gentleman has not told the House the position, which is that the proposal means that fees for funerals are likely to increase by three times, from £50 to £150, which is nothing short of appalling for many poor parishioners. Will the right hon. Gentleman make it absolutely clear to the Church that it is not right that, because of the Church Commissioners' mistakes, the poorest in society should be charged more to bury their dead?

Mr. Alison: I do not recognise the hon. Gentleman's figures. Fees are due to increase, on average, by 28 per cent. The total fee for a funeral service is set to rise from £43 to £55. The fee for a burial in a churchyard is significantly less than that for a burial in a local authority cemetery.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that clergymen will always take into account the needs of poor people, whether in regard to fees for funerals or to anything else? Will he also ensure that clergymen conducting funerals, especially on a conveyor basis at crematoriums, know the sex of the person who is being buried and take more care to ensure that the service is genuinely spiritual, which is what it is intended to be, but so often is not?

Mr. Alison: My hon. Friend has presented a horrific scenario involving "conveyor belts" at crematoriums. If he is prepared to carry out a personal survey of crematoriums throughout the metropolis and let me have a report, I shall be glad to arrange for a proper evaluation of the survey.

Ordination Of Women

32. **Mr. Frank Field:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, representing the Church Commissioners, what cost has been incurred so far and what is the estimated cost 20 years hence of the compensation measures following the ordination of women Measures.

Mr. Alison: The total cost of the financial provision over the next 10 years for the number of clergy expected to have resigned by the end of this month—July 1994—is estimated to be £7.5 million. We are unable to estimate the total cost over 20 years, as that will depend on how many clergy have resigned by the year 2004.

Mr. Field: Will the £7.5 million—if that figure is accurate—be paid by the commissioners or by individual dioceses?

Mr. Alison: That will depend on the extent to which it becomes a real cost. The sums expended will naturally result in sums being saved, because stipends will no longer be payable to those who have resigned. We shall have to make a precise assessment of the net position, but the contribution made by the Church Commissioners to all the dioceses is viewed as a global entity. I think that it would be impossible to specify the net figure that we are discussing within that entity.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Public Record Office

38. **Mr. Lidington:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will make a statement about the Government's policy concerning charging for access to the Public Record Office.

The Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department (Mr. John M. Taylor): The Public Record Office recently completed its report on its services and charges. The Lord Chancellor will make a decision about the report's recommendations in the autumn, when he has considered the views of his advisory council on public records.

Mr. Lidington: Will my hon. Friend place in the Library a copy of the survey of users of the Public Record Office, so that it is available to right hon. and hon. Members? Will he and the Lord Chancellor continue to bear in mind the fact that many scholars and other users of the public records have low incomes, and should not be inconvenienced by the prospect of a high charge?

Mr. Taylor: I am pleased to be able to tell my hon. Friend that copies of the main report will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses of Parliament.

Judicial Independence

39. **Mr. Hutton:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will make a statement about the independence of the judiciary.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The independence of the judiciary is a fundamental constitutional principle. The Lord Chancellor is concerned at all times to safeguard the independence of the judiciary and the judicial process.

Mr. Hutton: How can that statement be reconciled with the treatment earlier this year of Mr. Justice Wood, who was effectively forced to resign from the Bench after the Lord Chancellor's Department attempted to interfere directly with the operation of the employment appeals tribunal? Does not that prove—at least in respect of that case—that the Government's commitment to the independence of the judiciary is something of a sham?

Mr. Taylor: Certainly not. The Lord Chancellor was endeavouring to ensure that procedures put in place by this honourable House were followed by the tribunal in England and in Wales, as well as in Scotland. The Lord Chancellor made a full statement about the matter during a debate in the other place on 27 April; I recommend the *Hansard* report of that debate.

Mr. Tracey: I am sure that every hon. Member strongly supports the independence of the judiciary. Will my hon. Friend say something about arranging more conferences on sentencing, especially for magistrates, so that magistrates courts do not reach so many of the disparate decisions that throw the whole Bench into confusion and disrespect?

Mr. Taylor: I can tell my hon. Friend that the Lord Chancellor's Department gives judicial training the highest priority, as does the Lord Chancellor himself. We strongly support and encourage the work of the Judicial Studies Board, and of magistrates benches which arrange training for themselves.

Mr. Boateng: If the Minister and the Lord Chancellor are so concerned about judicial independence, will he tell the House why he proposes, in the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill, to enable industrial tribunals and social security tribunals to be put into the private sector? What possible benefit will that bring to the public? How can spending more than £500,000 in so doing be justified, and what safeguards will then exist for the independence of the judiciary?

Mr. Taylor: The technical scope of the legislation is narrow in respect of judicial functions. The Government have already amended it to acknowledge the constitutional position of judicial independence and they remain adamant that they will do nothing, whether in the context of the Bill or otherwise, that might erode the independence or probity of the judicial process.

Civil Litigation

41. **Mr. Ottaway:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will make a statement on the cost of civil litigation.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor is committed to reducing the cost of civil litigation, both to the parties involved and to the taxpayer. That commitment is demonstrated by the on-going implementation of the civil justice review and the establishment of Lord Woolf's review.

Mr. Ottaway: I welcome that reply, particularly as it is only a few weeks since the Master of the Rolls described the high cost of civil litigation as a cancer at the heart of the British judicial system. Is not the best way to reduce that high cost to lower lawyers' fees? To that extent, should not we generate a real market in lawyers' fees by insisting that they publish their fees? Would not it be in the public interest for large partnerships, which turn over hundreds of millions of pounds a year, to publish their accounts?

Mr. Taylor: Legal fees are a major factor in the high cost of litigation. My hon. Friend's proposal about publishing accounts is extremely interesting and the Law Society would find it interesting too, coming as it does from my hon. Friend, with all his commercial legal experience.

Legal Aid

43. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what plans he has to review the legal aid programme in civil cases.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor's Department is conducting a fundamental review of expenditure. That will cover expenditure in publicly funded legal services.

Mr. Steen: Is the Minister aware that the House is greatly concerned about the number of people who clearly should not receive legal aid under the civil list, as they have no right to do so, but who receive large sums of taxpayers' money to pursue or defend actions? Will the Minister ensure that an immediate review is conducted into the number of people receiving legal aid for civil cases when they should not be doing so? The public purse should not be paying for it.

Mr. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor's Department is conducting a fundamental review, which will cover the areas to which my hon. Friend refers. The issues that he raises are of great importance. As Members of Parliament, we all have a part to play in encouraging our constituents to complain if they think that there is a case where legal aid has been unmerited. Anyone can complain to the Legal Aid Board, and I would encourage people to do so.

Mr. Vaz: Will the Minister take the opportunity to deplore the action of Messrs Simmons and Simmons, the solicitors acting on behalf of the Sheik of Abu Dhabi, who have written to the Legal Aid Board to prevent former BCCI employees from obtaining legal aid? Is not it wrong that solicitors acting for a foreign Government should seek to deny British citizens the right to legal aid?

Mr. Taylor: The hon. Gentleman knows as well as I do that the solicitors' profession is independent and self-regulating, but there are mechanisms for complaints about solicitors' work and the hon. Gentleman will be familiar with those mechanisms.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: I understood that legal aid was given only to those who required assistance and who could not afford litigation without it. I find it astonishing that in

England it can be given, with impunity, to millionaires. Will the Lord Chancellor and the Attorney-General consider the matter, because it is a wrong on the public that the poor should pay for the rich to litigate?

Mr. Taylor: Anyone litigating in the English courts is entitled to legal aid, regardless of nationality, subject to a test of means and of the merits of the case. The Legal Aid Board is required by regulation to disregard in its means assessment of an application for legal aid all assets that are the subject matter of the dispute. That is because those assets cannot be considered the resources of the applicant while the ownership is in dispute. I am aware of the cases that have caused great concern. The Legal Aid Board is looking into them, and so will the Lord Chancellor and I.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Disestablishment

33. **Mr. Barnes:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, representing the Church Commissioners, what representations he has received since 29 June on the financial consequences of disestablishment of the Church.

Mr. Alison: None.

Mr. Barnes: It is a bit surprising that there was not one letter, following Jonathan Dimbleby's interview with the Prince of Wales—one from the Prince himself. He obviously decided that he would write to the archbishop instead, withdrawing his initial position. Is not it a good idea that the Church should be disestablished? That would mean that everyone with different faiths and beliefs, and those with none, could begin to be considered within the state. It would be a particularly good idea for Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland, who could then see that the British state did not have an established church.

Mr. Alison: I do not think that any non-Anglican Church in the British Isles, in England and in Wales or in the United Kingdom is in any way disadvantaged by the establishment of the Church of England. On the contrary, all derive benefit from the close relationship with an historic and traditional source of Christian truth and teaching, which is orthodox and catholic in its sweep and embrace, and which is shared, endorsed and propagated by the Churches of every non-Anglican denomination in the British Isles.

Mr. Nicholls: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, whatever view one might take about the present soundness or doctrinal orthodoxy of the leadership of the Church of England, with an established Church, every English person has, as an automatic birthright, the right to belong to the Church of England? That is an extraordinary thing and if it were taken away by some of the more liberally persuaded people in the Church of England, a great national Church would be turned into nothing more than a tiny sect.

Mr. Alison: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. It must be borne in mind that there are probably as many communicant Anglicans in the House of Commons as there are members of the House of Laity in the General Synod. To that extent, Parliament is much more accessible to those whom one might call fellow travellers, who have sympathy with the Church of England. It is to the House of Commons—to colleagues here—that they look instinctively to express their views, their aspirations and their fears about the Church of England.

Churches (Pit Villages)

34. **Mr. Enright:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, what capital funds have been set aside to assist in church regeneration programmes in small pit villages.

Mr. Alison: The commissioners' primary duty is to manage their assets for the benefit of the clergy, both serving and retired. There are therefore no funds set aside specifically for the purpose to which the question refers, although our financial support for the clergy is concentrated on the needier dioceses—for example, Wakefield, which covers the hon. Gentleman's constituency—where such villages are often situated.

Mr. Enright: Does not the right hon. Gentleman find it odd that a small congregation in Kinsley, which has inherited a down-at-heel, broken-down church and is trying to put it to rights, is having immense difficulty in getting funds from the Church while it sees funds easily going to those who have opposed the ordination of women? Is not there some imbalance there?

Mr. Alison: It is always possible to find one head of expenditure which sits uneasily with other heads of disbursement or with other heads of cost. Looking at the picture in the round, it is true to say that as much money as possible is allocated to poorer dioceses, such as the diocese of Wakefield, to help churches such as the one to which the hon. Gentleman has referred. I give him a personal undertaking, especially in the light of our brief exchange in the Tea Room earlier, that I shall approach the Bishop of Wakefield, if the hon. Gentleman will give me details of the church with which he is particularly concerned, to see whether we can help in the obviously strained situation in the village which the hon. Gentleman has described.

Flying Bishops

35. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, representing the Church Commissioners, if he will make a statement on the pay and emoluments of flying bishops; from what date payments will be made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alison: The Bishop of Beverley and the Bishop of Ebbsfleet took up their appointments as provincial episcopal visitors on 7 March and 29 April respectively. Their stipends are £19,895 a year and are in line with those paid to suffragan bishops. They are also provided with housing.

Mr. Greenway: Will the flying bishops have a role in administering to the 139 clergymen who have left the Church of England following the decision to ordain women? How many more ordained clergymen are expected to follow them? Will those bishops, like all other bishops, have a relationship with members of the royal family?

Mr. Alison: Links with the royal family are not likely to arise in the case of the two provincial visitors. Some 66 clergy may be thinking of leaving the Church of England,

in addition to the 160 who will have resigned by the end of July. I am quite certain that those 66 who have not yet resigned but are thinking of doing so will be having interviews and taking pastoral advice from the two provincial bishops to whom I have referred.

Economic Summit (Naples)

3.30 pm

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): With permission, Madam Speaker, I shall make a statement on the Naples summit of 8 to 10 July, which I attended with my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary and my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. I have placed the communiqué of the seven-nation economic summit and the chairman's statement on the eight-nation political summit in the Library of the House.

The summit process is changing in two important ways. In 1991, I invited the then Soviet leader to join the seven for a meeting after the London summit. This practice was continued in 1992 and again in Tokyo last year. I discussed a new format with President Yeltsin in February. That was to invite Russia to become a full and equal partner in our political meeting. That was accepted and President Yeltsin's involvement brought an extra dimension to the political aspects of the summit. He made it clear that Russia will co-operate closely on the most difficult international problems, from Bosnia to North Korea; and he was warmly welcomed in that spirit.

The second change is that the summits are returning to the informality and free debate which characterised the early meetings 20 years ago. The move away from set-piece speeches and pre-scripted discussions made it the most wide-ranging summit which I have attended. We shall allow even more time for unscripted discussions next year at Halifax.

We spent some time discussing international institutions. Many of the main world bodies—the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions, for example—have been with us for nearly half a century. The world has changed enormously in that period and so have some, but not all, of our institutions. For example, the World Trade Organisation will take over as a permanent body in place of GATT, itself originally a temporary structure. But, generally, we concluded that we should think about further changes to those institutions which may be needed in the future. We need to decide how best to meet the huge tasks confronting the different parts of the United Nations and how to respond to new economic problems. We may need to revitalise those institutions. We shall all consider that between now and the summit at Halifax next year. If we conclude that changes are necessary, we shall begin the process of bringing them about. The summit countries alone cannot make those changes, but it is right for us to ask whether they may be necessary.

On economic matters, the summit built on the G7 countries jobs conference held in Detroit earlier this year. The world economy is now emerging from recession. At Naples, there was wide agreement on the policies that the G7 countries now need to pursue: free trade, flexible labour markets, deregulation, policies that help and encourage unemployed people back in to work, and investment in education and training. Those themes will be familiar to the House, because they precisely match the policies that this Government have been pursuing. They were all warmly endorsed by the G7.

Further trade liberalisation is an important part of the G7's strategy. The completion of the Uruguay round was a significant achievement that will increase trade and growth right around the world. We need the various agreements to be ratified by the end of this year. Thereafter, we should consider further initiatives on trade and on economic liberalisation.

The summit proposed additional debt relief for the poorest countries. That is something I have long been pressing for. At Naples, we agreed on two specific measures to help those countries facing special difficulties: first, more help with debt payments, taking the level of relief above 50 per cent.—to two-thirds and perhaps beyond; and, secondly, reductions in the stock of debt. We also agreed to explore ways of getting the international financial institutions to use their resources more effectively to help the poorest and most indebted countries.

Since I introduced the Trinidad terms initiative four years ago, 22 countries have benefited, with nearly $3 billion of debts written off thus far. The new proposals agreed at Naples will provide further help to lift a burden from some of the world's poorest countries.

We urged that there should be more help for the Palestinian authority, which is setting up an entirely new administration in Gaza and Jericho and needs to encourage new enterprises. Britain is contributing £75 million, bilaterally and multilaterally, over three years, including the extra help for running costs and technical assistance announced last week.

Likewise, in South Africa, Britain has allocated £100 million to transitional aid over the next three years. South Africa's re-entry into the economic mainstream could do much to revitalise southern and central Africa.

We also spent some time on Ukraine, where there is an evident need to restructure the economy. Given her position and size, it is important to have both a stable and prosperous Ukraine. The summit countries and the international financial institutions are keen to help that process, which must include reform of the energy sector. We are putting forward an action plan to close the Chernobyl nuclear plant, where there are continuing worries about the risk of another accident. Our plan will require reform by the Ukrainians as well as providing significant financial help from the west. We agreed also to replenish the nuclear safety account.

On the environment, the G7 were concerned about the slow progress in meeting the commitments made at the Earth summit in Rio, and agreed to speed this up. Britain itself has fully met her commitments under the action plan agreed after Rio by the Group of Seven. We have published the plans required under the climate change convention. We all agreed to report further progress at next year's G7 summit.

At the Commonwealth conference last year and the European Council in Corfu, I argued for more action by Governments to oppose transnational crime, drug trafficking and money laundering. This approach was strongly supported at Naples. Where necessary, we are urging countries around the world to introduce legislation to prevent money laundering.

Bosnia was discussed in my bilateral meetings with both the Russian and American Presidents and, of course, at the political summit itself.

Collectively and individually, our Governments will urge the parties to accept the Contact Group's settlement proposal. We are completely united on that point. There is a risk of a wider and more intense conflict if this opportunity for peace is not taken. Later this week my right

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hon Friend the Foreign Secretary, together with the French Foreign Minister, will visit the former Yugoslavia to impress this point on the parties.

We need assurances about North Korea's nuclear programme, including compliance with the non-proliferation treaty and with International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards. The summit supported the efforts of the United States and of South Korea to develop a dialogue with the north, and I hope that they will be resumed when North Korea has a new leader.

In Yemen, the recent, brutal civil war has left fears about the country's future stability. Iraq's support for the north has caused justifiable concern to our friends in Saudi Arabia and Oman, both of which border Yemen. The summit called on the Yemeni authorities to resolve internal difficulties without repression. We were concerned that Yemen would become a new source of instability in the region.

I have highlighted the key political and economic points of what was effectively two summits in one. Summitry has proliferated over the past 20 years. I believe that we need a critical approach to make the best use of these occasions. Many worthwhile changes are now taking effect, and the Naples meeting was much more valuable as a result. I commend the outcome of the summit to the House.

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): There is much in the communiqué that we welcome, and much on which the Prime Minister touched only lightly, if at all. In particular, we welcome the communiqué's strong emphasis on the need for action to create jobs, to promote growth and the increased wealth that that creates; to tackle the damage being done to our environment and especially the problem of Chernobyl, to which the Prime Minister referred, and to work with the Ukraine to remove its nuclear stockpile. I join the Prime Minister in urging acceptance of the settlement proposals for Bosnia since, unsatisfactory though some may think them, continued conflict could surely only be worse.

We were also pleased to see in the communiqué that a start is being made on the reform and modernisation of the World bank and the International Monetary Fund. After talking about third-world debt relief on Trinidad terms for four years, it may actually begin to happen on a wider basis.

However, does the Prime Minister acknowledge that for many in the developing world, money will still just be going around in circles with money freed by bilateral debt relief going to the World bank or the IMF instead unless steps are taken towards multilateral debt relief, building on the approach already adopted?

Although the Prime Minister spoke this morning of the advantages of increased international trade, does he accept that unless we find some way of oiling the financial wheels and promoting international support for the economic reconstruction and development to which he referred—in South Africa, the middle east as well as in eastern Europe—it simply will not happen?

We welcome the reference in the communiqué to the fresh allocation of special drawing rights for which the IMF and the new members from eastern Europe have called. However, can the Prime Minister tell us anything about the time scale for that decision and what discussions were held on other measures, perhaps, as in the past, financed from IMF gold stocks?

Will the role of the G8 be reviewed alongside the IMF and the World bank, as John Smith urged earlier this year, exploring the idea of an Economic Council of the United Nations alongside the Security Council and drawing in therefore, as the G8 at present fails to, other major economic players such as China and South America?

The Prime Minister's principal contention in what he said about the economic summit is that the rest of the world is following Britain's lead and that this because of our proven economic superiority. I can only describe that observation as self-deluding since it is supported neither by the words of the communiqué—and I urge Conservative Members to read the communiqué in the Library—nor by the facts.

As anyone who reads the communiqué will discover, it calls for the co-ordinated pursuit of growth, job creation, skills enhancement, support for innovation and infrastructural renewal. Those are all Labour party policies since before the last election and they were all denounced by the Prime Minister as irrelevant and wrong. That leads one to wonder why he signed a communiqué which calls for precisely those measures.

The Prime Minister should recognise that, if those words in the communiqué that he signed are to be more than empty words, a complete change of British Government policy will be required. Is it not the case that, far from endorsing the Government's recipe of never-ending deregulation and lower wages, in the discussions the American Secretary of Labour called it "part of the problem not part of the solution"—and that, although there is a call in the summit communiqué to reduce employment costs, this Government have increased them by pushing up national insurance and loading sick pay costs on employers?

The Prime Minister must also be aware that the truth is that, while all our competitors are keeping, and in some cases increasing, minimum wage protection—for example, in France and in some parts of the United States—and bringing measures like extra family leave into train, their record on growth, skills and job creation is better than ours.

Is not the real message of the communiqué that our more successful rivals are pursuing, not the policies of this Government, but the path that we advocate? The Prime Minister and his colleagues show every sign of failing, yet again, to understand why they are failing Britain.

The Prime Minister: I must say that that was a very novel interpretation, on which I shall comment in a few moments.

I welcome the support that the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) offered on a number of proposals in the communiqué relating to jobs, energy, environmental matters and on the approach that we are proposing on Bosnia. I also welcome what she said about the Trinidad terms. A substantial amount of debt has been written off already, but there is further to go. Some countries have been resistant to implementing the Trinidad terms, but I think that the Paris Club can now move ahead as a result of the agreement reached at the G7 in the past few days. That will be immensely helpful to many poor countries.

As the right hon. Lady intimated, there are other ways of helping poor countries. It was rather masked in the

arcane language of the communiqué, but we looked at using the IMF's gold stocks to assist not only the very poorest countries in the world, but areas such as Gaza and South Africa, where there is a self-evident need for help. That is a wise way for us to proceed. In terms of job creation in those countries, the opening of markets, the liberalisation of trade and the elimination of debt will all provide an incentive for growth that will show within those countries—providing we are able to proceed with those proposals.

The right hon. Lady then moved on to other matters and quoted rather selectively from the communiqué. Alas, she missed some points, such as a number of structural measures to reduce labour rigidities, which add to employment costs or deter job creation, eliminate excessive regulations, which will ensure that indirect costs of employment are reduced where possible, and to pursue active labour market policies. The right hon. Lady's eyes apparently skimmed past a range of other things as she quoted from the communiqué. If she thinks that all those measures are Labour party policies, my hon. Friends and I will be very pleased to have learnt, at last, what it is that the Labour party stands for in terms of economic policies.

As for the right hon. Lady's concluding remarks about the relative performance of the United Kingdom, that is an old ground of dispute between us. I do not agree with her interpretation, because there is no doubt that our country is leading the European Community out of recession—there can be no doubt about that, because our growth this year is likely to be twice as high as that of any other European Community country. I find it astonishing that, when this country is doing well and companies and the work force are doing well, that is something that the Opposition appear to regret deeply. I am sorry to learn that.

I must tell the right hon. Lady that we are leading the country and Europe out of recession. It is extremely good news for the world economy that the American growth now exists, that the Germans are now out of recession and that the G7 as a whole is moving back into growth by following the sort of policies that have brought this country out of recession, and not the policies that the Opposition advocate, which would take it straight back into recession.

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): Does my right hon. Friend accept that he did an excellent and workmanlike job for Britain at the Naples summit? He is to be congratulated on it. Like my right hon. Friend, I hope very much that the Contact Group will succeed in bringing peace of some kind to Bosnia. Can he explain why the Serb Bosnians should cease their fighting, after a 100-year ambition to expand their areas of control, when they have an unending supply of arms and equipment from Serbia proper? Has not the time come, particularly as Mr. Yeltsin is more on side now, to strengthen the embargo against Serbia proper in all sorts of ways? That would bring home to the Serbians and Serbian Bosnians that they cannot go on defying world opinion and that they must come to the peace table with everyone else.

The Prime Minister: In his last few words, my right hon. Friend set out clearly the message which my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary and the French Foreign Minister will take to the Serbs in the course of the next few days. It must be made clear to Serbia that Serbia and the next generation of Serbians have no future unless they are prepared to come to an agreement that is satisfactory to the world community. They cannot continue as they are and they can certainly expect no relaxation of sanctions or any international help until and unless they reach an agreement that will bring the fighting to an end.

For some time, both the Serbians and, on occasion, other parties have moved away from the settlement that could have been reached in the belief that, if they waited, they would get a better deal in the future. There is now no doubt that the international community is determined to do whatever it can to enforce a settlement. I find it striking that each of the political heads of the G8, including the President of Russia, were determined that now was the opportunity to put every conceivable pressure on all the parties to come to a satisfactory settlement.

Sir David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): Does the Prime Minister acknowledge that the forthcoming mission of the Foreign Secretary and the French Foreign Secretary, backed by President Yeltsin, to try to persuade the warring parties in Bosnia that they must accept the peace settlement, however imperfect, deserves the united support of this House?

On the economic section of the communiqué, will the Prime Minister forgive me if I do not quote bits of Liberal Democrat policy in its support, following the pattern already set? On the institutional changes contemplated in the world financial bodies, will he assure us that he will also look at their lack of accountability to member Governments and member Parliaments for the policies that they pursue?

Finally, does the Prime Minister accept that, although the communiqué is less specific than his statement, we welcome the new debt relief proposals that he has achieved? He will know that the all-party Africa caucus lobbied the Chancellor before the meeting, and he saw us last year. We are deeply grateful for the progress that has been made. It will certainly bring widespread relief to at least six of the poorest countries in Africa.

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for his final point. As soon as we have moved a little further with debt relief, we need to look again at the countries that are eligible for it. Some countries fall on just the wrong side of the debt relief line currently available under the Trinidad terms, but those countries may be helped by the point which the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) asked me about—the proceeds of institutional gold sales by the IMF. That would not necessarily be restricted to Trinidad terms countries.

On the institutional changes, accountability certainly needs to be examined. That is perfectly clear. The underlying reason for that examination is simply to determine whether, after so many years, the institutions themselves are still relevant to the problems that are likely to face us in the next 10 or 15 years. By "institutions", I mean not only the Bretton Woods institutions—the IMF and the World bank—but we need also to look at the United Nations, the development of NATO in the light of "Partnership for Peace", and the enlargement of the European Union, as well as the changes that we have already seen with GATT becoming the World Trade Organisation. Those are not matters which the G7 can determine but, in all those institutions, the G7 countries are leading members.

If we decide that there needs to be some reform, at that stage we shall wish to consult other members of those

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institutions in an attempt to bring about the reform. But I emphasise that the G7 does not see itself as a directorate that can impose those changes on the institutions. We are simply making the point that now is the time to examine them to see what changes are necessary.

I agree with what the right hon. Gentleman said about Bosnia and I am grateful for his support for the visit of my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Madam Speaker: Order. A number of hon. Members seek to question the Prime Minister. I am now looking for one brisk question each and, if I may, brisk answers.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): Was further consideration given to the extension of the non-proliferation treaty to those countries that have not signed it? Will Japan support any action that might be taken against North Korea if the situation deteriorates rather than progresses?

The Prime Minister: There was, in discussion, unequivocal support by all the G7 members, including Japan—and of course Russia as part of the G8—for the indefinite extension of the non-proliferation treaty in 1995.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): The summit communiqué reads remarkably like the election manifestos put out by my hon. Friends who are candidates for the Labour leadership—*[Interruption.]*—so, obviously, there are good things in it. In particular, I welcome the movement of the G7 into the G8, including Russia, and the arrangements for a very searching 50-year anniversary review of the institutions set up in Bretton Woods. On the question of aid, can the Prime Minister tell us what figure he hopes to put on the further concessions of debt relief as compared with the $3,000 million debt relief already gained?

The Prime Minister: I think that it is difficult to put a precise figure on it. I will examine the scope for further reduction, and I will write to the right hon. Gentleman with a figure. It will be a very substantial figure indeed, but I cannot immediately put a figure on it.

On the earlier points, I am pleased to have the right hon. Gentleman's support for the review of the institutions. I was a little surprised to hear of the apparent similarity between the communiqué and the manifestos of the potential leaders of the Labour party, which I have read with great interest—*[Interruption.]* I am not sure that my vote would swing the result—not least, though, alas, he is not with us this afternoon, that of the hon. Member for Kingston-upon-Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), who, despite what was in the G7 communiqué, said on 4 July:

"Deregulation has been an economic failure".

Mr. Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford): Notwithstanding my right hon. Friend's reply to the question of my right hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) about nuclear proliferation, does he agree that one of the biggest problems is that North Korea and China are at the apex of a chain of proliferation which has already taken place, and that many countries in the middle east, not least Iran, Iraq and Libya, have significant capability and within the next five or six years are likely to have a launch facility which will be able to strike parts of Europe? Does he agree that now is the time for us to accept that proliferation has to some extent failed, and to find new measures?

The Prime Minister: I am disinclined to accept the concept that proliferation has failed because I think that it is extremely important that we press the case for non-proliferation whenever and wherever we have the opportunity. It is not always entirely clear precisely who has the capacity to launch nuclear weapons and who has them. I wish it were a good deal clearer than it sometimes seems to us. But there is no doubt that we need to maintain pressure. My hon. Friend mentioned a number of countries which we have been pressing precisely on this point. He could probably name others, and so could I. However, we intend to continue to press for non-proliferation both through the treaty and, of course, bilaterally.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): What did President Yeltsin say to his colleagues about sanctions against Iraq? How does the Prime Minister feel about continuing sanctions and the shortage of water filters and water pumps in the sweltering heat of Baghdad which will most certainly lead to massive disease in the Euphrates and Tigris valleys?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman knows of the humanitarian options that are available, and he and I have had the opportunity of discussing them in the past. President Yeltsin did not express a view on this matter, but Russia, of course, has supported the imposition of sanctions on Iraq, and continues to do so.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): Can my right hon. Friend tell us whether the Group of Seven considered the long-term economic impact on the rest of the world of the growing industrial strength of Asiatic countries, not only Japan, Korea and Taiwan, as it was, but now increasingly India, China and half a dozen other countries?

The Prime Minister: We did not specifically discuss those countries in that sense, but in all the economic discussions of employment and growth, the changing position of south-east Asia and the Pacific basin countries was ever present in our minds. Many of the countries that were relatively captive markets to western states 20 or 25 years ago are now not only competing with those previous supplier countries but competing very successfully with them in different parts of the world. That is one of the matters that I think underlies the concern that we have for the maximum amount of industrial efficiency in this country, because competitiveness is far greater as a result of what has happened in the Pacific basin than it has ever been before.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): The right hon. Gentleman mentioned the contribution that Her Majesty's Government are making to the rebuilding of Palestine. Would he be good enough to give the House some idea of what contributions his G7 colleagues are likely to make to that purpose, and does he consider them anything like sufficient for the immense job that faces President Arafat?

The Prime Minister: It is, as the hon. Gentleman says, an absolutely immense job. Apart from our bilateral contributions, there will be bilateral contributions of various sizes from a number of the other G7 countries, and

also a substantial collective contribution from the European Union. I shall write to the hon. Gentleman with details of the figures that we have.

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): May I return to the issue of non-proliferation in relation to nuclear matters? Was there any consideration at the summit of measures that it might be right for the G7 to take —and Russia to take—to encourage other sources of energy in countries that might be tempted to go nuclear precisely because they see nuclear power as their best chance for the future?

The Prime Minister: There was no discussion on that point—time did not permit detailed discussions on it. We are primarily concerned to make sure that the non-proliferation treaty is extended and that it sticks. As my hon. Friend will know, a large number of countries are at the moment disinclined to sign it; we are very concerned to make sure that they do.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Another summit, another jamboree. Why did not the Prime Minister tell us about the part of the communiqué that he had to deliver at the end of the summit in respect of those two Tory Members of Parliament with their noses in the trough?

On the subject of deregulation, why should big business have to carry the on-costs of lining the pockets of Tory Members to put down questions? In some of the other G7 Parliaments, the rule is: one Member of Parliament, one job only. If people cannot manage on £31,000 a year, they should not put up for the job.

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman no doubt thinks that these summits are enormous fun. Set against the attractions of a cricket final at Lords they do pale to a certain extent, at least for me. The matters mentioned, with his usual delicacy, by the hon. Gentleman were not discussed at the summit.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): When the Foreign Secretary goes on his crucial mission this week —we all wish him success in that—will he and his colleagues see President Milosevic, Mr. Karadzic and General Mladic together, to impress on them not only how seriously the G8 view their appalling actions but also the fact that those who are responsible for war crimes will be brought to book?

The Prime Minister: I am confident that my right hon. Friend will meet each and every one of those gentlemen, but I very much doubt whether he will meet them together. There are likely to be separate meetings. He certainly proposes to see the leaders of the Serbs and the Bosnian Serbs, and I have no doubt that he will make my hon. Friend's final point to them.

Mr. Peter Mandelson (Hartlepool): Did the Prime Minister, in one of his scripted or unscripted moments in Naples, discuss the presidency of the Commission? In his quest for anyone but Dehaene to succeed Delors, can he tell the House who now is in the frame and what qualities they have?

The Prime Minister: That too was not a matter for the G7 summit. There was no formal discussion at Naples of the Commission presidency—

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): Go on.

The Prime Minister: I shall repeat it for the right hon. Gentleman's benefit: there was no formal discussion in Naples of the Commission presidency. It would be wholly wrong for four member states to form a caucus. [*Laughter.*] The House is well aware of the objection that I took to that on a previous occasion when there seemed to be a caucus. What is needed is thorough consultation between all 12 states, and that is what the German presidency has in hand.

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): The conclusions of the summit properly recognised the importance to economic growth of deregulation and labour market reform—despite the somewhat spurious claims of the Johnnies-come-lately on the Opposition Benches. Would my right hon. Friend agree that, in a European context, subsidiarity is particularly important? Does he agree with Klaus Kinkel, the German Foreign Minister, who recently said that subsidiarity provides the opportunity to roll back European decision making? Is not that evidence that European decision makers are at last coming round to the British view on subsidiarity?

The Prime Minister: I certainly know that the German presidency proposes to take subsidiarity a good deal further during its presidency of the European Union in the second half of this year. I have not heard the particular quote by Mr. Kinkel, but it is certainly one to which I would subscribe, and it is an indication of the extent to which the terms of debate in Europe have changed.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): If the Government think that they are dragging us up the economic hill, taking the G7 countries behind us, who took us down in the first place?

The Prime Minister: One might ask the same question of all the G7 countries which suffered recession.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): In three weeks' time, the Bank of England will be celebrating 300 years of survival. Does my right hon. Friend agree that the best news to come out of the summit is that the G7 central banks, and the Bank of England in particular, would no longer be required to chase the US dollar all over the Pacific?

The Prime Minister: The tercentenary of the Bank of England is a remarkable occasion: the bank has been an astonishing institution over the years. My hon. Friend makes his point with great clarity.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): Virtually the whole House will approve of the G7 putting up the money to close down Chernobyl nuclear power station. When is that likely to come about? There are other nuclear power stations of similar design in the former Soviet bloc. Will money be put up to close them down as well?

The Prime Minister: We have reached agreement on the way to help the Ukrainian authorities to close the Chernobyl plant. That involves closing the remaining reactors and assisting to complete new reactors with modern safety standards. That will now have to be discussed with the Ukraine. That will happen speedily, and I hope that the resources can then be made available. We have centred on Chernobyl because of the nature of that reactor and its condition, which is one of the special concerns.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): Given that much of the nervousness in world financial markets appears in part to be due to worries about long-term inflation, what discussion took place on inflation prospects? Were other countries present able to point to the good news on inflation such as that we had today on factory prices?

The Prime Minister: Yes, there was some discussion on inflation. There is no doubt that at the moment inflationary tendencies are subdued, not just in this country but in other countries. It is certainly the intention of the G7 Governments, as far as it is practicable, to keep inflation at the lowest possible level. I hope that that will have its long-term impact on the markets as soon as it is apparent to them that that is happening.

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): The news that the United Nations and its organisations and the international financial institutions are to be reviewed is welcome, but is not this a matter of such importance that it would be appropriate for the Government to issue a consultation paper so that there could be widespread debate in this country on those matters?

The Prime Minister: We first have to consider the matter ourselves. I shall consider the hon. Gentleman's point. I am not immediately attracted to issuing a White Paper. I think that the first process is for us to consider as a Government—and I accept that it is certainly a reasonable matter for a debate in the House—whether we think that changes are necessary and, if so, what they might be. However, I would prefer to engage in discussion with other Governments before deciding what to press for. Although I hope that other people would not hesitate about letting us have their views, I am not at the moment attracted to publishing a White Paper.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): May I draw attention to the pressure, according to the communiqué, that the G7 countries and Russia are putting on the Haitian junta to step down? In his campaign for democracy and human rights, will my right hon. Friend bear in mind the last Latin American republic that has still not returned to democracy and human rights—Cuba?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is right: Haiti is a matter of some concern to a number of countries and, of course, particularly, for self-evident reasons, to the United States. We should certainly like to see the restoration of President Aristide and democratic government. That is equally the view of the other G7 Heads of Government.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): The Prime Minister spoke of the concern of the G7 Governments for the poorest in the world. Was he able to tell them when his Government would reach the UN target of 0.7 per cent. of GNP for overseas aid?

The Prime Minister: No Government was able to give a commitment as to when that would be. As the hon. Lady knows, I think that we have the sixth largest aid programme in the world. I think that our record is unequalled by any other country in terms of the amount and speed with which we have completely written off historic debt.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): I believe that my right hon. Friend said that South Africa was discussed at the summit over the weekend. Will he confirm that it is imperative that the G7, rather than just the United Kingdom, contributes to ensuring the economic development and regeneration of South Africa? If that country succeeds economically, the trickle-down effect across the whole continent will be of great benefit.

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend. There is no doubt that other countries also recognise the importance of South Africa. In effect, they recognise that in two ways—the importance of dealing with the internal difficulties of the new South African Government; and, equally, the impact of a successful South Africa on the whole of southern and central Africa. I have no doubt that other countries will offer assistance. My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of trade is currently in South Africa, with business men, to determine what assistance can be given.

Mr. Geoffrey Hoon (Ashfield): In his statement, the Prime Minister suggested that the G7 supported his Government's calls for flexible labour markets. However, was it not the case that in the final communiqué other members of the G7 insisted specifically that the word "flexible" was not part of the final words? Is not that because they have quite a different view from Government policy on the best way to create jobs?

The Prime Minister: I am not sure where the hon. Gentleman heard that, but it did not occur in any discussion to which I was party.

Mr. Ian Bruce (South Dorset): Following directly from the question asked by the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Hoon) about job creation, did not the G7—now G8—countries discuss the introduction of an information super-highway? Did not they have before them the European Commission's White Paper on growth, competitiveness and trade? If so, were not they surprised that it is full of the British solution to introducing an information super-highway, which is competition, deregulation and privatisation?

The Prime Minister: That White Paper was referred to in the discussions, although the super-highway was not mentioned other than in the general sense of greater liberalisation of telecommunications.

Ms Glenda Jackson (Hampstead and Highgate): Will the Prime Minister tell the House why the G7 nations cannot bring pressure to bear on the International Monetary Fund and the World bank on the issue of accountability? Will pressure be brought to bear on the IMF and the World bank to ensure that in future developing nations will be genuinely treated as equal partners and not as beggars?

The Prime Minister: I do not think that the IMF views indebted countries in that fashion. It tries to assist them and to help them out of their difficulties. That is one of its purposes. Certainly those IMF officials whom I have met would not in any way characterise the countries in the way that the hon. Lady described them.

There is no doubt that there is a need for assistance for those countries. I believe that the IMF provides it. However, as we examine the future of the IMF and other institutions, we need to consider whether that can be done better in the future than it has been done in the past.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): Although the whole House welcomes the trade and aid policies being

pursued by the European Union towards Gaza and Jericho, does my right hon. Friend agree that the responsibility for helping those parts of the world goes much wider than just Europe? Was any estimate made of the contribution that the oil-rich Arab states could make to the regeneration process?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend touches upon an important point. There is no doubt that the Arab states—many, although not all, of which are oil-rich—should make a significant contribution to the future development of Gaza. That point is relevant— *[Interruption.]* I hear an Opposition Member whispering that some of them have already committed—

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Some of the money has gone.

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman interrupts me. An Opposition Member whispered that some of the Arab states have already contributed. Others have indicated that they will do so.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Was there any discussion of the urgent need to provide continuing financial assistance to those countries most heavily affected by the imposition of United Nations sanctions against Serbia and Montenegro? The Prime Minister will surely agree that Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary and Macedonia deserve continuing assistance.

The Prime Minister: There was no specific discussion of that matter, for the simple reason that the international financial institutions take that into account in the assistance that they provide at present.

Mr. Michael Bates (Langbaurgh): Is my right hon. Friend aware that news that the considerable needs of the poorest nations of the world featured so high on the agenda of a meeting of the richest seven nations will be deeply refreshing to many people throughout the country? Will he ensure that the review of international institutions, which is long overdue in the eyes of many, will specifically examine the costs of bureaucracy and duplication so that the maximum amount of money can go to those who need it most?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is entirely right about that. In providing further assistance to many of the poorest countries, there is a need not only for cash assistance—and I do not resile from the fact that much of that is necessary—but to do whatever can be done to ensure that the money is used for the purposes for which it was intended.

Mr. Michael Connarty (Falkirk, East): Did I hear the Prime Minister make a fleeting reference to unemployment and employment creation? If I did, does the right hon. Gentleman accept Library statistics that show that, in Britain today, only 25 million people are in employment when the peak figure in 1990 was 26 million? We are 1 million jobs short. Will the Prime Minister give an assurance that, when the G7 nations discussed that matter, they did not settle on the part-time, low-wage, poverty-making employment that the right hon. Gentleman's Government have created? What will they do to provide real jobs at decent wages for people in G7 countries?

The Prime Minister: I have to say to the hon. Gentleman that he is completely wrong. Perhaps he would like to tell me how many countries have a higher proportion of their adult population in work than does this country. There is only one in the European Union, and the hon. Gentleman would go a long way outside to find another that is better. The drivel talked by his hon. Friends can safely be ignored.

Mr. Mike O'Brien (Warwickshire, North): Will the Prime Minister confirm that, either at the summit or in his bilateral discussions with President Clinton, he raised concerns about the fall in the US dollar and the impact that that would have on constituents such as mine who work at Jaguar who need to export to the US market?

The Prime Minister: No. I am not going to make any comments in the House on currency values.

Points of Order

4.16 pm

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Over the past two years, you have been vigilant on behalf of the legislature in holding the Executive to account in the House. Last week, the Department of Trade and Industry modified its policy in relation to naming an individual who is subject to investigation for insider trading. We are advised that there will be a further statement on the same subject this week by the Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs, the hon. Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton). Would not it be right and appropriate for such a statement to be made on the Floor of the House so that the Executive can be held accountable to us all?

Madam Speaker: The whole House knows my views on how, why and by what methods the Executive should be held to account on behalf of the people of this country through the House—but I have not been told whether a statement is to be made this week or at any other time.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You will have heard of the stories that appeared in *The Sunday Times* about a confidence trickster who came to the Palace of Westminster. I would describe him as an agent provocateur. Would the correct procedure for any hon. Member—

Madam Speaker: Order. I think that I can deal with this matter—I believe that I know the point that the hon. Gentleman wants to raise. I make it clear to the House that anyone who alleges that a breach of privilege has occurred should write to me without delay. I assure the House that I already have that matter under urgent and active consideration. I shall report to the House as soon as I can. The House will be the first to hear my statement. We must proceed.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley) *rose—*

Madam Speaker: I will take no further points of order on that matter. Is it a totally different point of order?

Mr. Riddick: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. Is it a different point of order?

Mr. Riddick: Yes, Madam Speaker. May I voice my strong support for the suggestion that an inquiry is set up into the—

Madam Speaker: Order. I have heard quite enough. I made my views known to the House. I repeat that I have the matter under urgent and active consideration. The House will know my views as soon as I have reached a decision.

Mr. Riddick *rose—*

Madam Speaker: Order. I will accept no further points of order on that matter.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington) *rose—*

Mr. Michael Connarty (Falkirk, East) *rose—*

Madam Speaker: Order. I am on my feet. I call Mr. Connarty.

Mr. Connarty: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. During Scottish Question Time last Wednesday, 6 July, as reported in column 304 of *Hansard*, the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) asked a question about power. I noticed that in the Register of Members' Interests that Member is paid a consultancy fee by Scottish Power and has a car from that company. My point of order is that Members should enter in the register the amount of money that they get—

Madam Speaker: Order. At Question Time hon. Members do not have to divulge their interests. I thought that that was known by the entire House.

Mr. Connarty: They should.

Madam Speaker: In that case, the hon. Gentleman must raise the matter with the Select Committee on Procedure.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose—*

Madam Speaker: Is it a different point of order?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: It is, Madam Speaker. Will you rule on a contradiction between two resolutions—a contradiction that will not be dealt with in any announcement that you might make to the House at any stage on the issue of privilege? One resolution was carried in 1695 and states that the House of Commons resolved that

"the offer of money, or other advantage, to any Member of Parliament for the promoting of any matter whatsoever, depending or to be transacted in Parliament is a high crime and misdemeanour"—

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has been in the House long enough to know that Speakers do not give procedural advice across the Floor of the House. If the hon. Gentleman writes to me, I shall be happy to give him the best possible advice, but I shall not proceed with the matter now. I have made my decision and that is final.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose—*

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must resume his seat.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On what basis does—

Madam Speaker: Order. It appears that the hon. Gentleman is concerned about a procedural matter—a matter that he alone is concerned about. He does not know what my eventual ruling will be. If he writes to me, I will give him procedural advice.

Mr. Connarty *rose—*

Madam Speaker: I have already heard a point of order from the hon. Gentleman.

Ms Glenda Jackson (Hampstead and Highgate): The chief executive of the Royal Free hospital trust in my constituency issued a statement on Friday, saying that residents of my constituency in the NW5 postal district would be excluded from that hospital's catchment area due to lack of central Government funding. As that flies in the face of the statement by the Secretary of State for Health—

Madam Speaker: Order. That is a totally bogus point of order. That is a matter not for me but for the Executive. It has nothing whatsoever to do with the Speaker of this House.

Mr. Connarty: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. During Scottish Question Time, the hon. Member for

Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) used the terms "corruption" and "dubious practice". In the light of the recent revelations, can you rule—

Madam Speaker: Order. Will the hon. Gentleman resume his seat? I have had enough bogus points of order for today. The House must wait for my ruling.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Is it a different point of order?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: You ruled, Madam Speaker, that matters of procedure should be dealt with in writing to you. I have never heard such a ruling from the Chair before in all my 14 years here. I have heard the ruling that matters of privilege should be dealt with in correspondence to the Speaker. Can I protect the rights of Back-Benchers by exercising my right to ask a question on an issue of procedure, not of privilege, and return to the subject of the two resolutions of the House in 1695 and 1974? One is on page—

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is raising a point of order that is allied to a matter that I have dealt with. I am the first to protect the rights of all Back Benchers and that is what I have done by my decision today. The hon. Gentleman must not pursue that matter.

Let me make one point clear: matters of procedure are not dealt with across the Floor of the House. My predecessors never gave advice across the Floor about the way to proceed. If the hon. Gentleman writes to me, I shall do my utmost to give him the right advice.

BILLS PRESENTED

Unfair Dismissal (Insolvency of Employer)

Mr. Harry Cohen, supported by Mr. Harry Barnes, Mrs. Ann Clwyd, Mr. John Cummings, Mr. John Fraser, Mr. John Garrett, Mr. Bruce Grocott, Mr. Norman Hogg, Ms Tessa Jowell, Mr. Chris Mullin, Mr. Dennis Skinner and Mr. David Winnick, presented a Bill to amend section 122 of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 so as to extend the awards of compensation for unfair dismissal which may be paid from the Redundancy Fund in the event of insolvency of the employer; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 15 July, and to be printed. [Bill 145.]

Road Traffic Reduction

Mr. Cynog Dafis, supported by Mr. Jeremy Corbyn, Mr. Paul Flynn, Mr. Dafydd Wigley, Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones, Mr. Elfyn Llwyd, Mr. David Jamieson and Mr. Simon Hughes, presented a Bill to require the Secretary of State to draw up plans in order to achieve certain stated road traffic reduction targets and the discussion of those plans in Parliament; to require local authorities to draw up local traffic reduction plans; and for related purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 21 October 1994, and to be printed. [Bill 146.]

LAW OF PROPERTY (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) BILL [LORDS]

Ordered,

That the Law of Property (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill [*Lords*] be referred to a Second Reading Committee.— *[Mr. Wood.]*

Orders of the Day

European Union (Accessions) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

4.24 pm

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. The Bill introduces a treaty whose provisions concern four applicant members joining the European Community. The provisions of the treaty are consequent on all four members' joining. If one of those members, or more—as a result of referendums—were not then to join the Community, what impact would that then have on this legislation and what consequent procedures would we need?

Madam Speaker: That is a very good question, which the Foreign Secretary may attempt to answer during the debate.

4.25 pm

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

It is quite neat for the Second Reading debate to follow the Prime Minister's account of the summit in Naples. One of the themes of that summit was the need for international institutions to adapt to changed circumstances. For the world has changed. Economies that were recently impoverished are now competing successfully with ours; we have a world without communism in which the socialist model of development is largely discredited, and a Europe without the Berlin wall in which the words "peace, freedom and democracy" have one meaning and not two.

Those are new thoughts. Have we really understood the implications of such changes for our institutions? We know how earthquakes happen: when the tectonic plates of the earth shift, earthquakes are followed by aftershocks, and it takes time for the terrain to stabilise and become familiar again. The international terrain is not stable now; it is not yet familiar again; the aftershocks are still with us.

We have already made important changes in our institutions. The Bretton Woods institutions mentioned by the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel)— the IMF and the World bank, which are 50 years old this week—are changing their role and their membership. The GATT is about to become the World Trade Organisation. NATO is adjusting to a new security landscape, reaching eastward through "Partnership for Peace". There is discussion about reforming the United Nations Security Council. The G7 is becoming the G8, and, I hope, is returning to its traditional format of the "fireside chat".

We have made all those changes, but we shall certainly need more. That applies—particularly this afternoon—to the European Union. Old certainties are changing; unthinking centralism is a theme of the past. Ideas and structures that made sense—good sense, perhaps—for the six original members will make no sense for the European Union of 20 members, or probably more, for which we are heading. That is why subsidiarity, respect for national traditions and diversity are growing themes for the future.

One such theme that is influencing the future of the European Union powerfully is the theme of enlargement. That will apply first to the four European Free Trade Association countries—Austria, Finland, Norway and Sweden—and then, I hope, will apply further east. That is why the Bill is important: it shows that the European Union recognises the need for change in its external as well as its internal affairs.

The Bill follows from the treaty of accession between the European Union and Norway, Austria, Finland and Sweden, which was signed two weeks ago in Corfu. It will ensure that Britain is able to honour the obligations laid down in that treaty; its passage is essential if we are to ratify the accession treaty and allow those four countries to accede to the Union. The Bill gives effect to the treaty in United Kingdom law by adding it to the list of Community treaties in section 1(2) of the European Communities Act 1972, and clause 2 also approves the treaty for the purposes of the European Parliamentary Elections Act 1978.

Let me now deal with the point of order raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow). Article 2 of the treaty allows for technical adjustments to be made if an acceding state fails to ratify. My hon. Friend made the reasonable point that each of the four applicants would need referendums in their own countries under their own constitutional procedures; one referendum has been conducted successfully, and three are awaited. But the people who drafted the treaty were aware of that point. That is why they provided in the treaty for technical adjustments to be made by the Council of the European Union if an acceding state failed to ratify.

Mr. Marlow: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for that helpful information. But the technical adjustments could affect the balance in qualified majority voting. Is there a formula that my right hon. Friend could introduce to the House? Or could the balance be changed during the technical adjustments—in which case what instrument would be introduced to ratify those adjustments?

Mr. Hurd: We shall certainly follow up that point. My hon.. Friend the Minister of State can deal with it at greater length in his winding-up speech. There is provision in the treaty to deal with that matter. If such action were needed, the Council of Ministers would make a decision, which would be followed by our own parliamentary procedure. Details of that procedure may be given by my hon. Friend the Minister of State. However, my hon. Friend's point has been covered in the treaty.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I am grateful to the Foreign Secretary for giving way, but it might be better to deal with this matter now. The Bill refers to the treaty on accession to the European Union, whereas the Act that joined us to what is commonly known as the Maastricht treaty referred only to titles II, III and IV of that treaty. Will the Secretary of State tell us why that formula was not repeated here, with reference only to titles II, III and IV —which of course have the legislative effect, as distinct from those under the prerogative of the Crown?

Mr. Hurd: We are advised that there is no need to do otherwise than is provided for in the Bill because there would be no effect in United Kingdom law. The Bill covers the points that it needs to cover and not others.

This is a short but significant Bill. I shall try to explain briefly why enlargement to cover the four countries will

substantially benefit Britain, our consumers and our businesses. The Bill and the treaty point the European Union in the right direction. We are showing by enlargement that we realise that half of Europe is not the whole of Europe—that the European Union is not an exclusive club but an extended family of nations. No family can shut out its members and stay at ease with itself. We should not treat our success in the European Union as a commodity that we hoard to ourselves. It is a model to emulate and a prize to be shared.

We have held that view in this country for a long time. No other Government have argued as forcefully as ours that the European Union should open its doors. No other leaders have argued as strongly as the Prime Minister and Baroness Thatcher that Europe is not an exclusive club.

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hurd: No. I should like to continue for a little while.

When we began the argument, it was very controversial. At first, it met stiff resistance. The hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) knows that because he has followed these matters and held more consistent opinions on them than most Opposition Members. He knows perfectly well that the idea of widening the Community jarred harshly with the old-fashioned idea that European construction came only by the steady centralisation of power in Brussels. The cry was, "We must deepen, we must not widen." Opponents of enlargement, who were strong at one time, saw it as an unwelcome distraction from the gradual centralisation of power. We had to argue at Maastricht—and we prevailed in the argument—that the treaty should include the right signal that any member state could apply to become a member of the Union.

Mr. Radice: It is true that the Government have been in favour of enlargement and I congratulate them on that, but it is a bit much not to acknowledge that the united Germany has always been in favour of enlargement as well. It was Mr. Kohl who said that the borders of the European Union should not end on the Oder-Neisse line, and he was right.

Mr. Hurd: Indeed, Mr. Kohl and the unified Germany have made that point; we were making it substantially in advance of that.

Mr. Radice: No.

Mr. Hurd: History shows that clearly.

We kept up the impetus on behalf of enlargement during the British presidency and at the European Council in Edinburgh in December 1992. That was when the decision was taken to open negotiations promptly with Austria, Finland, Norway and Sweden. At the same time, we held out the prospect of membership for the new democracies of eastern Europe. It was really no accident that it was our presidency that marked the decisive point in the history of enlargement.

Those four countries are, of course, all members of the European Free Trade Association. We in Britain thought for a time that the European free trade area would provide an alternative to membership of the European Economic Community—a way of having our cake and eating it. We saw it as a means of increasing trade and co-operation with Europe without having to give up any power to supranational institutions. After a year or so—I am talking of 30 years ago—we realised that that was an error and that a free trade area alone would not provide the European prosperity that we desired. We also realised that the European Community, with the powerful economies of Germany and France at its heart, was destined to be a major player in Europe and that it would not be to our benefit to remain outside. That is why, with the Danes, we left EFTA in 1972 and joined the European Community.

A number of European countries could not do that. The Norwegian Government wanted to join the EC, but the Norwegian people voted against membership in 1972. Finland's long border with Russia made it very cautious about provoking the Soviet Union by moving towards closer integration with western Europe. Then the plates shifted; the world changed. The cold war ended and the collapse of the Soviet threat allowed Finland and the other neutral countries—Austria, Sweden and Switzerland—to look again at their policies towards western European institutions. They no longer felt that they had to remain outside for security reasons and they began to weigh up the benefits of EC membership.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Can my right hon. Friend give us some explanation of what he understands by the word "deepening" in a European context? We want to know whether we are to welcome those four countries so that the European Union may be loosened up or whether we shall be told continuously that it is possible to have further deepening as well as enlargement and even that it may become necessary to have a single currency because we have more members in the European Union.

Mr. Hurd: I can think of several arguments for a single currency, but not that one. The two processes—deepening and widening—have to be considered separately on their merits. What we rejected in the early days was the idea that we could not enlarge because we had to spend all our time deepening. The two things are entirely separate. What we are dealing with here is enlargement. The treaty of Maastricht is the basis on which the Community will rest for the next few years. What we are discussing now is the extent to which the Community should be enlarged on that basis.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): May I none the less coax my right hon. Friend into agreeing that the striking feature about the four countries now joining, subject to the referendums, is that they have all strongly reiterated their adherence to deeper integration as the only way in which to take the Community forward? They have all said that with great emphasis in all their official statements.

Mr. Hurd: Before I close, I shall analyse rather more clearly what the role of the four countries is likely to be. I shall spend a little time on that before I conclude.

I was talking about what happened when the cold war ended and how that altered the view of the four countries. Something else happened. Around the same time, or a year or two earlier, the member states of the European Community decided to form a single market. The Single European Act in 1986 marked a new stage in the development of the Community. Its businesses were gradually able to operate on a truly European scale for Europe-wide growth and prosperity. The EFTA countries rightly feared that they would be sidelined as business and

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investment were drawn to the greater opportunities then offered by the Community. That is why the EFTA countries joined the Community to form the European Economic Area which covered all the EFTA countries except Switzerland and virtually all the single market legislation of the Community.

So the four countries with which we are concerned today are already members of the single market. They have already taken on most of the European Community legislation in that area. The point that I am making, however, is that they are not satisfied with that. They have no real say in the drafting of new legislation which affects them. They have no seat at the table where it is decided and they are excluded from other areas of European policy—the common commercial policy, financial and fiscal policies, the intergovernmental pillars of the treaty of Maastricht, the work-together on foreign policy, and the work-together on Home Office matters such as the drive against crime and the drug trade.

Rather than settle for that second-class status in Europe, Sweden, Finland, Norway and Austria all elected to go the whole way for what they saw as the big prize: to take their place in shaping the future of Europe rather than allowing others to shape their future without them. They recognise that only by joining the European Union can they have a say in the decisions that affect the whole of Europe, and that only by taking their seats at the European table can they truly play a part in Europe's future.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): I could use the same arguments about sitting at the top table in the context of Scotland. The four countries that we are discussing have already achieved economic convergence with the European Union. But the Foreign Secretary talks about further enlargement. What kind of time scale is envisaged and what kind of criteria will be used for the emerging democracies?

Mr. Hurd: Poland, Hungary, Cyprus, Malta and Turkey have applied, but we are not negotiating with them at present because it will be some time—they accept this—before they are qualified. Qualification means being political democracies—they are all political democracies—and it also means being economically qualified to take on the treaty's competition rules about state aids. It will take some time. I do not believe that the next stage of enlargement to full membership is likely to be completed in this century, but that is a matter for discussion. There has been no decision on timetables.

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): Will my right hon. Friend address the preamble to the question asked by the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing)? Does he not see how integration with the European Union is being used by the Scottish nationalists to destabilise the integrity of the United Kingdom, and that they are campaigning for an independent Scotland in the European Union? Does he not see how our integration with the European Union gives credibility to those arguments?

Mr. Hurd: I have been hearing those arguments for ever. They make no sense and I am amazed that my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) should pay such attention to them. The idea that it makes sense for Scotland to detach itself from the United Kingdom, and therefore from our membership of the EU, and the idea that it would be an easy or pain-free operation to then knock on the door in a completely new set of clothes and say, "This is little Scotland wanting to come in", is simply unreal. When that issue is explored before a Scottish audience, I find that the assembly argument disintegrates quite quickly. I hope that all of us who disagree with it and who wish to preserve the Union of this kingdom will not give the idea the kind of credence which, unfortunately, my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North seems to be bestowing on it.

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Hurd: No. I want to get on. I see my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) leaning forward in his seat, but I must get on because many right hon. and hon. Members wish to speak.

We are not yet at the point where the process is complete, because of the issue of referendums, which my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North raised a few minutes ago. The Austrian people voted on membership a few weeks ago. They were submitted to the usual mishmash of views on and criticisms of Europe—some, alas, perfectly true and others mythical. Having been exposed to that for a number of weeks, a resounding majority voted in favour of membership. The last fling of the "no" campaign was the accusation that, in future, yoghurts would contain Spanish beetles as colouring matter, and that that was not a price that the Austrian people should pay for joining the Union. As a result of that clash of opinions, they voted in favour of membership. We were pleased to see that and pleased with the margin by which they did it. I cannot predict—obviously, it would be foolish to predict—the outcome of the remaining three referendums this autumn. Obviously, the Austrian result is hopeful and we hope that the Finns, the Swedes and the Norwegians will vote to join us.

The accession negotiations were certainly not always plain sailing, as the House will remember. All the parties concerned had important interests: all the applicant countries had important interests to protect and it was not easy to find a balance between them. The outcome in the treaty was a good deal for the applicant countries, a good deal for Britain and a good deal for Europe as a whole.

One of our many concerns, as we went into those negotiations, was a point that has already been touched on: the arrangements for how decisions should be taken—not the question of the national veto, which featured largely in the recent European elections in this country, because that was not at stake—in the provisions for qualified majority voting. We wanted to ensure that there would be a fundamental review of the QMV system in the 1996 intergovernmental conference. As the House knows, that was agreed. The conference will have to devise—it will not be easy—a formula which more closely reflects population levels in member countries but ensures that the rights of minorities are properly safeguarded.

During the discussions in the spring, we agreed finally on a legally binding arrangement, which requires the presidency and the Commission to take any initiative necessary to reach a solution supported by member states with at least 68 votes. We had a rough time on that. With the Spaniards, we pressed for stronger protection for minorities, whereas 10 member states resisted anything

other than the automatic uprating of the figures which had occurred on earlier enlargements. Experience next year, when—we hope—the arrangement comes into effect, and thereafter will show how it works out. I am reasonably confident that, in practice, the compromise that we accepted will justify itself.

Certainly, the clarifications which we attained at the same time on the Commission's social programme have already proved their worth. I am clear that we would have scored a dramatic own goal if we had disrupted the whole process of enlargement because of a disagreement over the figures for qualified majority voting.

Mr. Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford): I should like to clarify the point that my right hon. Friend was making when he said that the arrangement was legally binding. He meant, of course, that it was legally binding in international law and not under the auspices of the European Court of Justice.

Mr. Hurd: It is the subject of a decision of the Council and, as the German Foreign Minister confirmed at the time, it is legally binding under European law. There are two documents—a declaration and a decision. The declaration is not legally binding and the decision—in jargon terms, the Beschluss—is legally binding.

Let me refer to the practical consequences of enlargement. Like us, Sweden, Austria and Norway will be net contributors to the Community budget. So they will share our interest in budget discipline and in value for money. Like us, they will want to ensure that Community funds are used efficiently. The fact that four relatively well-off countries will be coming into the European Union will reduce the amount that other countries, including Britain, will need to contribute to the budget. We expect our British contribution to be some £300 million sterling less over the first six years of accession than it would otherwise have been.

All four of those countries will, we believe, join us in arguing for a market-oriented, free-trading Europe, rather than the more protectionist "Fortress Europe" approach, which has its advocates in the EU. We steadily fight against that approach and we shall have allies in that argument.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr. Hurd: I shall get on a little and then I shall give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford.

In particular, the close ties that those four countries have with the countries in central and eastern Europe mean that, like us, they will want to see the benefits of the free market extended to the whole of Europe. I can give a practical example of that. Finland, Sweden and Norway already have free-trade agreements with the Baltic states—they are ahead of the European Union in that respect—but, because of accession, those trade arrangements with the Baltics will, from next year, extend to the whole of the European Union. That is a practical example of how the free-trade impulses of the new arrivals have already affected, for the better in our view, the trading arrangements of the rest of us.

We can also expect the four countries to support us in arguing for the vigorous application of subsidiarity throughout the Community. They have all applied to join the European Union because they believe, like us, that certain matters are best discussed at European level. But they all have strong traditions of democracy and independence and do not want to see the Community act in areas where decisions could best be made at national level. Like us, they believe that the European Union should be a union of diverse nation states, each preserving its own traditions and its own identity. They take the view that their accession will add to that diversity.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Does my right hon. Friend accept that the Scandinavian countries have a strong position—it is one that he has not mentioned—on social policy, trade union rights, consumerism, the environment, a single currency and on many other matters, including an obsession with the deutschmark, in respect of which we have taken a directly contrary view? Given our reservations about centralising and socialising tendencies in Brussels, we have sought to resist those tendencies, whereas the Scandinavian countries have an active policy of encouraging them.

Mr. Hurd: I have not yet mentioned those matters, because I gave way to my hon. Friend before I completed my speech. I wish now that I had let my hon. Friend make his own speech and that I had not given way to him. I shall touch on the matters to which he has referred as I continue, and I shall now continue.

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East) *rose—*

Mr. Gill *rose—*

Mr. Hurd: No, I shall not give way. I have had experience of several of my hon. Friends making their speeches in the middle of mine. Perhaps the House should have a clearer understanding of what I intend to mention before I am rebuked for not mentioning certain things. I can never resist my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor), however, and before I conclude I shall give way to him, but not now.

The four countries that I have mentioned will take—

Mr. Gill: I would ask my right hon. Friend to give way now.

Mr. Hurd: I shall give way to my hon. Friend and then I will bring my remarks to an end.

Mr. Gill: Before my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) intervened, my right hon. Friend was talking about the need for the countries that are now proposing to join the European Union to preserve their own national identity. Is he aware of the remark that the German ambassador to Moscow is reported to have made to the effect that national sovereignty is becoming irrelevant and meaningless, but that for all that many still cling to it? I accept that my right hon. Friend cannot be held responsible for what German diplomats say, but it is worth putting on record the fact that there are people in the German foreign department who apparently take a view that is contrary to that of my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. Many right hon. and hon. Members hope to catch the eye of whoever is in the Chair, and long interventions do not assist.

Mr. Hurd: I feel sad for my hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Mr.Gill) after his intervention. No, I am not responsible for what the German ambassador in Moscow says. I know what Chancellor Kohl says, and I have heard him say it more than once: he says that the old idea of a

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united states of Europe is not worth pursuing and will not work. Germany does not have exactly the same views as us on the way in which Europe should proceed. However, the ideas that gradually nations in Europe will disappear, that gradually centralisation will assert itself until there is one Executive in Brussels and one Parliament in Strasbourg or Brussels, are finished. Those who used to advocate them are either silent or in a small minority. They certainly do not appear in the four applicant countries.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow) *rose—*

Mr. Hurd: No, I shall get on.

The four countries have proud Parliaments and strong traditions of legislative scrutiny. They will consider carefully the implications of proposed Community legislation before they vote on it. Once legislation is in place, we can expect them to be diligent in implementing and enforcing it.

By joining us, they will increase their own international standing and influence and ours. Norway, of course, is an old friend and an old ally in NATO. The accession of the four countries to the European Union should not affect the strong Atlantic ties in Norway. The other three countries have a long tradition of neutrality. They have said, however, that they will take their full part in shaping common foreign and security policies. Whether they decide to join the Western European Union, which they can do but do not have to do, is a matter for them. They might prefer the status of observer, as have Denmark and Ireland. That is a good example of the multitrack Europe of which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and I have spoken recently.

Mr. Dalyell: Will the Foreign Secretary give way?

Mr. Hurd: No, I shall get on.

All four states, in their different ways, are outward looking with strong records of contributing to peacekeeping and generous aid programmes. Of course, we shall not always agree with the new members on all subjects. I have usefully been reminded that they may be tempted to support measures under the social chapter that we reject. I suppose that that is possible.

I must say, however, that the tide of opinion in Europe —and elsewhere, but especially in Europe—is now blatantly beginning to flow strongly in favour of competitiveness and against over-regulation. If the four countries were to join in supporting measures under the social chapter, we should be even more grateful for the opt-out that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister obtained at Maastricht, which would protect us in Britain. My hon. Friend the Member for Stafford would not be well advised to start opposing extension or enlargement of membership of the European Union because we shall not always agree with the views of those who join us.

There will be matters on which we differ occasionally, but having worked with my colleagues in the four applicant countries at the various meetings that they have attended in advance of enlargement, I do not doubt for a moment that the blend of enthusiasm and common sense that they bring to our discussions will strengthen the quality of the decisions that we take.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Will my right hon. Friend safeguard himself against over-optimism? Will he tell us—yes or no —whether the £300 million that he has said we might gain because of the proposed arrangement was estimated after or before the information that we received on Friday from the Treasury, which is in the Vote Office: namely, that our gross contribution in 1995 will increase by £2,000 million, which is £3 per week per family, and that agriculture expenditure will break through the legal barriers despite all the pledges and optimism, which I am sure my right hon. Friend entered into and displayed genuinely after the Edinburgh summit?

Mr. Hurd: I am writing to my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell), the Chairman of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs, on the general point about our contribution. I was asked about the matter only the other day in that Select Committee and I promised to produce figures, which I have set out in a letter to my right hon. Friend.

I was talking in the context of the Bill. The figure that I gave was the amount by which our contribution would be less than it would have been if the new states— [*Interruption.*] That was the point that I was making in terms of the Bill. I was saying that our contribution would be substantially less by the figure I gave—£300 million over six years—because of enlargement.

There are other practical benefits. First, our agriculture exporters will benefit from the opening of the previously highly protected agriculture markets of the four applicant countries. Our fishermen will have new opportunities in Norwegian waters from 1997 onwards. Those who manufacture alcoholic drinks—I hope that the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) will listen to this—will benefit from the opening of Nordic markets and the dismantling of state monopolies. Our hauliers will benefit from increased access to the crucial Austrian market following agreement that our quota for terminating traffic will increase. Our oil industry—especially the offshore supplies industry—will benefit from Norwegian acceptance of the European Union rules. That should mean new contracts and new jobs. Many of those points will be of particular interest to Scottish Members.

Mrs. Ewing: Will the Foreign Secretary give way?

Mr. Hurd: No. I have given way to the hon. Lady already and I shall not give way to her again.

Mrs. Ewing: My intervention will be on the points that the right hon. Gentleman has just made.

Mr. Hurd: No. I have already explained the benefits to Scottish fishermen that will flow from the arrangement.

I have no doubt that British business in the different sectors that I have mentioned will benefit—perhaps not hugely, but significantly—from enlargement. The significance of the arrangement goes wider than that, however. The accession of the four countries, with their strong democratic traditions, their prosperous economies, their international outlook and their commitment to an efficient and effective common-sense European Union, is a substantial step towards the outward-looking Europe that most people in Europe seek. It is a step towards dismantling the divisions of Europe, which belong to the cold-war era and which are out of date.

The enlargement will point the way towards closer links with the countries of central and eastern Europe and, indeed, their eventual accession to the European Union. We have believed very strongly, including those who have

been doubtful in the past about the course which the European Community—now the European Union—was taking, that it must be right for the European Union to keep its doors open to those who wish to join; that half Europe could not call itself the whole of Europe; and that where countries qualified, they should be allowed to enter.

Without any doubt, the four countries qualify. They are mature, established democracies. Indeed, it is patronising even to question that point. These countries have given Europe and the world many lessons in democracy and solid good sense. Having passed through intellectual changes as the world has changed around them, and as their security and economies are now on a different basis, they see that their future lies in full membership of the European Union.

We should welcome that, not because we will agree with them on every subject because of course we will not, but because the voices and interests that they bring and the contribution they will make to the future of the European Union will, I am sure, be abundantly worth while. I commend the Bill to the House.

5 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): It is a genuine pleasure to welcome the prospect of Austria, Finland, Norway and Sweden joining us as members of the European Union. Labour has long campaigned for their admission to the European Union. We made that commitment a long time ago and presented it to our conference in a policy statement last year. We reiterated our support for that goal in our European election manifesto which, as the House will recall, was massively endorsed by the people of this country on 9 June when we had a resounding victory, won the largest share of the vote and the greatest number of seats and made the most gains.

The Foreign Secretary did not find an opportunity to mention the European elections in his 35-minute speech and I am not surprised about that. He looked like a relieved man when he was eventually able to resume his seat having rediscovered the fault lines in his party.

The Foreign Secretary talked about earthquakes at the beginning of his speech. The biggest earthquake for the Foreign Secretary and his right hon. and hon. Friends was the result on 9 June—the worst performance by the Conservative party in any national election this century. Whatever else the Foreign Secretary can claim for his party's policies on Europe, he certainly cannot claim the endorsement of the people of this country.

That great victory for our policies, and those election results, give Labour a strong voice for Britain in Europe. We are the largest group in the European Parliament, with 62 Members. Our colleague Pauline Green has been elected overwhelmingly as leader of the socialist group, which is the most influential group in the Parliament. We hope that our friend and colleague Klaus Hänsch of the German SPD will soon be elected President of the Parliament. He has our wholehearted support.

We shall give all that power—*[Interruption.]* I am sure that I have the endorsement of the overwhelming majority of my right hon. and hon. Friends. We shall continue to use that power and influence in the European Parliament in support of our friends in Austria, Finland, Norway and Sweden and we continue to work in the party of European socialists, of which I have the honour of being vice-president, to that end. There is emphatic support in that organisation for the four applicant countries. Austrian, Finnish, Norwegian and Swedish social democrats are members of the party of European socialists. We have worked closely with them from the outset on their applications and we continue to do so.

We welcome four friends and countries with strong traditions of good government, and of strong social democratic government in many cases. Those countries regularly elect social democratic parties to govern their affairs. We welcome them also because at least three of them will be net contributors to the European Union budget. All four countries have good records on economic, social and environmental policy and all four are strong supporters of the social chapter. If their applications are successfully endorsed by their electorates, 15 out of 16 member states will strongly support a social dimension for the European Union. That is something that we, too, strongly endorse and which, I regret to say, further increases the isolation of the Foreign Secretary and his colleagues in their mulish objections to policies which, despite their standing on the touchline in a petulant way, the other members of the European Union are determined to see through.

Mr. Hurd: They are not doing very much about it.

Dr. Cunningham: The Foreign Secretary spoke a moment too soon. He should read the newspapers. A report of a meeting this weekend under the new German presidency, chaired by Norbert Blüm, should be drawn to the right hon. Gentleman's attention. Norbert Blüm makes it absolutely clear that, during the German presidency, they intend to press ahead with the development and deepening of the social dimension of the European Union.

That is the trouble with Bonn, of course. We used to be told in briefings from 10 Downing street that Helmut and John were chums. It now looks more like, "Auf Wiedersehen Helmut, bon giorno, Silvio", despite the latter gentleman's tendency to work with neo-fascists in Italy. I say to the Foreign Secretary, as I have said before in this House and elsewhere, that the Opposition want to make it absolutely clear that we want nothing to do with emerging fascism in Europe, whether inside the European Union or outside it. It is about time the Foreign Secretary made his own position, and that of his party, clear on that subject.

Mr. Hurd: There is a coalition in Italy which hosted the recent summit. There were several Ministers there, some from one party and some from another. All were freely and democratically elected, and all were elected on a particular programme which I do not think contains any elements of fascism. Is the right hon. Gentleman seriously saying that a Labour Government would not work with that Italian Government? I cannot believe that that is the case. No other Government in Europe are taking that view. Is that a view that the right hon. Gentleman would urge upon us? It makes no sense at all.

Dr. Cunningham: The Foreign Secretary is wriggling. He is avoiding the question and obfuscating the issue. I did not say that we would not work with an Italian Government. I said that we would not work with neo-fascists if they were part of one.

We have made our position clear in respect of the growth of right-wing extremism right across the European Union—in France, in Germany and, for that matter, here in London. We are implacably opposed to those people at

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every level. That is one reason why, in the face of the growth of fascism, xenophobia and racial intolerance in Europe, we have been calling for the designation of a Commissioner to deal with racial equality in Europe. It is also a reason why we shall continue to press for legislation on racial equality in the European Union.

Mr. Hurd: The right hon. Gentleman is moving off into total generalities. Is he advising Her Majesty's Government to boycott and have no dealings with the present Italian Government with their present composition?

Dr. Cunningham: No, I am advising the Foreign Secretary to have nothing to do with the neo-fascist members of that Government. That is no switch. It is exactly what I said at the outset.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Dr. Cunningham: I will give way in a moment.

We were talking about the Secretary of State's unfounded sedentary intervention that no progress will be made on social agenda policies in Europe.

Mr. Budgen: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Cunningham: Not for the moment.

The right hon. Gentleman's statement is a flat contradiction of all the evidence, including the most recent from the German presidency. The social dimension in Europe will continue to become more significant whether the right hon. Gentleman and his friends like it or not. If they want to continue to put their heads in the sand on this issue, let them do so, but they are not fooling the House or the people of Britain. They are fooling no one by trying to argue that the rest of Europe is coming round to their way of thinking. There is not a scintilla of evidence to support that vacuous assertion.

Mr. Budgen: If one Government were negotiating with another Government, could the right hon. Gentleman please explain the practicalities of how it would be possible for the British Government to say to the Italian Government, "We are prepared to talk to one Minister, but we are not prepared to talk to another"? How could that be done?

Dr. Cunningham: Quite easily, because we would make it clear that we would not be willing to participate in discussions with fascists. It is as simple and straightforward as that. It is interesting to note that right hon. and hon. Members on the Conservative Benches apparently feel quite comfortable with the idea of sitting down and working with fascists. They seem quite relaxed about that, but they should think about past failures. The Foreign Secretary gave a little history lesson at the outset of his speech, but he seems to have forgotten past failures to confront fascism.

The European Union has changed and is continuing to change. The Opposition want that process to continue. This is the fourth wave of enlargement to which we look forward. If all four applicants are successful, one of the world's largest trading areas, with an estimated output of almost $7,000 billion, will be created. The accession treaty agreed in March 1994, and signed by Heads of State and Government in Corfu, would become, for British constitutional purposes, one of the Community treaties, as defined in the section 1(2) of the European Communities Act 1972. The Bill will amend that Act to take account of the accession treaty and make the necessary changes in United Kingdom law.

As with the European Communities (Amendment) Act 1993, the Bill is—potentially, at least—amendable, but any amendment incompatible with the accession treaty could prevent United Kingdom ratification of the proposal. Such amendments will therefore not have the support of the Opposition. We do not wish to take any action that would impede the Bill's safe and swift passage. The Opposition, at least, want to ensure that we do nothing to prevent Austria, Finland, Norway and Sweden from becoming members of the European Union. We will do nothing that might jeopardise the referendums that will have to take place in three of those four countries. We applaud the huge success of Chancellor Vranitzky's campaign for a yes vote in the Austrian referendum and we hope that that success will be repeated in the other three applicant countries.

Sir Teddy Taylor: To avoid confusion in the referendums, was not the right hon. Gentleman a bit unfair to the Conservative Government in what he said about the social chapter? Has it not been made abundantly clear by the German presidency and by officials of the Commission that almost all of the social chapter will go through under laws related to health and safety in the Single European Act and the treaty of Rome? There will not be any problem about that and we shall all have to abide by those horrible social chapter laws whether we like it or not.

Dr. Cunningham: I agree in large measure with the hon. Gentleman. If anyone has any doubts about the intention of the German presidency, I refer him to David Gardner's report from Dortmund, which appeared on the front page of this morning's edition of the *Financial Times*.

The Austrian Chancellor, Franz Vranitzky, has stressed that Austria's application has been determined by the importance of finding common answers to the economic, social, political and ecological issues that face us all. He cited the safeguarding of Europe's competitiveness in world markets as the foremost challenge of the future. We endorse his views. Europe faces common problems such as the securing of jobs, the prevention of unemployment, the prevention of ecological disasters—which, of course, recognise no boundaries—and the political and economic stabilisation of eastern Europe. We also face the common problem posed by the migration of displaced people as a result of tragedies such as that suffered in the former Yugoslavia. Those common, shared problems demand shared solutions and a common approach.

The arguments about joining the Union differ in the four applicant countries, although the respective social democratic parties share those Austrian objectives. The Finnish President has called the European Union

"The central factor in strengthening the security of our continent."

As the Foreign Secretary said, that represents a major change in that country's stance.

In Sweden, where we hope that our great friend and colleague Ingvar Carlsson will soon return to power as the head of a Social Democratic Labour Government—the general election comes before the referendum—concern has been expressed that its high standards of social and environmental protection will be weakened as a result of

membership of the European Union. The Swedes do not share the Foreign Secretary's view of the future of the European Union. They want to see increasingly high standards of social provision and environmental protection imposed. They also share the Opposition's view about the unnecessarily secretive nature of decision taking in the Council of Ministers and in the Commission. The social democrats in Sweden, under whose leadership the original application was made, voted at their party congress on 19 June in favour of recommending that their colleagues should back the application for membership of the Union in the forthcoming referendum.

Mr. Spearing: We all admire the social provision in Sweden to which my right hon. Friend referred and the support given to it by our friend, who we hope will soon be Prime Minister of Sweden. The Union and the Community do not prohibit the adoption of higher standards than those applied in the Union being written into a member state's national law, if that country so wishes. Would that not automatically put that country at an economic disadvantage in trade in the single market? Does my right hon. Friend agree that that should be borne in mind?

Dr. Cunningham: I am not sure that I even followed my hon. Friend's argument, let alone agreed with it.

Competition and productivity have far more to do with per capita investment, plant and equipment, education, training and skills than with employment protection or hourly rates of pay. The idea that we can compete with our major competitors in Europe, the Pacific rim, Japan or the United States on the basis of poverty pay—the thesis advanced by the Foreign Secretary and his colleagues—is one that we reject totally. It is not supported by any economic, industrial or social evidence. The right hon. Gentleman knows that.

Great concerns have been expressed in Norway about membership of the European Union, but I hope that the decision of our colleagues in the social democratic party to recommend that their supporters should vote yes in the referendum will eventually lead to all four applicant countries receiving the endorsement of their populations so that they can take their place in the expanded Union in 1995.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): The right hon. Gentleman sets great store by those referendums. Last year we were not allowed a referendum because, we were told, it would weaken our system of parliamentary democracy. Has the right hon. Gentleman any evidence that parliamentary democracy has been weakened in Denmark, Norway or other countries that have held referendums?

Dr. Cunningham: The hon. Gentleman has a short memory. Britain had a referendum in 1975, provided for by the then Labour Government. I am not in the least defensive about referendums. The whole country decided, in a once-and-for-all referendum in 1975, about Britain's membership of the then European Community. In reality, however, those once-and-for-all decisions are never accepted by those who do not win the argument and who therefore want yet more referendums.

Mr. Hurd: How did the right hon. Gentleman vote?

Dr. Cunningham: I voted yes. Unlike the right hon. Gentleman, I do not slither this way and that on the European Union. He favours the hokey-kokey approach to membership of the European Union—in, out, in, out, shake it all about.

In his speech, the Foreign Secretary mentioned consistency. The Tory party manifesto says:

"The Conservative Party has remained steadfast on Europe".

It is interesting to examine that claim in this context. Incidentally, during the European election campaign I wrote to the right hon. Gentleman about that matter, but he never replied to my letter and nor did the Prime Minister.

In answer to a question in this House, the Foreign Secretary said that it would be a disaster not only for this country but for Greece, where he had discussed the matter, for Portugal and Spain and for many other countries, if there were a two-speed Europe. Yet we are told that the right hon. Gentleman is the architect of a multi-speed, multi-layered, multi-track Europe.

In November 1990, the Prime Minister said:

"I don't want a two speed Europe. I think a two speed Europe is unequivocally bad for Europe."

At the conclusion of the European summit in Birmingham, after the British presidency, the Prime Minister said:

"No fast track, no slow track, no one left behind, that was a constant theme"

at the Birmingham summit.

During the European election campaign, the Foreign Secretary and the Prime Minister referred to:

"a sensible approach, varying when it needs to, multi-track, multi-speed, multi-layered. It is a Conservative idea".

How dare the Foreign Secretary conclude that hon. Members have such short memories and that the people of this country forget so quickly the promises and commitments solemnly given in the House of Commons and at European summits about their approach to the European Union? In a desperate attempt to cling on to votes at any price, the Foreign Secretary abandoned all his long-held principles on Europe, whereas I never have. I therefore claim to have shown constant support for the European Union. The right hon. Gentleman used to be able to make such a claim, but he abandoned it for political expediency during last month's elections.

Mr. Hurd: This will not do. In the 1960s, the Labour party was against membership of Europe. When Lord Wilson was Prime Minister, the Labour party moved in favour. When he left office, having tried unsuccessfully to negotiate membership, and when my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) successfully negotiated membership, Labour turned against. When it was returned to office, it was in favour, although mildly so—that was the time of the referendum. After that, it passed under the leadership of the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) and was passionately against. [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer the question."] I have not followed the right hon. Gentleman's gyrations during that time, but those are the changes about which he challenged me and I am answering the challenge. He cannot speak on behalf of his party on that subject.

Dr. Cunningham: The Foreign Secretary is wriggling. He asked me about my personal position. I told him about that, and then told him about his record. He is now trying to transpose the argument into one about parties. It would be ridiculous to pretend that the Labour party had not changed on Europe, but the right hon. Gentleman asked me about my position and I told him unequivocally what it was

[Dr. Cunningham]

and is. His problem is that he cannot say the same about his own position. Indeed, he can say nothing consistent about Europe at all.

Last July in Oxford the Secretary of State for Employment, speaking about the Conservative party and the European People's Party, said:

"As the union between the peoples of Europe inch by questioning inch grows ever closer, we will need to look for new alliances. I believe that political and ideological alliances between like-minded parties from different countries will soon come to complement or supplant old national rivalries and friendships. Our admittance to the European People's Party in the European Parliament puts that scenario into perspective. There is, even now, a European People's Party office at Smith Square."

During the European elections, the Foreign Secretary sought to deny that there was a connection between the Conservative party and the European People's party. The Secretary of State for the Environment rose to his aid and said:

"We are entirely enthusiastic about the EU. We want Europe to grow in unity".

The problem is that they are "entirely enthusiastic" about it at different speeds, on different layers and on different tracks. That is the governing party's position on Europe.

It may seem amusing to expose in this Chamber the shifts in the plates which the Foreign Secretary mentioned —the tectonic slipping and the fault lines—but they do massive and enduring damage to this country's interests and standing in the European Union and we all pay a heavy price as a result.

Mr. Dykes: The House will accept that the right hon. Gentleman has good credentials from that point of view. But will he comment on the Home Secretary's interesting letter in *The Times* on Thursday, in which he reminded us that it is shocking to recall that as recently as 1983 the putative new leader of the Labour party, in his own election address, called for withdrawal from the European Community?

Dr. Cunningham: Parliamentary candidates often go with their party line. After all, it is much easier to roll rocks downhill against one's opponents than uphill against one's party. But if we are talking about political judgments along the way, the Foreign Secretary, not as a young parliamentary candidate but as a mature Cabinet Minister, supported the poll tax—£14 billion down the drain; he overruled his accounting officer and gave between £200 million and £300 million to the Pergau dam project; and he gives visas to visiting Iraqi businessmen to meet his friends Lord Weinstock and Lord Prior, in spite of the United Nations' embargo on trade with Iraq. The judgment of someone who has been in high office for many years does not compare with someone standing in a parliamentary election for the first time.

Mr. Dykes: But someone who wants to be Prime Minister.

Dr. Cunningham: The Foreign Secretary once wanted to be Prime Minister, too. I am not surprised that he did not get far.

While we are discussing enlargement and consistency, I invite the Foreign Secretary to explain the Government's exact position on the application of Cyprus. Their manifesto—and I have a copy of it here—says that they will help Cyprus and Malta to prepare to realise their ambition of European Union membership. In December 1993, the Minister of State said in the House:

"I should also remind him"—

referring to my hon. Friend the Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright)—

"that the partition of the island is not a prohibition on eventual accession."—[*Official Report*, 15 December 1993; Vol. 234, c. 1054.]

We share that view. Indeed, we think that membership of the European Union will be part of the solution to the illegal occupation of the island.

On 27 June, in his report on the European Council in Corfu, the Prime Minister said:

"Certainly, if the dispute between the north and the south is unresolved, it will be extremely difficult for Cyprus to be admitted to the Community . . . we hope that that dispute will be resolved before it is possible for Cyprus to become a member of the Union."—[*Official Report*, 27 June 1994; Vol. 245, c. 567.]

That contradicts what the Minister of State said. As ever, we would like a straight answer. Will Her Majesty's Government go ahead now and actively support the earliest possible accession of Cyprus to the European Union, as we intend to do, using our strength and influence in the European Parliament to pursue that objective?

Mr. Hurd: The right hon. Gentleman has passed from the puerile to a serious point which must be dealt with seriously. Of course my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is right—the existence of the dispute makes it very difficult. If the right hon. Gentleman thinks of the practical implications of admitting to full membership a country as divided as Cyprus, he must see that it is very difficult. We want to remove those difficulties; we want to see Cyprus admitted. That is one reason—though not the only reason—why we, perhaps more than any other outside country, are working so hard to find a solution. But we are involved. The Prime Minister was party to the statement issued at the Corfu summit which said that in our view Cyprus and Malta would be involved in the next round of enlargement. One cannot say more than that at present. Our attitude is a positive one—to remove the obstacles to the accession of Cyprus. I think that the right hon. Gentleman would agree that that is a fair statement.

Dr. Cunningham: I am little wiser than I was before because the right hon. Gentleman concluded by saying that "our attitude is a positive one—to remove the obstacles". The obstacle has been there for 20 years. This year is the 20th anniversary of the invasion of Cyprus. Despite the right hon. Gentleman's claims, there is no sign that the Government's active work to resolve the problem is having any effect at all. Indeed, we received alarming reports from our colleagues who visited Cyprus that that active work included Her Majesty's Government's representatives encouraging people to visit north Cyprus, which we do not recognise as a legal entity. We are not very happy about that either. So the Government have a lot to do to convince us that they are genuinely and wholeheartedly backing the accession of Cyprus to membership of the European Union, as, indeed, we are ourselves.

In 1996, there will be an important intergovernmental conference of the new and, I hope, expanded European Union. Among other things, the Maastricht treaty provides for revision of the pillar structure, widening the scope of the co-decision procedure, revision of common foreign and security decisions, including consideration of defence issues and whether the Union should absorb the Western

European Union, whether to introduce specific titles in the treaty to cover civil protection in energy and tourism, the hierarchy and classification of Community legislation and, of course, the whole vexed question of institutional reform.

Let me say clearly and unequivocally that we stand for a Europe of nation states. We do not support a federal Europe, as the right hon. Gentleman wrongly asserted many times and the Conservative central office hand-outs lied time and again during the European election campaign. Nor do we have any intention of abandoning Britain's right of veto. I say that so that the right hon. Gentleman hears it again from me at the Dispatch Box, as he has heard before, in the hope that from now on he will not continue to repeat falsehoods about Labour party policy as, regrettably, he has done in the past.

Mr. Marlow: Can the right hon. Gentleman explain his party's attitude to, first, deepening and, secondly, the Luxembourg compromise? What is the Labour party's attitude to deepening? What does it mean? What is the right hon. Gentleman's understanding of the Luxembourg compromise? Does it still exist?

Dr. Cunningham: There is some dispute as to whether the Luxembourg compromise still exists as a legal entity. But as Governments assert that it still exists, and we see no reason to dispute that, the answer is yes. As for deepening of the Community, we are in favour of some deepening of the Community, as we have made clear time and again in relation to the social chapter. We regard the European Union as more than a market and a free trade area.

We have made it clear—as, incidentally, did Lord Howe and Baroness Chalker—that in some areas there is scope for an extension of qualified majority voting on social and employment policy and on the environment, to give two examples. That is apparently another area where there seems to be some difference of opinion in the Government. In 1986, in this House, Baroness Chalker said:

"Some have implied that there is majority voting against United Kingdom interests . . . We cannot criticise the Community for its inability to take decisions, while, on the other hand, we refuse to allow practical improvements that could well assist us". —[*Official Report*, 23 April 1986; Vol. 96, c. 391.]

Of course, she was talking about qualified majority voting, which was massively extended as right hon. and hon. Members on the Government Benches guillotined the Single European Act through the House. I hope that we shall have no more of that nonsense in the future. *[Interruption.]* I think that we all know who the arch-villain was—the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen).

Mr. Jenkin *rose—*

Dr. Cunningham: No, I am not giving way any more.

We support the Bill because, above all else, it embodies our consistent policy on enlargement and our support for our friends in Austria, Finland, Norway and Sweden. I hope that the whole House will support the Bill and that it can be agreed without a Division. If there is a Division, I shall vote for enlargement and for the legislation, and I urge my right hon. and hon. Friends to do the same.

5.37 pm

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): I was glad to hear that the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) and his party will support the Bill; I do not think that that has come as any surprise. However, I noticed that he said that the reason why he was anxious to do so was that those countries are his political friends. The House must have noted the difference between the way in which he referred to those countries and the way in which he previously referred to Italy and the Italian Government.

It is a most extraordinary constitutional pronouncement that one can pick and choose the Ministers in the Italian Government with whom one will negotiate. I must say that to the right hon. Gentleman, because it is the most extraordinary attitude to have. Let us suppose that the Labour party were to win the next election and that it then signed up to the social chapter. Are we seriously to believe that the Social Security Minister would decline to attend a meeting of the Council of Ministers because an Italian Minister whom he calls a neo-fascist was attending? Such a suggestion is totally ludicrous.

Dr. John Cunningham: I do not call those people neo-fascists: they call themselves that—that is the point.

Sir Peter Hordern: Perhaps my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary would like to answer.

Mr. Hurd: The people to whom the right hon. Gentleman may be referring are part of the Alleanza Nazionale and are hence part of the Italian Government. Is he advising Her Majesty's Ministers to boycott all meetings in which Ministers of that party participate?

Sir Peter Hordern: I am happy to give way to the right hon. Member for Copeland if he wants to make his position clear. Certainly, he was making a most extraordinary constitutional pronouncement, which showed yet again that the Labour party is wholly unfit for government; its members cannot even understand basic constitutional points.

I unreservedly welcome the accession of Austria, Sweden, Finland and Norway, all of which will be net contributors to the budget. That has greater appeal, perhaps, to Conservatives than to Labour Members—we are always likely to give a much warmer welcome to countries that will make it less expensive for us to belong to the EU.

However, the accession of those four countries raises serious problems for the future, and I want to say a little about the problems that will face the intergovernmental conference of 1996. For a start, each country will have one new Commissioner, bringing the total to 21, and the Council of Ministers will also be enlarged. I understand that the inclusion of the four will allow eight countries representing only 12 per cent. of the European Union population to block the wishes of eight countries representing 88 per cent. of it. That is clearly a serious matter that will have to be dealt with in the course of the IGC.

It is most unlikely that we shall all agree on every proposal coming before the Commission. With the enlargement that the new accession produces, there will be a need to enforce subsidiarity and to use the opt-out whenever necessary. I am glad to welcome the ideas of variable geometry, a multi-speed Europe and so on, all of which arrive at the same point: that we reserve the right to preserve our national interests whenever we see them at risk.

I offer one or two examples of the difficulties that may be created. The common agricultural policy is a case in point. I understand that in Austria, Norway and Finland

[Sir Peter Hordern]

national agricultural prices are higher than they are in the CAP, and that those countries have been allowed additional national aids—described as temporary—to enable them to adjust their prices to the common European level. It is in our interest and in that of Germany to reduce the cost of the CAP, but it will be in the interests of the Scandinavian countries, and of France and the Mediterranean countries, to keep the CAP prices high. Of course the whole process is controlled by the budget, but strains on it have increased and will increase and must be most carefully curtailed. That matter, too, will come up in 1996.

Mr. Gill: Is my right hon. Friend aware that, before this association agreement, the Swedish Government had agreed a new scheme of agricultural support that would have had the effect of reducing the cost of such support in Sweden but, as a result of the accession treaty, the costs will rise again?

Sir Peter Hordern: I am not quite sure that my hon. Friend has it right. I understood that Sweden met the terms of the treaty right away, but was going to be given some monetary compensation for so doing—but I am not sure.

The point is that the CAP is bound to be placed under further strain when and if Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic join in the next century. The arguments against the CAP have been rehearsed often enough, but the idea that it should help agricultural communities, not agricultural products, is surely the right way forward. That is best done by national Governments; otherwise, how are we to pay for the huge surpluses that will be produced by Polish and Hungarian agriculture at prices necessary to accommodate Norwegian and Finnish farmers? Those problems loom large for the IGC in 1996.

Then there are problems with convergence. The costs of convergence are difficult enough in the present EU, but how great would they be if it included Poland, Hungary and the Czechs? It is quite unnecessary to achieve convergence by Government-to-Government transfer. Anyone who examines the substantial investments in Thailand and Malaysia by the Japanese will observe that they are not Government-to-Government transfers; they simply occur because the costs of labour and skills make Malaysia and Thailand attractive to Japanese investors.

Mr. Budgen: If we roundly declared that we wanted nothing to do with the single currency, we would not need to worry about the enormous cost and distortion brought about by so-called convergence.

Sir Peter Hordern: If my hon. Friend will contain himself, I shall come to the single currency question.

It is possible that limited infrastructure projects, if cost effective, are necessary, but we need to be clear about our own interests. I take them to be that we are part of a European Union that is committed to free trade and to GATT in particular. We are also committed to further enlargement of the EU beyond what is envisaged in the Bill, but there is, and always has been, a political element in the European Union. I cannot accept, after all the sacrifices that our country has made in two world wars, that anything but relief and satisfaction are to be found in the closer union between France and Germany. We cannot wish it away.

I hope and trust that we shall find that that closer union is here to stay. I do not draw comfort, although some apparently do, from the prospect of a newly unified Germany operating on its own to its own agenda, and I cannot believe that the French, the Russians or the Poles do either. All those countries want a closer union in which the interests of Germany are inextricably linked with those of the rest of the European Union.

We must not be surprised, still less angered, by serious attempts to weld the European Union together by supranational institutions to form a single currency. After all, we have an opt-out of, or rather, an opt-into, the single currency. Some, like my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen), simply wish the whole thing would go away, but it will not go away, and we must face up to that fact.

It seems to me probable that France, Germany and the Netherlands will meet the Maastricht criteria and will in due course form a single currency, probably by the end of the century. Austria, and possibly the Scandinavian countries too, may also meet the criteria and join. This country will then be faced with a clear choice of whether or not to join.

We certainly want to meet the Maastricht criteria on prudential grounds alone—nothing to do with the single currency. Let us then suppose that we meet the criteria but a future Parliament decides not to join. Can we imagine that the greater part of our businesses and industry, which carry out their business in the single market, would not decide to transact that business in the European market using the ecu? They would be perfectly entitled to do so. They would simply vote with their feet and do their business in the single currency, just as the oil industry has always done its business in dollars—except that in this case it would probably be done in the hard ecu. We must come to terms with Europe as it is and as it is bound to be, not as some would wish it to be.

I see nothing wrong with an evolutionary path to a single currency by way of a de facto common currency. That is how I think it will be. Monetary union leading to political union in the sense of a federal European union is nonsense.

Mr. Cash: My right hon. Friend will recall a letter that he wrote to *The Times* two or three years ago in which he advocated the virtues of a single currency. Does he still advocate that as a matter of principle, contrary to some 70 per cent. of business men in Germany who, according to a recent opinion poll, do not want a single currency? Does he believe that a single currency would be advantageous to the political situation in Europe as it evolves, as he put it?

Sir Peter Hordern: I am immensely flattered that my hon. Friend should remember what I wrote to *The Times* three years ago. He remembers it better than I do. At that time I was certainly in favour of Britain joining the ERM with a strong currency and I still hold that view. However, as my hon. Friend has heard, we must look at the way in which events are likely to move. There is likely to be a partial single currency and in practical terms many of our business men will wish to conduct their business in that currency. Therefore, it will be formed into a common currency.

Mr. Marlow: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Sir Peter Hordern: I shall give way for the last time because many of my hon. Friends wish to contribute.

Mr. Marlow: I think that my right hon. Friend is talking about the possibility of a de facto common currency, but not a single currency. Does he agree that a single currency is not so much a matter of commercial convenience but that it effectively means a single European state, a single European economy and a single European Government?

Sir Peter Hordern: I am coming to those very points. My hon. Friend is right: what is more likely to happen is that our country will be involved in a common currency. However, that is a matter of opinion. As I have said, monetary union necessarily leading to political union in the sense of a federal European Union, to which my hon. Friend referred, is nonsense. For example, we have only to look at the United States where virtually every state has a different sales tax. There are widely differing forms of tax and even wider differences in social benefits. We do not have to have a common system of social benefits or a social chapter to form a closer European Union.

As I mentioned earlier, investment gravitates to those states with lower taxes, and the same would apply here. We have done well. By having a low tax system we have been able to attract much investment, and I see no reason to give up that advantage. We should not accept for a moment the myth that monetary union necessarily leads to political union. Equally, we should certainly not accept the myth that sterling has always stood on its own, disregarding entirely our link to the gold standard which we had for centuries and to the dollar which we had under Bretton Woods.

I foresee the time when, whatever we may wish, there will be a strong single currency at the heart of Europe which will act as a common currency for the rest of Europe, including ourselves. I do not believe in a federal Europe, by which I mean the sole or main power to raise taxes resting in a single European Parliament. Nothing can persuade us that the essence of democracy is not to identify as closely as possible democratic institutions with the people in a way that enables them to understand, accept and approve of what is done. That means national Governments with the principal power to tax. The low turnout in the European parliamentary elections, not just in our country but throughout the European Union, should be a lesson to us all.

The Bill broadens the European Union to take in those countries which have long been democracies and of which we wholly approve. It also provides us with an opportunity to think of what will happen in the European Union, of which we are an important part. To be a positive European does not mean to favour a federal Europe. I like the prospect of closer union between France and Germany and between all other European countries because that means peace and not war.

I am also a positive European because I like the prospects for Britain in Europe. I certainly see better opportunities for trade and business, but I also see us using our influence to reform the European Union in the direction of an outward-looking community of nations that is better able to deal with the United States and Japan than we possibly could on our own. Above all, we have no need to be frightened of Europe or to be constantly negative. Perhaps we will go at our own speed and no doubt our geometry will vary from that of others, but we are part of Europe and always have been, and we might as well be positive about its future.

5.54 pm

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): The speech by the right hon. Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) was addressed to his party rather to the House as a whole. His remarks about a common currency as distinct from a single currency were sensible and reassuring. I do not think that any hon. Member would object to the emergence of a further, as it were, reserve currency or common currency of the kind or of the practical use that resulted from using the dollar in post-war periods, gold before the second world war and, indeed, sterling up to about the late 1960s.

A common currency gives us the freedom to operate with our own currency, except where it is clearly advantageous to operate with a different one. As the right hon. Member for Horsham correctly reminded us, oil trade has been carried on in dollars for a long time, certainly for as long as I can remember. That is perfectly sensible and has caused us no damage.

If we accept even the principle of the currency following trade, we all know that, although our trade with Europe has grown enormously through trade diversion and the coming together of the economies, it is still less than half our total trade. The logic of what the right hon. Gentleman said is that the other half ought to be conducted either in our own currency or in somebody else's which is a suitable common currency. That was all rather refreshing, and tomorrow I shall study the right hon. Gentleman's speech with great care.

I am sorry that the Foreign Secretary has disappeared, because I have a few remarks to address to him. His optimism never ceases to amaze me. He really believes that Europe is developing along the ways and paths that he would like to see it pursue. To cite the treaty of accession which is the subject of our debate as evidence of the European Community's abandonment of centralisation, of deepening and consolidating and centralising in favour of widening, was a remarkable example of the Foreign Secretary's almost infinite capacity for self-deception.

This is a three-clause Bill. European Community Bills are always short, but they carry with them an enormous load of text. In this case the three clauses conceal about 365 pages of the treaties. We are dealing with Austria, Sweden, Finland and Norway. In a way, it may be a little premature to approve or disapprove of the Bill because, as we all know, apart from Austria, the other three countries mentioned in the accession treaty have yet to hold referendums. I have no serious doubts that Finland will vote positively in a referendum, but it is sensible to put a considerable question mark over Sweden and Norway.

Those of us whose memories go back to at least 1972 will recall that Norway reached this same point on the road to joining the European Community, but the people of Norway asserted that their view was different from that of those who negotiated on their behalf. In the referendum then held in Norway, the people decisively rejected the proposal for entry. If that happens again, there will have to be changes in some crucial paragraphs of the treaty, because it is obviously based upon the assumption that four countries will join.

[Mr. Peter Shore]

I have always thought that the great discussion about the blocking minimum and so on was, to say the least, rather premature. It is not clear what benefits the applicant countries hope to gain through membership, beyond those that they already have as members of the European economic zone. Indeed, I can envisage considerable disadvantages, especially now that the earlier obligations of joining the European Community have been added to by the many and much more difficult commitments contained in the Maastricht treaty.

Mr. Marlow: The right hon. Gentleman referred to the 385 pages—I hate to correct him, but he said 365 pages—of the treaty. On page 9, it talks about qualified majority voting, to which he has just referred. It says that qualified majority voting will require

"64 votes in favour, cast by at least 11 members."

If, under the procedures, Norway or Norway and Sweden do not join, the Council will look at the matter again and come forward with decisions. Those decisions have to be taken by unanimity. Suppose those two countries vote no and decide not to join the Union. As long as there is no unanimity, one presumes that a qualified majority will be 64 votes and 11 member states. Is that correct?

Mr. Shore: I am not sure about that, but it is a question that could quite properly be addressed to the Government. I should be interested to hear the reply. What I am saying is that there are possible complexities ahead that were not entirely dealt with in the Foreign Secretary's speech.

Of course, it is the peoples of the applicant countries who decide. From a purely selfish British point of view, I would welcome their adherence—in particular, that of Finland, Sweden and Norway. They have a powerful social democratic tradition, which I share, and their histories of robust independence give me the strong sense that they will be potential allies in the forthcoming struggles between those who wish to achieve a minimum Europe of national states and those who seek to secure a maximum Europe of a neo-federalist character.

My feeling is that—although we cannot be certain about it—the instincts of such sturdy, independent people will place them on our side in many of the arguments that lie ahead.

Mr. Cash: Is there not another agenda here, which is the possibility of a German Europe? Does the right hon. Gentleman acknowledge, as many countries do privately, that that is the direction in which we are moving? The recent Karlsruhe court judgment said that there should be not a Bundestat but a Staatenverbund. That is quite different, one being a federal Europe and the other a confederation. Since that judgment, the Christian Democrat party has now reverted to the idea of a federal Europe and Bundestat, and so has its partner, the FDP. In other words, we need to beware.

Mr. Shore: I thank the hon. Gentleman for raising that point. I shall say something later about recent trends in opinions and proposals coming out of Germany that are of concern for the 1996 intergovernmental conference.

The immediate issue that the accession treaty has posed to us and other Community members is the voting formula to be used for qualified majority voting. At present, the blocking minority is 23 out of a total of 76 votes. In future, despite the Prime Minister's almost embarrassingly unsuccessful efforts at the last minute to avert it, the blocking minority will be 27 out of a total of 90 votes. I know that it is also agreed that best endeavours must be made where the blocking minority falls between 23 and 27, but best endeavours are not a strong line of defence against the minimum blocking vote of 27 in the treaty.

What worries me is not just the increased size of the blocking minority, but the fact that so much emphasis has been placed on a blocking minority. I take it to mean that in practice, although not verbally, the Luxembourg compromise of the famous national veto is falling into disuse. There is a lack of self-confidence in member Governments to assert that they have a veto and will use it.

I say that with the utmost regret because I well remember the document in the referendum of 1975 issued by the then Government. It recommended a yes vote on the basis that, under the heading

"Will Parliament lose its Power?",

there was the assurance:

"It is the Council of Ministers and not the market's officials who take the important decisions. These decisions can be taken only if all the members of the Council agree. The Minister representing Britain can veto any proposal for a new law or a new tax if he considers it to be against British interests."

That was the basis of that referendum, which my right hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) promises never to hold again, because that referendum settled matters once and for all. That is not easy to square with the fact that the referendum on Scottish devolution was rejected, yet we are committed to having another one, which, if it is accepted by the Scottish people, presumably we will accept.

The veto power was guaranteed to the British people as a condition of their assent through the referendum in 1975 to Britain remaining part of the European Community. It matters very much, because it is part of the faith that should exist between Government and people. The Government should mean what they say and abide by their commitments.

Dr. John Cunningham: My right hon. Friend and I take different positions on this matter. The Labour party's policy position does not rule out referendums, depending on what may emerge either on the question of 1996 and the intergovernmental conference or on other matters. I was referring to the referendum that gave the British people the choice to say whether or not Britain should stay in the European Union. My right hon. Friend may think that that question should be put to the people every two, three, four or five years. I do not agree with him. The people were given the opportunity to make a decision, and they did so overwhelmingly.

Mr. Shore: I accept what my right hon. Friend says up to a point, which is that the referendum was about membership of the European Economic Community, not membership of the European Union with its far more extravagant ambitions. I take it that my right hon. Friend has at least given me a partial reassurance that he would not necessarily oppose a new referendum on proposals for ever closer union within the European Union.

Dr. Cunningham: I am delighted to tell my right hon. Friend again that that is the position. Throughout the

European election campaign, we made it absolutely clear —I said it myself on many occasions, and I am happy to say it again on the record—that it is not ruled in or out.

Mr. Shore: I am especially pleased that my right hon. Friend has said on the record that the Labour party is opposed to a federal Europe, and that it will abide by and hold on to such use of the veto power as is contained in the unanimity provisions of the treaty of Rome. Good, we are making progress.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): The right hon. Gentleman said that the fact that the veto was slipping into desuetude was due to a lack of self-confidence among member countries. We could also argue that it was due to a reduction in obduracy and an increase in consensual decision making.

Mr. Shore: To be fair, there is another and much more important cause. Given Lady Thatcher's general attitude towards the European Union and British sovereignty, it is curious that, when Prime Minister, through signing the Single European Act she opened the way for qualified majority voting on a much larger scale than had ever previously been envisaged. I know that that is a difficult fact for many Conservative Members to accept and acknowledge. Nevertheless, that is why so much was abandoned in the use of the national veto under the Luxembourg compromise formula.

The issue of qualified majority voting, the blocking minimum and the veto is of growing importance, not less. I say that for two reasons, First, we all hope that this treaty of accession will be followed by further accession treaties in which, in the first place, the Visegrad countries—Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia—will join, and there may well be others after that. If every new accession brings further adjustment to the voting formula and weakens our capacity to safeguard our interests—particularly against the thrust of Euro-federalism—we will not easily accept or stomach that. That is cause for considerable concern.

We are already on the road to the next IGC in 1996 —a commitment that is part of the Maastricht treaty. We cannot be sure how far-reaching and wide-ranging that conference will be, but we know that article B of the Maastricht treaty identifies in particular the common foreign and security pillar and the justice and home affairs pillar. It states:

"the policies and forms of co-operation introduced by this treaty may need to be revised with the aim of ensuring the effectiveness of the mechanisms and the institutions of the Community."

Article N of the Maastricht treaty states:

"a conference of representatives of the governments of Member States . . . shall be convened"

in 1996. We know what lies ahead, and we may be certain that we shall have a traumatic time beating off the Euro-federalists in that conference.

There is only a short breathing space. At the meetings in Ioannina and Corfu, it was decided to establish a so-called reflection committee. A communiqué issued after the recent Corfu summit referred to

"a Reflection Group consisting of representatives of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Member States and the President of the Commission. It will be chaired by a person appointed by the Spanish government and begin its work in June 1995. Two European Parliament representatives will participate in the work of the Reflection Group. The Group will also have exchanges of views with the other institutions and organs of the European Union."

For some of us, 1995 is not far ahead but—wait for it—action is starting earlier than that. The communiqué continued:

"The Institutions are invited to establish before the start of the work of the Reflection Group reports on the functioning of the Treaty of European Union, which will provide an input for the work of the Group."

Some ambitious proposals are being thought out and framed. I refer to only one set—which comes, of course, from Germany. Proposals from Herr Bitterlich, who I understand is Chancellor Kohl's personal foreign policy adviser, came out of a think tank associated with the Bertelsmann Foundation. The *Financial Times* had this to say about them:

"In a report which reflects widespread thinking at the highest levels of the German government, the group spelt out proposals for a bi-cameral system which would put the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers on an equal footing."

A lower chamber and upper chamber of a legislature is how they see the future of the Council of Ministers.

A report in *The Guardian* added that the President of the Commission would be nominated and elected by Members of the European Parliament and would be empowered to appoint Commissioners to a reduced number of posts—a kind of Cabinet. The report added:

"The commission would take on the hue of a European government."

I am not saying that that is necessarily the sole or most strongly backed proposal that will come before us in 1996, but some powerful pro-federal forces remain unchecked in Europe. They have been buried in the institutions of the European Parliament, and they are embedded in the whole structure and ethos of the Commission, the European Court, and the hearts and minds of the ruling political classes of many countries of continental Europe. We must be ready for a prolonged and difficult struggle.

If the Foreign Secretary were right about the success of British ideas and how subsidiarity and all the other British intergovernmental arrangements have carried the field in Europe, we could relax. It is simply because the Foreign Secretary has got it so wrong that we must be on our guard and prepare for a bitter fight between now and the end of 1996. That is the task ahead.

6.15 pm

Mr. John Biffen (Shropshire, North): The speech of the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) reminded us that the virus of scepticism is not confined to these Benches. What was particularly attractive was his exchange with the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), which authorised with the strength of Labour's Front Bench that Labour is hostile to a federal Europe, is in favour of a Europe of nation states and argues for the maintenance of our national veto. After a while, I began to wonder what, as time unfolds, Labour will supply to the European debate that is distinctive.

Mercifully, the right hon. Member for Copeland pre-empted my anxieties in that respect. Labour would take into the Union its time-honoured characteristic of proscription. Every party and every Government would be tested to see if they passed Labour's good housekeeping arrangements. The question was raised of the Italian Government. Let us not be delicate. The right hon. Member for Copeland did not mean that he would refuse to sit down and share spaghetti with Signor Berlusconi. It is Signor Fini about whom the right hon. Gentleman has great reservations.

[Mr. John Biffen]

I challenge the right hon. Member for Copeland to name the name that gives rise to the proposition that there are Ministers in the Italian Government with whom a Labour Government would have no contact. That is no way for a potential Government to behave towards European Union partners. If the Union cannot inspire some sense of tolerance, it will never have any chance of longer success.

I do not regard the exchange earlier today as flippant July madness. The assertion that there are Ministers in the present Italian Government with whom members of a Labour Government would be unwilling to co-operate is an indication that Labour is taking into the Union a sectarian attitude to its functioning that would falsify all Labour's other ambitions.

Mr. Radice: I understand that the European People's party is not enthusiastic about those particular persons, with whom the right hon. Gentleman's party is loosely associated. Others object as well.

Mr. Biffen: That is simply considered. I invite the hon. Gentleman to name one continental European Government containing members of the EPP who have said that they will not sit down and discuss matters with certain members of the Italian Government.

It is quite simple. As we go through political life, we often have reservations about those people with whom we have to have daily contact. Frankly, within this Chamber, calculated unease is an integral part of how we operate. I think that the hon. Gentleman will have problems enough, in the course of European co-operation, without the self-imposed and sanctimonious barriers that are being sought.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North) *rose—*

Mr. Biffen: No, I shall not give way. I shall make a short speech, thus giving the hon. Gentleman an opportunity to address the House.

As this is the first time that we have debated the subject since the European elections, I pay my respects and regards to the right hon. Sir Christopher Prout, who led the Conservatives at Strasbourg and was my European Member of Parliament—the Member for Staffordshire and Shropshire. He contributed significantly to Conservative fortunes in Europe, although in terms with which I often disagreed. It would be appropriate to place that tribute on the record, and I hope and believe that those on the Government Front Bench will endorse it.

The European Union (Accessions) Bill has achieved a good draw for a non-voting occasion, which goes to show that the issue is at the heart of British politics, wherever else it is. Why? Because Euro-scepticism, as advanced from the Conservative Benches, has made it into a major political issue. That is a tribute to this institution—the House of Commons—without which the exercise could not have been mounted in such a way.

I understand that the Prime Minister addressed the 1922 Committee last Thursday. I try to avoid too much emotion and excitement. I was not there, and I am dependent on a report in *The Times*, which stated that he said:

"As the membership"
of the European Union
"expands, it will be impossible for the centralist model to continue".

Mr. Budgen: More.

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) pertinently observes that one would like a little more definition of the interplay between widening and deepening, in the context of the assertion that

"it will be impossible for the centralist model to continue".

That will be the subject of continuing debate for this Chamber in the coming months and years.

I shall consider the Bill in the context of three matters: European diversity, qualified majority voting, and the common agricultural policy. Out of deference to all the other hon. Members who wish to speak, I shall do so at breakneck speed and ask for tolerance for my brevity when considering those three major points.

First, of course the Bill will add to the diversity of Europe. There is an extraordinary unwillingness to recognise that, from its very inception, the European Community had aspects that were by implication diverse —for example, the fact that the Federal German Republic had a relationship with the German Democratic Republic which made it unique within the Community, and powerfully unique.

There is also the central paradox that the industrial aspects of the Community were dominated by liberal economics, whereas agriculture was dominated by the highest common factor of protectionism. We can expect that to increase with increased membership, as different social structures have to be adapted to the confines of the European Union, and as certain fashions are replaced or challenged by other fashions.

I know that some of my hon. Friends may not be too excited at that prospect, but I do not believe that anyone will persist with the same enthusiasm and decisiveness with the liberal economics that dominated the early phases of the Community, especially as the Union enlarges to the east. Hungary and Poland are already moving away from their original preoccupation and fascination with market forces. At this stage, no one can foresee what the balance of social and economic fashion will be as we proceed. However, we are fully entitled to judge that, if the Union is to be a successful partnership of nation states, it cannot be shackled to any economic ideology.

Secondly, qualified majority voting can be reconsidered in the light of the accession of these countries. That was made clear in the Ioannina statement, ahead of the 1996 renegotiation. I hope that my hon. Friends on the Treasury Bench will persist with the arguments on qualified majority voting that they advanced unsuccessfully last March. I do not regard my attitude as especially nationalistic—not that that does any harm—as the European Union is bedevilled by bureaucracy. I fully accept that the Single European Act was probably the most decisive development in that direction. My hands are as stained as anyone's. I am here not to apologise but to assert what I believe to be an observable political truth.

I cannot see any easy way out of the difficulty. That bureaucracy will destroy any idealism for the European Union that might exist. In as much as it gives slightly more chance of blocking the initiation of legislation, qualified majority voting should be welcomed—and welcomed as much by members of the Labour party as by Conservative Members. We have now got out of the way the tactical problems caused by persistence with the British stance on qualified majority voting and what it might do to affect the

successful applications of these countries. We can now consider such voting in a more relaxed atmosphere. I hope that Opposition Members will also see some virtues in trying to impede the flow of legislation and understand what that legislation is doing to general affection and support for the European Union.

Finally, most hon. Members who have spoken have mentioned the common agricultural policy. It is clear that we are taking on four national agricultures, each with remarkably distinctive characteristics. None of them is large, but all represent powerful political considerations for each of the nation states.

Surely we ought to begin to try to apply the principles of subsidiarity when relating those national agricultures to the existing common agricultural policy. If we cannot do so now, and cannot achieve some clear successes soon, it will be impossible to draw up a framework for the inclusion of the agricultures of applicant countries from central and eastern Europe. In every sense, we are on Euro-borrowed time as far as that matter is concerned.

Once again, that issue ought not to be the cause of division across the Chamber. I do not believe that it is seriously at issue. In the reform of the CAP, supporting qualified majority voting and ensuring an inherent diversity in the European Union, we are all talking sceptic language. As the centre of the debate moves, the sceptics will march with it.

6.29 pm

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): I am no sceptic, and I do not speak sceptics' language. I should have loved to follow a good many of the points made by the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen)—for instance, his delightfully throwaway, cavalier comment "What's wrong with nationalism anyway?"—but time is pressing.

Liberal Democrats warmly welcome the impending accession of Austria and—conditional on their referendums—Finland, Sweden and Norway. The addition of four prosperous and stable democracies can only strengthen the Union in all spheres of its activity. However—as a number of hon. Members have pointed out—that enlargement will place great strains on the existing institutional framework, and its reform must be addressed urgently in advance of the 1996 intergovernmental conference. As the Foreign Secretary said, we also need to look forward to the adhesion of the central and eastern European countries, and in time—almost certainly—that of Malta and Cyprus; Switzerland will probably change its position as well.

First, we must consider the size of the Commission, the way in which its members are appointed—not least the President—and the extent of the European Parliament's involvement. Let me digress for a moment, and comment on the Corfu affair. Jean-Luc Dehaene, a Belgian, was the Franco-German nominee for the presidency. Why did all that happen? On 26 June, *The Observer* commented—in an editorial, not a news item—

> "The idea, promulgated by John Major and Douglas Hurd yesterday that Britain was opposing the Franco-German candidate, Jean-Luc Dehaene, because of the manner of the choosing—rather than the man who would have been chosen—is so much hogwash.
>
> The President of the Commission has always been chosen behind the scenes by the leaders of the European states."

The "white smoke" system may be wrong, incidentally, but hon. Members should note that there is no record of the United Kingdom's having opposed it in the past, and no record of our having sought to change it.

The editorial continues:

> "Helmut Kohl raised the name of Dehaene to John Major a couple of months ago and received no objection. Indeed, the Prime Minister had none at that time."

I should like to know whether that is true, because, if it is, the Prime Minister must have been consulted in April. An *Observer* editorial would normally be regarded as a reasonably authoritative and reliable piece of paper.

The article goes on:

> "What has happened since is that the presidency has become an issue in the Conservative Party, a litmus test of Major's willingness to stand up against the Continentals. The Prime Minister has chosen to take his stand for reasons wholly of domestic politics."

I think that that is true, and that it reflects badly on the Government.

I do not know how many hon. Members saw *The Independent's* Saturday magazine the day before yesterday. I thought that one of its cartoons summed up the position beautifully. It showed a man looking gloomily at a poster on a wall, apparently advertising either aftershave or deodorant, and an extremely pugnacious, lantern-jawed Prime Minister holding the valuable elixir; the slogan read "Veto—for Men!"

Mr. Cash : Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Russell Johnston: For the hon. Gentleman, what else could I do?

Mr. Cash: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that Jean-Luc Dehaene was responsible for delivering to Chancellor Kohl the siting of the central bank in Frankfurt? Does the hon. Gentleman not think that that might have had something to do with—quite apart from Mr. Dehaene's federal inclinations—his determination to ensure that he was repaid for the good services that he had rendered?

Sir Russell Johnston: Does the hon. Gentleman not think—as we are in the business of "thinking", which of course is a good thing—that the siting of the central bank in Frankfurt had a good deal to do with the United Kingdom's failure to accept any commitment to economic and monetary union or a single currency? Of course it did.

I believe that the whole question reverts to the continuing inability of the British political establishment to understand consensus decision-making, and its tendency to favour sporadic macho-dramatics instead. Another recent example of that was the qualified-majority adjustment to take account of enlargement; I know that it has already been discussed, but I think that our position was silly.

Reducing the number of Commissioners—if that is the favoured route—would not be easy, and I would be foolish to try to present a scheme now. I find two ideas particularly interesting, however. First, there is the possibility of retaining the same pattern rather than reducing the number, while increasing the number of vice-presidents and giving them the core responsibilities for policy. Secondly, there is the possibility of acting on a regional basis—Iberian, Benelux, Nordic and so forth. Either way, something must be done.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. I am sorry to interrupt, but I have only just taken the Chair and I must admit to being slightly confused. I thought that the House was debating the Second Reading

[Madam Deputy Speaker Dame Janet Fookes]

of a Bill enabling other countries to accede to the European Union, but so far I have not heard much on that subject. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will be able to relate his remarks to the main subject under consideration.

Sir Russell Johnston: I can only say, Madam Deputy Speaker, that none of my remarks relates to matters that have not been raised by other hon. Members. It is inevitable—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I have not had the pleasure of hearing what other hon. Members have said; I am concerned only with what happens here and now, when I am in the Chair.

Sir Russell Johnston: If we are dealing with enlargement, Madam Deputy Speaker, must we not inevitably deal with its consequences—its effects on the European institutions, and on the Union as a whole?

The second point that I am anxious to make—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. May I clarify what I said? If the hon. Member can make an adequate and convincing connection, I shall have no objection; my point was simply that, at the time when I was listening to his speech, he seemed to be making no such connection.

Sir Russell Johnston: I am extremely sorry if that was your feeling, Madam Deputy Speaker. I shall do my utmost to follow your wishes.

In the event of accession, the European Parliament will at some point have to be revamped. It is impossible to contemplate the possibility of a continuing and unlimited increase in size. That will mean that it must also be made more proportional to population. The Foreign Secretary raised the point earlier in relation to qualified majority voting, but he did not mention the fact that the Germans, for instance, are undoubtedly severely under-represented in the European Parliament. Problems such as that will have to be corrected at the same time.

The Nordic countries—three of which are to join the Union—have a particularly open form of democracy which, in my view, is far superior to ours. They will certainly be allies to those of us who wish the Parliament's co-decision-making powers to be increased, and want its involvement in the individual approval of Commissioners.

Mr. Dalyell: The hon. Gentleman and I were colleagues in the European Parliament when it was much smaller in terms of countries. He may recollect that, even then, there were great difficulties of translation. How will those difficulties be overcome if the Nordic countries take up their right to use their own language? There will be a great demand for tranlations of Swedish into Greek and Portuguese into Norwegian. Will there not be real physical problems?

Sir Russell Johnston: The short answer is, yes there are. The three new languages will undoubtedly cause not only interpretation, but translation problems and cost.

Mr. Duncan Smith: They will throw even more of our money at it to solve the problems.

Sir Russell Johnston: Yes, but the hon. Gentleman is touching on a peculiarly sensitive issue: a country's language. We are lucky because most of us speak tolerable English. For the Finns, the Norwegians and the Swedes, language is a touchstone. The hon. Gentleman must recognise that fact.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. He remarked, I think to general agreement, that the form of democracy enjoyed by some of our Nordic friends may be superior to our own. If decisions are taken away from their Parliaments, will not that risk the atrophy of their democracies, and therefore diminish their quality, on which we all agree?

Sir Russell Johnston: Let me think about that—I know that that is unusual in the House. With respect to the hon. Gentleman, who has had views on this matter for a long time, it is a question not of taking all powers away from the old Parliaments, but of taking certain direct responsibilities away from them and transferring them to the Council and to the European Parliament. That will not necessarily lead to the atrophy of what is left.

The Nordic countries will be particularly supportive of opening up the Council of Ministers and of seeking to end the excessive secrecy through which it makes decisions, which often even denies us information on who took up what position and why. With regard to the Council, the other main question relates to the scope of qualified majority voting, whether there will be a case for greater weighting for some decisions, and if so, what decisions. I do not think that opting out is a solution.

The Bill's explanatory memorandum states:

"Austria, Norway and Sweden are expected to be net contributors to the Community budget. They will contribute more than enough resources to cover the increase in Community spending resulting from enlargement. The balance will reduce the financial contributions of the existing Member States, including that of the United Kingdom, compared with what would otherwise have been the case."

That is a funny way of putting it. The reference to the UK suggests that it is not one of the existing member states. That may be legally necessary, but it is odd.

Not only as a result of accession but for other reasons, a review of the budgetary position will be required. That particularly affects us because of the United Kingdom rebate. We have concentrated too much on saying that we must keep the rebate. We should take a lead in trying to devise a system that relates gross national product to contribution—an outcome that would be fair to ourselves and to others.

I have not so far used the word "federal", which has often been bandied about, but the future European Union will be a federal Europe not a unitary Europe, and the accession of the four countries increases that likelihood. In those matters that we undertake together—political policy, which includes foreign policy, security and defence, economic and environmental policy—we must devise systems that give not only Governments—this is where I part company with the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North—but our citizens a direct opportunity to play a part in decision making at European Union level. The Liberal Democrat view of tomorrow's Europe is of a citizens' Europe, not an intergovernmental Europe.

The Foreign Secretary referred to the central and eastern European countries, which are still out in the cold, but which we all agree should ultimately accede. We need more than generalities of intent, even if they are well expressed. We need more open trade arrangements and to

be more specific in establishing a clearly defined time scale on membership of the Visegrad and Baltic countries, Slovenia and others.

I should like to continue, but time is short and many hon. Members wish to speak. The accession of Austria, Finland, Norway and Sweden is greatly welcomed by Liberal Democrats, and I very much hope that the Bill will receive a Second Reading without a Division.

6.44 pm

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): I do not want to be accused of the crime of optimism, but I welcome the accession of the four new members, assuming that it takes place in all four cases, because the changes greatly reinforce the opening up of a range of issues about the direction of Europe which have hitherto been closed. The institutional structure must be revamped. The institutional discussion will involve the size of the European Commission and its powers.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, my hon. Friend the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory), has rightly said that reviewing those powers in 1996 is an objective of British policy. Accession will change the entire style in which the Community is run and take us aeons away from the old Common Market, the old European Economic Community and even the European Community, which we joined some years ago and which many of us thought was the right way towards the great single market of 1992.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) said, with his usual insight and shrewdness, accession will change and challenge the common agricultural policy, the root foundation block of the old EEC, the deal between France and Germany secured by the great European statesmen, which would keep the whole thing together. There is no conceivable way in which the CAP as presently structured can even accommodate the Eftans. Finnish agriculture is a mix of earth and forest; Swedish agriculture is also different; Austrian agriculture is not that different from German or Swiss agriculture, but it is different from that in other countries. Norwegian agriculture is different again.

If the EFTA countries join, all those matters will have to be rejigged. If we move on, as I hope we shall, and bring in the Visegrad four and Slovenia, which has not applied but which, like the Visegrad countries, is anxious to come in on the coat tails of Austria, the concept of the CAP will be dissolved. There is no conceivable way in which the agricultural sectors in Poland or Hungary, which have a huge capacity and which could feed almost the whole of Europe, can be opened up and allowed to market their products, raise living standards and ensure that they achieve a democratic process and progress. That cannot be done without a fundamental reform of the centralised agricultural system on which the Community has been based.

That is one practical example of a much larger picture that is opening up as a result of the proposed accession of the new members. I welcome that even more because it gives us a chance to begin to develop our vision of the direction in which Europe will go in and after 1996. I agree that we should get on with that. We cannot wait for this funny reflection group, the prepatory committee, which is to be chaired by a Spanish gentleman and which is to be intergovernmental but, oddly, will include two Members of the European Parliament.

The matter should be triggered by the Bill, the act of accession of the three and the clamour of the Visegrad four to join the European Union, or at least to join in the political process of the Union, in the pillars of interior and justice matters and in a common foreign and security policy, if not the single market. We cannot wait around for the reflection group to reflect.

Nor can we wait for certain cliques in Bonn, Paris and Madrid to hijack the presidency for a whole series of six-month periods from now until 1996 and to impose through that device a totally federalist, out-dated and old-fashioned agenda. We cannot wait for any of those things.

Instead, we must get on and seize the opportunity, which I believe is presented in ever greater openness to us, to develop the alternative vision of Europe. We have now a golden opportunity to fill out in detail what we mean by a multi-track and multi-layered Europe, and to explain how we intend to set out an agenda that will challenge the old idea, which is still, I am afraid, enshrined in Maastricht, that all European affairs should be wrapped in a single hierarchical structure, and that a single institutional system should embrace everything.

We must challenge the idea that eventually the pillar of the single market should, by magnetism, pull the other pillars into a gigantic single trunk. We must show how we intend to go in another direction, how we have allies in the rest of Europe who will also move in that other direction, and how we intend to reinforce, and in some cases actually give, the intellectual lead so that that can be achieved.

Right hon. and hon. Members may say that my view is all optimism. The cry from Opposition Front-Bench Members has been that my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary is indulging in self-delusion, and that these changes are not happening. I tell the doubters what the new countries, such as Finland, are saying. Of course, for the moment, they are saying, "Let us just sign up. We want to get into the Union. Don't bother us with the details and the arguments; that will come later. We shall accept the acquis. Everything else will fall into place later."

Those countries are also saying to themselves that they cannot go on with the much-vaunted social policies and the much-vaunted economic policies that they have adopted in the past. We have heard a great deal about the glories of Scandinavian social policy. The hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) seems to have forgotten that, in Finland, there is 20 per cent. unemployment and that the Finns are crippled by the most enormous social budget.

The whole level of debate in Finland is about how to introduce deregulation, how to unscramble the overwhelming social burden, and how to move into an entirely modern stance, which would fit not with the Brussels of the social chapter and not with the Brussels of high Maastricht, but with a looser and much more competitive Europe. That is the debate going on in Finland. If the hon. Member for Rhondda thinks that that is not going on, he is ill informed and out of date.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): Is the right hon. Gentleman contending that unemployment in Scandinavian countries and in other countries is due to decent living and working conditions? If unemployment exists, as the Government say, because of factors outside

[Mr. Allan Rogers]

their control, surely that argument applies to Scandinavia as well. Surely unemployment is not directly related to the fact that the Scandinavian countries believe in decent conditions for workers.

Mr. Howell: What I am saying—I point to the facts—is that the much-vaunted social policies which Opposition Members believe to be so important—indeed, they act for the reinforcement of more centralised social policy in Brussels—have not brought the high standard of living, the glowing harmony and the high employment that we all want to see.

Mr. Duncan Smith: I take up my right hon. Friend's earlier point about this enlargement being only stage one of two stages of enlargement. The reality may be that the Germans and others will say, "We have given the British their prize of enlargement, so we can now get on with our other agenda. Let us push these others, who would really lead to reform of the institutions, to one side." We must leap into this now, and not hold back.

Mr. Howell: I totally agree. However, I do not fear that there will be resistance from Germany to bringing in the Visegrad four, as my hon. Friend suspects. On the contrary, the Germans, as they have been almost since the creation of modern Germany, are in the usual dilemma.

Germany is a huge country dominating the middle of Europe, but the Germans do not know whether to follow their powerful instinct to bring the states of eastern Europe as fast as they can into the European Union and into the security system, whether to put that second to binding themselves with France, or whether somehow to avoid the choice. Of course there is a choice, and it creates turbulence and a lack of clarity in German politics. That is interesting for the analyst outside, but it is a little disturbing.

However, I believe that the Germans will try to do both at once. They will seek to ensure that the Visegrad four come in, for a good reason. In a sense, they want countries with western values on their eastern border, as they have on their western border. They want a westernised eastern and central Europe, and that is why, for political reasons, they are already backing the entry of the Visegrad four in a way that makes the French extremely uncomfortable.

That point leads me to the view, which has not been mentioned today, that the Franco-German federalist axis, which is alleged to be so unstoppable and which, it is believed, will roll forward and impose a federalist agenda, is not as strong in its content and its inner meaning as it has been in the past. Major differences are emerging between the French and the Germans which should be understood, although not necessarily welcomed all the way, because we do not want the French and Germans to get into a state of hostility, as has been the case in the past 100 years. There are major questions, however, which take the French and the Germans in distinctly different ways.

It is essential that we back the German aim of bringing the eastern European countries into the European Union as fast as possible. I hope that the House sees the point that they cannot join the great single market tomorrow, but that they should be given the opportunity to join in any political developments outside the single market as soon as possible, and that they should be involved politically in every conceivable way.

I want to see those countries involved in security terms which means going further than "Partnership for Peace". I have never been very comfortable with the "Partnership for Peace" idea. It may suit Finland, one of the new accession countries, because of its position vis-a-vis Russia. It may suit some of the Baltic states, and it may suit Russia, which is signed up to it. However, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Poland are ready to move into a full, proper European security system and would like to do so as soon as possible.

I hope that the enlargement of NATO can embrace the eastern and central European countries, including any of the new countries joining the European Union, as soon as possible. I hope that we do not wait for Russia to struggle through all its own agonies and to work out its democratic problems. That could take decades, and it is on a completely different time scale from the needs of eastern Europe and the Visegrad four, which, as I said, I hope will follow the accession four with which we are now dealing.

This is a crucial moment, when we can, as my hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan Smith) said, begin to pile on the pace. We can begin to say that, now that we have the 15 or 16 and now that we have opened up the institutional and constitutional issues of how Europe should be organised, how we entrench subsidiarity, how we limit the powers of the Commission, how we build a Europe that is constitutionally of nation states, and how we halt the tendency for the whole thing to drift in a centralised direction, now is the opportunity to achieve the real objective of European union, which is to recapture for the democratic camp the lost states of eastern and central Europe which we thought we had won back at the end of the second world war but which were taken from us.

That movement is the greatest opportunity and the great leap forward of 1996. It is not a great leap forward towards an unattainable monetary union based on an unattainable single currency. It is not a great leap forward towards more federal institutions and a tighter, inward-looking western Europe. We do not want that kind of great leap forward. We want the great leap forward towards bringing these countries into the democratic system. That is a vision which I hope all hon. Members will articulate with more confidence than we have in the past.

We have a great confederation and a gigantic single market which runs from Finland and Lapland in the east to Lisbon in the west, and from the toe of Italy up to John O'Groats and to the northernmost point of Europe. It is a huge single market for which we should work. I must tell my right hon. and hon. Friends that it will include some qualified majority voting, perhaps in areas which we have not yet covered, and perhaps not in areas which are covered at present.

Outside that, we may employ the multi-track and multi-speed approach to all the additional political, defence and foreign-policy ambitions, as well as to the ambitions for intrusion into the nooks and crannies of social and national life in every conceivable and unnecessary way, and we need not insist on a single hierarchy and a single institutional system.

There is a vision out there which is receiving greater and greater support from people in all parts of Europe. Luckily, it unites—or should unite—the party of which I am a member. It should unite this Parliament, and it will unite Europe in taking itself forward to become a larger organisation, which will ensure peace and stability, and postpone for ever the return of the war which destroyed Europe in the past.

7 pm

Mr. Jim Marshall (Leicester, South): May I briefly address the final comments of the right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell)? I certainly agree that the next great challenge and leap forward for the European Union is the possible accession of the Visegrad countries, perhaps in a decade's time, followed by others. There is a curious irony that those countries, as the right hon. Gentleman said, will show far greater enthusiasm for and sympathy towards the military alliance of the European Union than the four impending members which we are discussing. That is not necessarily altogether in their favour, but it shows the eagerness with which those countries in central and eastern Europe wish to join the European Union. Therefore, I share with the right hon. Gentleman the hope that it will not be too long—probably a decade—before we consider the impending accession of those countries.

Along with the vast majority of hon. Members, I welcome the accession of the four countries in question. I share all the sentiments expressed by my right hon. and hon. Friends and echo what has been said about the empathy that we have with those four countries and the way in which we are looking forward, as social democrats, to working with them if—hopefully—they all accede to the European Union from January 1995. Most of the speeches have concentrated primarily on one pillar of the European Union: the economic community. That is clearly an important pillar, but I do not feel that sufficient regard has been paid to one of the other pillars of the Union—the common foreign and security policy which the Maastricht treaty established. I wish to address my remarks to the difficulties that we are likely to face after the accession of Austria, Finland, Norway and Sweden to the European Union.

Hon. Members do not need me to remind them that the Maastricht treaty established three pillars: first, the economic community; secondly, the internal aspects of the Union; and, thirdly, foreign and security policy. It also designated the Western European Union as the defence arm of common foreign and security policy. We have been struggling since then to get some kind of coherent common foreign and security policy which could be accepted by the present 12 members of the European Union. We have been struggling, but recent events, especially in the former Yugoslavia, show how little progress we have made in that regard. Inevitably, national interests have been paramount and have tended to hamper the search for a common foreign and security policy. In the case of Yugoslavia, we can cite Germany's natural tendency towards Croatia, and, more recently, Greek sympathy towards the Serbs. We have had that difficulty with the present 12 and such difficulties will probably increase with the accession of the four new countries.

If we consider the facts, three out of the four countries are traditionally neutral. I find it paradoxical that the Foreign Secretary of Sweden and the President of Finland have stated that they wish to enter the European Union. One of the reasons for that is that it will offer them greater security. They want greater security through membership of the European Union, but they are not prepared to be members of any of the military alliances which bind the core members. Clearly, that may well alter with the passage of time. Indeed, there have already been indications, especially from the Finnish, that their attitudes may alter, particularly after 1996. However, this Bill deals with the here and now and the period up to the intergovernmental conference in 1996. As I have said, the situation may change, but it means that, in the enlarged European Union of 16 members, 11 only—that includes Norway—will be full members of the Western European Union, while four members of the European Union, Sweden, Finland, Austria and Ireland, would not be members of any mil ary alliance whatever.

Sir Russell Johnston: Is the hon. Gentleman aware of the recent visit by Western European Union representatives to Finland? We were extremely warmly received and there was every indication that the Finns were radically reassessing their situation.

Mr. Marshall: As the hon. Gentleman knows, I am a member of the Western European Union, which is why I speak about it with such feeling. I have tried to express the view that the feelings of the four countries are the most likely to change in the near future, but the reality is that, at present, it is not their stated intention to become full members of the Western European Union. They have indicated their wish to be observers, which is in line with what I have already said to the House. The claim of the Western European Union to be the security and defence wing of the European Union is substantially weakened if one third of the membership of the Union are observers to it only. If we are to progress with a common foreign and security policy and a common defence policy, which will, one hopes, lead to common defence, to use the Maastricht phraseology, it clearly cannot be based on a military or defence strategy in which one third of the membership of the European Union are fully participating, fully paid-up members of the defence organisation and European pillar of NATO: the Western European Union.

May I remind the House that the accession of those four countries will bring a new set of problems? I think that it was the Foreign Secretary himself who said that, for the first time, the European Union will now have a common border with Russia. The Scandinavian countries have a close interest in the Baltic states. I am not suggesting for one moment that the United Kingdom does not have an interest in them too, but the interest of the Scandinavian countries is much greater than that of the United Kingdom. That applies especially to Sweden, which has invested a great deal of time, energy, money and diplomatic effort in supporting the Baltic states.

I remind the House that President Yeltsin referred to the three Baltic states as the "near abroad". In a parody of President Yeltsin, the Swedish Government referred to the three Baltic states as the Swedish "near abroad" to indicate their own interest in preserving the independence of the Baltic states.

My two examples show that the European Union will be faced with new and different problems. As a consequence, it will have to take a much closer interest than it has in the past in the political and economic development of Russia. I hope that we are prepared to be more proactive in assisting the Russians in the development of their economy than we have been hitherto. We must also take a closer interest in the foreign policy developments of Russia.

Having been pessimistic and probably having presented a far too negative case, I shall end on a positive note. Clearly the four applicant countries have great experience in international affairs. They have all played their full part in the development of the United Nations and in carrying

[Mr. Marshall]

out the United Nations peacekeeping and humanitarian efforts throughout the world. They have also assisted in the promotion of the welfare and interests of the third world. I hope that when they accede to the European Union and begin to play their full part in the development of the foreign policy of the Union, if not its security and defence policy, they will be able to push the EU towards a more imaginative approach to third world problems and to global environmental problems. If they are able to do that, their accession will more than outweigh the negative features that I have outlined and the pessimistic case that I presented about the four countries' participation in the security and defence organ of the European Union.

7.12 pm

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): I suppose that the first question that we must ask is whether it is necessary for the four applicant countries to accede to the European Union if we are to give them some of the advantages that many in this country would wish to extend to them. Surely it is not necessary to invite them to join the Union if we are to enter into some form of military alliance with them. Equally, it is not necessary to invite them into the Union if we wish to extend to them the advantages of free trade and to gain the advantage for our manufacturers of free trade with them. It must surely be that we principally advocate their entry into the Union because we believe that it will have some beneficial effect upon the Union itself.

I am glad that my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) is in the Chamber. He has a long and distinguised career in his criticism of the Union, or the Common Market as it used to be. When talking to me he always said, "Extend the Common Market; bring in more members. That will loosen it up." He used to use a different verb, but that was the effect of his remarks. He always argued that when the southern European countries came in the common agricultural policy would be loosened.

My right hon. Friend reminded us of the imaginative attitude that many of the people of southern Europe have towards the question of public finance. He felt that it would be unlikely that the Germans would wish to finance, say, a tobacco-support mechanism or the growing of notional olives on every piece of concrete in southern Italy. That has not happened yet. Equally, the loosening up of the CAP has not yet happened.

We are about to find that the cost of financing the CAP and the European Union has grown enormously, partly as a result of the entry of southern European countries and partly because of our great vision—all this vision—of convergence and industrial support. We would be opposed to it if we saw it emerging in the United Kingdom, but we manage to describe it with great enthusiasm when we see it elsewhere in Europe.

Is it proven that the entry of the four applicant countries will loosen up the Community? I have tried to ascertain what people mean when they talk about deepening the Union. To some, deepening is a term of abuse. To others, it is a sign of the Union developing in ways of which they approve.

It seems highly likely that the entry of the four countries will be to the Labour party's advantage in the sense that their entry will lead to the shaping of the Union in a manner of which it tends to approve. Each of the four countries will be in favour of the social chapter. I note that the hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) is nodding firmly. He has been one of my tutors in these matters over the years.

The four countries will be strongly in favour of the social chapter and will be more than likely to disapprove of our opt out. They will say that our opt out gives us an unfair advantage in competing in Europe. They will use the Community's institutions to impose the social chapter on us by various indirect methods connected mainly with the Single European Act. They will further impose it by the use of the federalist mechanism of law-making and law-enforcement within the Community. To that extent, their entry will surely lead to the further deepening of the Community.

The argument of my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North about the southern European countries and the CAP can again be used. We are to see the entry into the Union of four more agricultural economies with slightly different agricultures. That will again distort and make more expensive the CAP. By any rational standard, one would expect the Germans to say, "We have had enough. We do not want to support any more of these distortions. If these distortions are to be later extended to the traditional bread basket of Europe—Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, as it used to be—the cost will be enormous."

The loosening up process has been anticipated on so many occasions but it has not come yet. When most people talk about deepening, it is a term of art for what happens to be their particular concern about the Community as matters stand. There is much talk about our vision of Europe.

I hope that my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) will forgive me for being offensive, but he offers the House a lot of stuff about our vision of Europe being accepted by the rest of Europe. If a gentleman in the south of Italy is completing his application for some form of industrial or agricultural support, I do not suppose that he has in mind much of what my right hon. Friend said about his vision of Europe as a place where honesty, democracy and gentlemanly behaviour will overcome all national characteristics.

I dare say that the gentleman who is pulling down the ramp of a cattle wagon to unload a cow which is about to be walked across the border between the Republic of Ireland and the north in order to collect subsidies on each side of the border does not have much in mind talk about a vision of a democratic, honest and forward-thinking Europe. I doubt whether he will be completely overwhelmed and burst into tears of contrition as a result of the vision of Europe held by my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford.

Sir Russell Johnston: One could say, so what?

Mr. Budgen: I was just going to say what.

Instead of telling Europe how it should proceed, we should recognise that there are many individuals, parties and states in Europe who genuinely believe in a federal structure. No doubt, if we were Belgians, we would have a very different view about how our country might be united. If we were Italians, we might well say that we did

not trust our domestic institutions and that we would be happier to be ruled by European statesmen. Those are perfectly reasonable points of view.

My contention is that it is not much good making airy speeches about how our vision will conquer Europe. In the present circumstances, the best we can do is to decide what our view of Europe should be. We should try to assess domestic opinion and try to offer a little leadership in that regard.

Instead of going on about a vision for Europe, we should recognise that the most important misfortune that we have suffered as a nation in recent history was the mismanagement of our economy through our membership of the exchange rate mechanism, the failure of the Conservative party to understand that that membership was only the necessary preliminary to a single currency and the need for us, in our party and in our country, to argue with those who are still unprepared to accept the lesson of that humiliation.

It is no good saying that allowing the accession of these four countries is irrelevant to that point. When I said that to the Foreign Secretary, he replied that the accession of these countries has nothing to do with a single currency. However, my right hon. Friend should read some of the speeches which his fellow members of the Cabinet make from time to time.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer made an extremely important speech in Bonn on 29 June. When expressing his support for Sir Leon Brittan and for Mr. Lubbers, he said:

"These men are all men with a vision of European Union. They support the deepening as well as the widening of the Union."

The Chancellor of the Exchequer then very helpfully explained his views further on television the following Sunday. According to *The Daily Telegraph*, the Chancellor said:

"However with the prospect of a further enlargement of the European Union he indicated that a common currency would soon be inevitable.

'The idea that they will all be trading in 20 freely floating currencies based on 20 monetary authorities I would find highly unlikely.'

'It is possible that they would all trade in Deutschmarks.'"

No one can accuse my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer of being overwhelmed by an interest in detail. It is possible that he did not draw the distinction between a common currency and a single currency. However, he has been the most vigorous advocate of a single currency.

When he appeared before the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee recently, my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer said that he had not had time to read the book which his old friend Sir Leon Brittan had written about Europe. I recommend that book. It is a very important and interesting summary of the present views of many people in the Tory party. On page 54 of his book, Sir Leon writes about the membership of the club:

"This is crucial, for the government leaders who signed the Treaty are fundamentally aware of two factors: first, that some of them may be ready and willing to form a single currency before others, and must not be stopped from doing so; and secondly that, in the long term, a single currency will work more effectively the more European nations join."

The Chancellor of the Exchequer and Sir Leon Brittan believe that the accession of these four countries, far from loosening the organisation in the European Union, will actually deepen it, make it more integrated and lead inexorably—they argue—towards a single currency.

I have spoken at some length and I am sure that my colleagues would like to contribute to the debate. Let us not in this House make vague, vacuous assertions about the way in which our European neighbours will change their view. They, like us, formed their view perhaps in childhood or in late adolescence, but owing to the deep experiences of their countries, families, towns and villages, they will not be influenced by foreign words, no matter how grand or eloquent.

All we can do in this House is to try to see how such policies work for our country and offer some element of leadership and choice. At least we can now say that the Labour party is moving clearly and firmly towards the advocacy of a federal European state. It will soon be the duty and honour of the Tory party to offer choice to the country.

7.27 pm

Mr. Peter Mandelson (Hartlepool): Before the contribution of the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen), I was going to say that the one thing that has tended to unite those of us who are habitués of these European debates is our support for enlargement. The hon. Gentleman fractured, or at least splintered, that fragile unity among us. That is a shame because, like hon. Members who have already spoken in the debate, I strongly welcome the accession of Austria, Norway, Finland and Sweden to membership of the European Union.

In the past, we have tended to differ, and the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West referred to those differences, on whether deepening should accompany widening, whether widening means diluting, as some hope, and therefore whether widening means more or less integration within the European Union. I can say unambiguously that I entirely share the analysis of the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West. He got it absolutely right. He was spot on. To those who see widening as an alternative to deepening, I say that, in the history of the European Community, enlargement has always led to greater integration.

The economic and political forces that drive the process of European integration are invariably strengthened, not weakened, as more nations gain membership. The greater the number of members, the clearer and tighter—not the vaguer and looser—the institutional arrangements have to become to accommodate the decision-making among the increased number of member states. That, of course, means more complexity, more tough bargaining, more compromise and more give and take between that greater number of member states. It also means, inevitably, more majority voting within the European Union. We must face up to that. That has been the lesson of enlargement in the past and it will be the case as we move from a 12-member to a 16-member Union. It will certainly be true in spades with the coming challenge as the Union is enlarged through membership of east European countries.

Given the complexities and the difficult currents within the Union through which we must navigate, it is all the more important to have a clear and agreed vision of where we want to end up. We also need a good route map to enable us to get there. It is lamentable and unfortunate, and a great loss for our country as well as for the entire European Union, that that vision and end goal, as well as the route map, are notably absent from the Government's

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approach. On its current performance and in the light of its current divisions, the Tory party seems incapable of providing them.

I shall discuss where the European Union is going and some of the problems that it must face on the way. I shall be as blunt as some hon. Members who have already spoken, including the right hon. Members for Guildford (Mr. Howell) and for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen). On the subject of further enlargement, I believe that a continent like Europe, which is so strongly linked by its geography, its history and its culture, and whose political stability and security is so dependent on close work and co-operation, should not in principle exclude any applicant country which wishes to join its union. That is an important observation and an important principle to establish.

We want to extend Europe's influence in the world and therefore we want the European Union to grow. We want to extend current European stability and security throughout the continent. Whether the impetus is to safeguard Europe from continental war, to expand trade and develop markets, to build up a third economic force to rival the might of the United States, Japan and the Pacific rim or to extend social benefits and environmental protection to all European citizens, the case for stronger co-operation and integration in an enlarged European Union is overwhelming.

Membership of the Union must depend on each new country's compatibility—membership is neither a foregone conclusion, nor automatic. Given the different stages of economic, political and social development achieved in the Visegrad countries, their membership of the Union will not be gained speedily and smoothly. It will not happen overnight.

The challenge from east Europe is clear to us. Those countries are striving to become successful, stable and socially united market economies. The help that they need to restructure, to gain reassurance as well as security and access to markets can be provided only by the west. In the years to come, therefore, the central task for the European Union will not simply be to forge even closer integration among its existing members. That was the Maastricht agenda. It was an appropriate and relevant agenda, but we have moved on from it as events and changes throughout Europe have overtaken the thinking that underpinned it. We must reach out much further and concentrate increasingly on adapting the workings and institutions of the European Union to meet the needs of a larger and more diverse membership of nations.

That will involve a gradual process of association leading to stronger links, perhaps with the various pillars of the Union. The right hon. Member for Guildford made an apposite observation about that. I see no reason why the Visegrad four should not increasingly become associated with, or linked to, some of the political mechanisms and pillars of the Maastricht Union without necessarily becoming fully drawn into the economics of the Union, and far less becoming full members of it. The right hon. Member's observation about that was extremely important and valid. We want such membership to be gained finally, but it must be organised. The process of change and adaptation will be slow. It must come at a time when it can be afforded—when the costs can be borne by the member countries and, not least, by the European Union.

Whatever path the enlargement follows and whatever applicant countries are involved, some daunting issues, apart from cost, must be faced. I do not discount the need to overhaul radically the common agricultural policy or the complexities posed by the creation of economic and monetary union. However, without any question, as the Union grows, the biggest issue that will confront us will be the necessary rethink of the ways in which it makes its law, enforces its decisions and regulates its markets. Those issues represent the most daunting challenge to those of us who are committed to the development of the European Union.

We know what is wrong. A lurid picture of those problems was painted by the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North and I do not mind saying that I accept a number of his criticisms, but I do so from a different standpoint. I acknowledge those problems through a desire to overcome them rather than in the hope that they should continue and possibly weaken the European Union.

We know about the strains and shortcomings in Europe's methods of work, the lack of transparency in its decision making, the poverty of national debate and scrutiny of its laws and decisions and the limited accountability of its officials. That democratic and administrative malaise within the Union is seriously undermining it. It is impeding its development, undermining its legitimacy and its public appeal. It is important to address those problems, because they are the cause of a growing public revolt. I do not exaggerate that, and I do not support the course that others would like us to follow in our denunciation, but we have witnessed the emergence of a public revolt against what is perceived to be a remote, out-of-touch and uncontrollable bureaucracy in the European Union. That must be dealt with if, as the Labour party and those of us who are strongly committed to Europe and approach the matter not as Euro-sceptics but as convinced Europeans want, the European Union is to be strengthened, its sense of purpose restored, and Britain's place in it reaffirmed.

Without stronger democratic development, hand in hand with greater economic integration and enlargement of the Union, public acceptance of both that integration and enlargement will be fragile and may even be placed in jeopardy. That is the key lesson to be learnt from the experience of the ratification of the Maastricht treaty and the negotiation of the entry of the four new member states whose accession we are debating tonight.

Important questions must be asked in closing the democratic deficit that has become such an issue in relation to the Union—how European legislation is initiated in the Commission; how the Commission is formed, and who forms and approves it; which decisions are taken and on what basis in the Council of Ministers; what involvement the European Parliament has; what scrutiny national Parliaments undertake; whether an entirely new hierarchy of decision making should be instituted, with heavier procedures attached to the European Union's weightier acts; and, above all, how we shall open all that to greater democratic scrutiny and accountability within our own nations and among our publics at home. Those and other issues need to be seriously addressed and debated as further enlargement is pursued. I do not for a moment describe that as a Euro-sceptic agenda. On the contrary, it is a positive, thinking, pro-European agenda, on which

those of us who are convinced Europeans should not for one moment cede to those who are hostile to the whole project.

It has been a recent orthodoxy, at least in the Foreign Office, to regard the intergovernmental conference in 1996 as an essentially limited and unambitious exercise—more a 3,000 mile service than a radical overhaul. I understand the nervousness of those who went through the whole Maastricht experience, whether they were officials, Ministers or those who participated in so many debates. I understand the reluctance of all those concerned to embark on anything that remotely resembles that Maastricht process. None the less, that attitude is wrong.

Even if the outcome is smaller than anticipated, our sights should be lifted and our horizons should be wider than that suggested by a mere 3,000 mile service. Our aims should be to put a lot into 1996, play a constructive part in the IGC, help shape the decisions and, most importantly, loudly proclaim and stand up for the IGC's results rather than gloss over its conclusions or run away from public debate about them. We should not refuse to stand up and give an account of what has been agreed at that conference for fear that public debate may re-open internal party divisions. That has bedevilled our approach to date and it has been very weakening as a result. We must give a lead. That may be hoping for more than the Government can give, hobbled as they are by the terrible internal tensions and divisions within their party, but that positive, creative approach to the IGC is extremely badly needed.

If Britain is to be remotely successful at the IGC, the Government, in their contributions to the debate, whether in Britain or among our European partners on the continent, must stop posing the choice for Europe's future —whether it is enlarged or not—as between a minimalist, free-trade area with weak, shackled institutions and loose-knit intergovernmental working versus a centralised, federalist organisation, robbing its member states of their sovereignty and riding roughshod over their traditions and national Parliaments. Both options are equally unrealistic, irrelevant and undesirable. It is hardly surprising that, given that choice between almost nothing and rampant federalism-centralism, many of our constituents have become a little sceptical. It is a false, wrong-headed and thoroughly misleading choice to put to the British people.

A third option gives a different vision of a larger, more integrated Europe that is wider and deeper in its economic, political and defence integration, but whose institutions and working practices are radically reformed to make it more democratic, more accountable, more responsive, less wasteful and more efficient, with proper devolution of power outwards and downwards from the centre. That is the Europe that we need for the future. We must work for that and, above all, we must argue for it. If the present Government will not do so, the rest of us must.

7.46 pm

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): I am grateful to be called to speak in this debate, especially following the characteristically thoughtful and profound contribution about Europe's future direction from the hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson). I hope that I shall not embarrass him or his colleagues if I say that I agreed with a substantial amount of what he said.

I have never considered it a weakness if hon. Members substantially agree across the Floor of the House on European matters. On major votes of principle on European matters and at all the developmental stages since we joined the European Community in 1973, the House has a strong tradition of big, built-in, natural majorities for the next significant stage of development. That may not have applied to specific legislation, in respect of which the whipping system and the Government majority system in whatever form were in play and where the majority was commensurate with the party reflection. But on the big issues of future European development, a great meeting of minds in the House has impinged on public opinion outside.

The European Movement, an all-party European movement of which the hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright) is an active member, holds its ordinary meetings in various places throughout the country. The reaction of the audiences, of all political affiliations and none—some people adhere to no party whatever—are encouraging and enthusiastic. Basically, subject to details and differences of opinion on individual items, people are keen on these developments.

It always encourages but depresses us when audiences ask, "Why haven't the politicians told us that before?" People want to know why they have had such a distorted account of the development of the European Community and Union from the press—and particularly from a number of malevolent broadsheet newspapers owned by non-British people who are pursuing a campaign of hatred towards the European Union. I use that strong word deliberately. The campaign is even more stark in the tabloids and it leads to a great deal of scepticism among the public because it creates a vacuum.

I am a keen Conservative and enthusiastic supporter of nearly all the Government's policies but am nevertheless of the view that, tragically, the problem was added to in our European election campaign. As has already been said, this is our first debate on the European accession treaty since the European elections. The Conservative stance in those elections was unnecessarily negative, which was a great shame; ultimately, it sought merely to cover our internal divisions in the parliamentary party. We were so busy campaigning and trying to keep the party together that we ended up simply appeasing some of the more active—and, indeed, geriatric—members of the local associations. One Sunday newspaper found in a survey that the average age of the most active members in our local Conservative associations was about 62, which is fairly disturbing in its own right.

I do not believe that that scepticism is other than simply the result of a vacuum—unfortunately, as I have said, a distorted account of these developments is given both in the House and in the British press. I do not believe that we are talking about the genuinely sceptical people who want to see a recrudescence of nationalism or a strong nation-statism of one sort or another, whatever the future structures. If we take the youngest generation, it is axiomatic that they are extremely keen and natural Europeans, and want politicians to take the lead.

In the German European elections, even though they were somewhat jolted by the lower-than-ever turnout—and others will remind me of the percentage if it is relevant to the debate—there was literally no difference of any sort in the European policy stance of the major parties. In Britain, that would be regarded as eccentric and bizarre. Basically, if the development of the European Union is a good thing

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and is in the interests of this country and other member states, there does not have to be a huge difference of opinion.

If a Government succumb to the temptation—and I say this with great sadness—to create official state policy on the basis of appeasing a small number of my reactionary old-fashioned colleagues here who want to put the clock back not 20 or 50 years but to 1850—or probably earlier than that, and probably to before the Reform Act of 1832—rather than constructing a positive and enthusiastic policy in the literal, intrinsic and good interests of this country, they will inevitably get into increasing difficulties. I deeply regret that.

The reality is that, if all Governments and parties go too far down the un-European path, that brings rather sad conclusions to those who seek to perpetrate those policies. We have seen that in the past, and I hope that it will not be repeated in the future because the public are crying out for strong leadership on these matters. That is why I think that there will be a strong welcome among the British people for the accession of these four members if the subsequent referendums in three of them also prove to be positive—despite the fact that there is inevitably a question mark over Norway.

If Norway votes no, membership is not compulsory; it can go away. It does not have to join, but I would be sad if that happened. All the way through the strands of debate and argument in those countries, from the official Government statements to the debates in their own Parliaments, we have seen the enthusiasm for accepting the acquis communautaire. There is no question but that the people in those countries, and particularly their Governments and governing parties, feel that to be so.

I will not prolong the debate unnecessarily by quoting in detail. It just so happens, however, that I have the official negotiating statements made by those Governments recommending membership to their people. I shall quote the statement from a country which had a spectacular referendum result. The British press, by the way, said that the result would be either a no or a tiny yes margin—and look what happened. I did not see much exegesis and interpretation in the British press afterwards: there was no questioning of the sensible Austrian population about why they were so wise as to make this decision. I shall quote from the official Austrian Government's statement from the publication "On the Threshold to a New Europe":

"the European Union enshrined in the Maastricht Treaty stands for much more than the Single Market. The process of European integration was designed by the political vision of a Europe undivided and prosperous. So far, this work of peaceful cooperation has yielded in European history four decades of what we hope will remain a lasting peace. European integration"—

that is what they want officially and that is what they voted for—

"has also been an answer to hatred, nationalism and genocide—phenomena that we believed to be a thing of the past."

There is the answer. There is no question but that some of the young fogies in the Conservative party and elsewhere—there are one or two elsewhere, and I imagine that there are also old fogies in the Labour party—would like to put the clock back as well. There is no question but that, a few years ago, enlargement would have been the original idea for stopping the integration process. But they all accept the acquis communautaire.

I shall quote from the equivalent official statement from Corfu of the Finnish Government:

"The European Union is a key factor in strengthening the security of our continent. Security grows out of social responsibility, interaction, respect for human life and economic prosperity. In such a Europe there are no economic or social lines of division and all states are able to participate equally in the integration process. Enlargement of the Union promotes the enhancement of stability throughout the continent.

Finland supports the Union's economic and political objectives."

To move on briefly and quickly, I shall quote from the Swedish press release which was issued in March when the negotiations were concluded:

"Swedish membership also means enlargement in a number of other crucial areas of cooperation: environmental issues, international efforts to combat crime, narcotics questions and refugee matters. All these areas are examples of problems which can only be solved by means of broad European and international cooperation.

Membership is the only option which will enable Sweden to participate in this cooperation."

Finally, Norway: once again, the British newspapers have attempted to say that hesitations will turn out to be no votes. I am not sure about that; we will have to wait to see how one interacts with and impinges on the other. I quote from the official statement issued by the Norwegian Government at the same time as the Swedish one:

"Our national interests are best served if Norway participates fully in the further development of Europe, on an equal footing with our Nordic neighbours and European allies.

All the countries of Europe have a great need for close cooperation on employment, economic stability, welfare, social security and environmental issues. Binding cooperation in these areas is especially important for a country with such an open economy as Norway."

Can we also get away from the phantasmagoric mythology which has been repeated time and time again by certain foolish people in this country? It is suggested that, for some reason, there is a huge change of opinion among the other existing members—or, indeed, among the four new members, if the other three countries follow Austria's lead in joining the Union soon, which I expect them to do—and that there must be major hesitations and fundamental second thoughts about the development of the Union and a resiling from the Maastricht treaty and the Single European Act. There is no evidence at all that that is so—other than the harsh reality of the recession and the fact that that and mass unemployment produce crude political movements arising in various member states which may have a nationalistic impetus which is stronger than the more traditional and conventional parties in different countries, and other than the vacuum created by the gaps in the traditional enthusiasm for European matters which has always been a feature of the Conservative party and the Conservative Government. That is the solemn and dangerous thing which we in our party and in the whole of this Parliament must accept.

Again, that is illustrated by the idea that suddenly in the campaign it was suggested that there would be different speeds for different member states, and the total misrepresentation of what the Commission is about and what it has been doing. I do not disagree with the assertion by the hon. Member for Hartlepool that we need another searching look at all these matters, particularly because of enlargement. As the Union gets larger, we must have a more tightly drawn up, integrated structure. This is not an irony; it is a reality if we are to make progress to the next stage—the greater use of qualified majority voting. To my mind, that is the quintessence of a democratic mechanism,

but it is regarded by some of our colleagues with scorn, derision, contempt and hatred. How can they describe that as being other than totally democratic and for the most part in the deep interests of this country rather than detrimental to it in future?

We see the multi-speed idea suddenly arising. I hope that it will disappear as quickly as it has arisen because of its intrinsic superficiality. Some people use a different phrase—"variable geometry". I shall quote what Mr. Andriessen said several years ago about the matter of variable geometry and what I believe it means to those who are involved, whatever their domestic political party adherence. By the way, that is often much less relevant in the European Councils and discussions than we think here. There is no obsession with someone being a Conservative, a Christian Democrat, a socialist or of the far left. There is a working together with people from all sorts of different political disciplines.

I was struck by what Mr. Andriessen said in April 1991:

"Creative thinking is now required to define arrangements whereby the Community could offer the benefits of membership, and the accompanying gains for stability, without weakening its drive towards further integration and without subjecting the fragile structures of new market economies to excessive pressure. This could be achieved through affiliate membership, a new concept not provided for by the Community treaties or by the Europe Agreements, and at present not on the agenda of the inter-governmental conference. Affiliate membership would provide membership rights and obligations in some areas, while excluding others, at least for a transitional period."

No one is suggesting that notion now, because there is no suggestion of anyone applying for membership on that basis. To be sure, some non-member countries still have association agreements, as they have had for a long time. Nevertheless, the quotation provides an insight into the thinking of those who assumed that there might be an alternative way of applying for membership, with endless opt-outs and hesitations, and with strident demands for instant second thoughts, should countries wish to press ahead with certain developments in the Union. I hope that that puts the record straight.

The same idea lies behind the discussions that can be heard going on in the newly elected Strasbourg Parliament. No one is having second thoughts on these matters—none that I can detect—although there are inevitable differences about details of policy. That is only natural; we would not expect there to be automatic consensus on all areas of policy. It would be very silly to suppose that there could be.

There are still internal party divisions in the House, although for the moment they may be papered over in the Labour party by a soi-disant unity. It will be intriguing to see how long that lasts. I would expect it to last at least until the next general election. There are some who believe that, if there were ever a Labour Government—which I hope there will not be—the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) would act as the leading old fogey in his party in a campaign against greater European integration.

If we go along with such ideas, this country will be in mortal danger of losing its way once again. The national sovereignty of member states is not under attack in any of these plans—if it were, I would not be in favour of them. I have never detected a single instance of loss of sovereignty; those who think that it has been lost are suffering from fantasies of old parliamentary doctrine—ideas that are no longer part of the real world. Sovereign countries can work together in more and more closely integrated structures and with qualified majority voting. That serves only to enhance their intrinsic national sovereignty.

The more axiomatically desirable something is, the less we tend to discuss it. That was certainly true of NATO, which in the cold-war period was axiomatically considered a good idea. Of course there was an external threat, so the parallel is not exact, but because it was regarded as good it was felt that there was no real need to discuss it at length. That is how other member states often regard membership of the EU. They believe that it is axiomatically good for their national strengths and their future prosperity.

Why cannot we come up to date? Why cannot the House of Commons be more mature about these matters and devise a cross-party consensus without the fear of being dull? I am sure that the Minister would agree that we need a properly constructed policy and that we should not worry unduly about a small minority in our party, which should not be allowed to dictate terms and to demand that we agree to more of the items on its agenda: "You gave way to our hesitations over Maastricht. Sorry, but we forgot to mention another 11 items on our agenda."

It would be a most unwelcome development if the Conservative Government acceded to such demands. The Government will gain support if they succeed in recreating our traditional enthusiasm for membership of a growing and enlarged European Union.

8.3 pm

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): I am glad to follow the hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes), who made a characteristically positive speech about the European Union. He criticised his own party's campaign in the European election. Whatever else may be said about that campaign, it was a resounding failure, in that it produced the Conservatives' worst result this century.

I want to refer later to what the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) said about widening and deepening, but he claimed that I was one of his tutors on the subject of the EU. If so, he must have been an extremely inattentive student.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson) on his thoughtful speech about the European Union and its direction. I also intend to take up several of his points.

Like every other hon. Member who has spoken, I welcome the treaty of accession, signed in June of this year in Corfu and admitting Norway, Austria, Finland and Sweden. It is good news that the Austrian referendum gave a resounding yes to entry. I hope that that will prove a good augury for the referendums to be held later this year in Norway, Finland and Sweden.

In some ways, the four former EFTA countries are natural members of the EU. For many years, the Austrian economy has been closely tied to the German. The three Scandinavian countries are prosperous welfare democracies, which will strengthen the EU and which should have little difficulty adapting to membership. They will certainly have little difficulty supporting the social chapter. The hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West rightly pointed out that the Government are gaining no allies in that respect. On the contrary, Labour will gain allies when those countries join, as I hope they will.

From a purely economic perspective, the surprising thing is how long it took after Britain had joined the EC for

[Mr. Giles Radice]

these four EFTA countries to follow suit. The explanation is political. Finland had a special relationship with the former Soviet Union, Austria and Sweden were neutral, and Norway was the Scandinavian country furthest from Brussels and the European centres of power.

It is nevertheless good news that the four are likely to join the EU. As the Foreign Secretary said, Second Reading provides us with a good opportunity to debate the strategic direction of the European Union. Should it, for instance, take in more members? If so, which ones? Should widening take priority over deepening, or do both processes go hand in hand? What does the accession of these countries say about popular support for the Union? What can be done to further that support? Those are all important questions.

I believe that the EU's greatest task is to help to bring lasting stability, prosperity and democracy to the former Soviet bloc countries. That applies especially to the Visegrad four, but it does not exclude other countries such as Slovenia and the Baltic states. This is partly an argument about history and culture. I think it was Lady Thatcher who said that Warsaw, Budapest and Prague are European cities too. Partly, too, it is an argument about our self-interest. We do not want these countries failing on our borders. If they do fail, huge numbers of migrants will come to our countries—hence the self-interest.

There is also the sometimes forgotten fact that the establishment and underwriting of democracy has always been the European Union's underlying purpose. It was never just a free trade area. Had it been, Spain and Portugal could have joined much earlier. The European Union is above all a grouping of democratic countries, and it is primarily to help to provide a lasting basis for democracy that it is so crucial that the EU lay down a positive, clear timetable for the entry of the former communist countries.

As some hon. Members have said, if the task of enlargement to the east is accepted by existing members, there will be some implications. There is the issue of CAP reform. Euro-sceptics sometimes hopefully suggest that widening the EC somehow rules out deepening. That is not the case.

A European Union of 20 or even 25 members will inevitably have to change its operating rules if it is to work effectively. It will have to look at the number of Commissioners and how they are appointed, and at strengthening the presidency to facilitate business. There is already a problem about that. It will have to look at the transparency of the Community institutions, and will have to reappraise the weighting between big and small countries.

My argument with the Government over the Ioannina compromise was not so much the issue as the fact that they chose to raise it at this inappropriate time. Above all, the EU must look at the greater use of majority voting. Anyone who does not see that as a serious issue is not facing the reality of the Union, because a Community of 16, let alone 20 or 25, cannot be run without a great deal more majority voting.

Those will all be vital questions for 1996, but even more important is the need to involve the peoples of Europe in the European Union. I hope that the EFTA countries will show in their referendums that they want to join the Union. The Maastricht referendum in France was narrowly won but the result was uncertain, and two referendums were necessary in Denmark before the Maastricht treaty was supported.

Mr. Dykes: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that there is a big difference between a compulsory referendum under constitutional arrangements and one that is an optional extra designed by a political leader which goes wrong for internal reasons?

Mr. Radice: I am coming to that, and I thank the hon. Gentleman for keeping me on the right track.

In an excellent recent speech on the Union which I advise hon. Members to read, my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) rightly said that it cannot be a grand design handed down from on high from Government to the governed, and that Europe must be argued for. *[Interruption.]* We do not always argue for it. We argued for it on entry, but we do not go on arguing for it. We must continue to argue for it, and when we do things will change.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield rightly argues not just for an increase in the powers of the European Parliament but for the involvement of national Parliaments in the process. We have failed to do that throughout the Union.

Mr. Spearing: I commented to myself rather than to the House that the argument has been going on for 15 years. Does that not show either that a mistake was made or that there are continuing doubts that have some validity?

Mr. Radice: My hon. Friend has never accepted the result of the first referendum in 1975, so in a sense we are arguing on different levels. I am saying that we must make a case for what is done, that we must argue for the Maastricht treaty.

I was involved in both the French and Danish referendums. The problem was that they were ad hoc referendums, and were related mainly to national events. President Mitterrand decided to have one because he thought that it would strengthen his political position. They were held at different times, and had a knock-on effect. They were fought primarily on national lines and often accentuated party differences.

There is a case for referendums, but they should be Europewide, and should take place simultaneously, on the same day across Europe, rather in the manner of European elections. That might avoid some of the purely domestic political issues that enter the debate.

The hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnson) does not support referendums, but I think that we should look at the idea. Purely Europewide referendums could highlight European aspects of policy and would force politicians to argue for change and involve the people in that change. The problem is that politicians have sometimes not argued the case. The Government certainly did not argue the case for Maastricht, just for its opt-outs. That was hardly an argument for Maastricht, and the people were not involved.

Britain must be involved in all these debates. It cannot be an effective member of the European Union, half in and half out, an occasional country member, an offshore island semi-detached from the continent. We must play a leading part in all the debates ahead. In that context, the

triumphalist tone that the Foreign Secretary occasionally allowed to creep into his speech was totally inappropriate to the facts.

Under this Government, Britain is not taken seriously, as it ought to be, in European debates, and the reason is simple. Our partners are uncertain of our intentions and motives, and do not know whether the Government will be blown off course by a band of very determined rather skilful and in some respects quite able Euro-sceptics. The Government must make up their mind. It is about time that they said firmly to their rebels that we can achieve more together in Europe than we can alone, and that Britain will at last begin to play a positive part in the European Union and in the debate about its direction.

8.16 pm

Mr. Ray Whitney (Wycombe): I join in the warm welcome expressed by nearly all contributors to the debate for the proposal that the four new candidates should accede to the European Union. It is significant that the Governments of those countries have decided to apply, and I hope that their peoples will endorse that decision.

Those applications have been made despite the fact that the past two or three years have been difficult for the Union. We all know the reasons, and they are related not only to the economic recession but to the challenges of Bosnia and other foreign policy difficulties. Despite that, those countries clearly understand the benefits and advantages to their nations of membership of the European Union.

I hope that the decision by those four Governments will send a message to those in this country, some of whom are in the House, who are misguided and muddle-headed about the concept of the European Union and about the advantages and benefits that membership offers this country.

There are two types of misapprehension—I use as kind a word as I can. A small minority cling to the idea that Britain should leave the European Union. There are not many people in that minority, but there are a few, and there are possibly one or two of them in the House. I hope that they will pause for thought and consider that, after such a long time, these four balanced, normal countries which we respect have decided that membership of the Union is in their national interests.

A rather larger minority is much more important, because it is much more difficult and has a damaging political impact. That minority constantly suggests—not often spelt out in concrete terms, but implied—that the answer is a free trade area. Hon. Members and others who hold that view must surely pause to think that those four nations who for years adhered to the European Free Trade Area and then to the European Economic Area have decided that that is not enough, that it is not the way to promote and develop their national interests.

They have decided that the benefits and advantages, together with the challenges and difficulties of European Union membership, will deliver the goods for Austria, Finland, Norway and Sweden. As the majority of hon. Members well understand, what delivers the goods for the people of those nations is what will deliver the goods for the people in this country. That must be the message of the application for accession from those four countries.

Another point that I hope will be taken to heart is that each of those countries has a very strong and distinct national identity; a sense of its own nationhood. It is inconceivable that they would be misguided enough to sign up for some smudgy blur of a centralised united states of Europe. That is not their concept; it is certainly not my concept or that of the great majority of hon. Members on both sides of the Chamber. That, too, is a message that I hope the doubters and the sceptics take home. I hope that they will then finally drop their neuroses, some of which have been expressed in speeches tonight.

I deeply respect the views of the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) on many matters. Indeed, I strongly share his views on NATO. However, I do not share his views on Europe.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) trotted out the bogeymen. It appears that the right hon. Gentleman and my hon. Friend have discovered that, lurking on the continent of Europe, there are people who are actually in favour of a centralised and united states of Europe. They seem to be terrorised by, and terrified of, that amazing discovery. They should have a little more confidence. I have confidence that we will achieve a union of the European Community that does not surrender to Mr. Bitterlich, who was cited by the right hon. Gentleman as evidence.

The one point on which I differ from the hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson), who otherwise made a very helpful speech, is his suggestion that there is a third option. I believe there may be 30 or 40 options. That is the excitement and challenge of developing and building the European Union. That challenge faces us all. I wish that the carping and the negativism would now stop, so that, in the months and years ahead, we can all—whatever party we belong to, or if we belong to none—try to work out the shape of the European Union and the British approach to the intergovernmental conference in 1996.

I am usually regarded as an optimist, but it would be optimism of a high order to believe that we could develop a national cross-party consensus towards the IGC. However, there is a broad agreement on the sort of relationship with our European partners that we want to develop. I also believe that the instinct felt by me and many others in this House is shared by many on the continent.

That is the challenge; that is the excitement. I hope that we can hold our debates without negativism and carping, and that we can join our 11 existing and four new partners in constructing a European Union that can get over the difficulties and meet the challenges from the rest of the word that we must surely face.

8.24 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I agree with the hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney) about facing the challenges in the world. However, I am not sure that the encomiums of the treaty and the assumptions behind competing economic blocs meet that case. If there is to be a new world order and community in which tensions and economic competition do not develop into armed conflict, as they have in the past, we must do something better than the treaty before us.

Despite the depleted numbers in the Chamber at this stage of the debate, I sense that a new tone has been struck. There is an unusual axis between Hartlepool and Shropshire. Indeed, branches of that axis may even extend as far as Harrow. I join those who have extolled some of the thoughts behind the speech of my hon. Friend the

[Mr. Nigel Spearing]

Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson). I do not think that he and I will agree, but I hope that the House agrees that some of my thoughts on enlargement are at least worthy of consideration.

The half-agreement that, uncharacteristically, appears to have broken out across the House between what are sometimes called in the press the well-known suspects at either extreme of the argument is due to the fact that those hon. Members have the ability objectively to analyse the observable facts. Even if they disagree on the direction from which we have come or should go, at least they can analyse the facts objectively.

I want to deal largely with the Nordic states. Austria, for obvious cultural, linguistic and historical reasons, is rather separate. I have not listened to every speech tonight, but I do not think that anyone has mentioned the existence of the Nordic Union. It is an existing, genuine, international organisation that has not been paid the attention that it is due. How many countries would give up the idea of a national airline? Scandinavian Air Services is an example of that.

Iceland is a member of the Nordic Union, but is not joining the EU. There has been the north Atlantic extension of Denmark into the Faroes. The Scandinavian countries look to the Baltic countries, with which their historic links are great. They have long-standing trade and cultural agreements. If they join the Union, there will be a greater and more rigid frontier between our friends in Scandinavia and our friends in the Baltic. That would not necessarily be wise.

Again, objective observation shows that all those countries have had a specific and important history which will not sit well with the way in which the treaties are currently operated. Sweden is a former imperial power whose upper House of Parliament of landowners voted itself out of existence in the early 19th century. It did not even remain an advisory body. Norway became a new nation only this century, having been part of a greater union—"union" having been a dirty word in Norway. Should it virtually give up being essentially its own state in the same century in which it achieved independence?

Mr. Denis MacShane (Rotherham): Norway might have become an independent state only at the beginning of this century, but it was always a proud and independent nation. There is a difference.

Mr. Spearing: Indeed: some of our hon. Friends may make the same comment about our northern member of the United Kingdom. My hon. Friend will probably have the facts at his fingertips later. The political fact that I emphasise was probably correct.

Denmark—a remarkable nation—has commonality with the others but is distinct. There is the old joke about the Schleswig-Holstein question, but it is no joke in Denmark—a country about the size of a Land in Germany that, through collective effort, produced an enormous social and agricultural revolution 100 years ago, largely through co-operative enterprise, not competition, that transformed that country's landscape.

When I spoke to Danish officials on a visit by Select Committee members not long ago, they had to admit that, in acceding to the European single agricultural policy and its development, they are risking the development of Denmark's own agricultural industry, created over the centuries. Finland has every reason to be suspicious, because it has knowledge of large economic and political blocs on its frontier.

I reinforce the point made by the hon. Member for Wycombe, that each of those countries has a distinctive reason for the best sort of nationalism. The problem for some of us on this side of the House is that some of those with whom we occasionally have constitutional quarrels are not as keen on the best sort of nationalism. Unfortunately, no word in the English language expresses what is legitimate in being proud of one's community, in the sense that one is proud of one's own town. Nationalism has a nasty ring about it, for obvious reasons. There is a word gap that colours our own thinking.

Each of those countries, particularly because of their rigorous national environment, has developed over the past thousand years its own form of community life. Forest, lake, water and sea have meant that those countries and their communities of relatively small towns, villages and scattered settlements have produced public enterprise, public ownership, forms of public support and taxation that have grown through the centuries and are now extremely strong. There is a democratic collectivism, market management and support of public markets to an extent, perhaps, that is not found elsewhere in mainland Europe.

The impact on those qualities not only of the single market but of bankers at present is of concern in all those countries. Bankers in this country have a status rather greater than they deserve. I understand from Scandinavian friends that bankers in most Scandinavian countries do not have a high reputation at present.

In toto, the grain of political and social life of the Nordic applicants is, in fundamentals, contrary to a great deal of the fundamentals found within the treaties. There is much talk these days about "our vision for Europe." Anyone who wants to get off the hook talks about "our vision for Europe", "my vision for Europe" or "my party's vision for Europe". There is no question of vision—it is there in the treaties. One cannot get away from them, and they are decided in black and white.

The comment was made that my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) and others of us on this side of the House are backward. Fifty years ago, we in London knew what was going on, with the flying bombs, V1s and V2s. Members of my generation were determined that, as a result of that war, we would see something different. That is why many of us are pro-United Nations, pro-international and pro-Commonwealth. Until the altercation of the past 20 years, we would have been called pro-European.

The trouble is that these days, European does not mean the totality of Europe or co-operating nations. It means pro-treaty, which is very different. I put it to people in this country that to achieve the sort of Europe that my generation wanted after the war, we have—to use a British Rail phrase—the wrong sort of treaty. That is growing clearer even to some people who were the most vociferous supporters of Britain entering the Common Market in 1972. I fear that it will become clearer and clearer to the citizens of the applicant states as time goes by.

That is not clear to the Government. Today, the Foreign Secretary claimed that centralism had been checked. I agree with hon. Members in all parts of the House who say that that is not correct. Having signed a treaty that accelerates centralism, the Government claim that it has

been checked. They say that the federalists are on the retreat. There is a lack of knowledge in the House as to the difference between a federal constitution and a confederal constitution—the worst civil war in the English-speaking world was over the distinction between the two, and a unitary constitution.

The treaties are neither confederal nor federal, but are unitary, because of the unitary nature of the European Parliament, Council, Court and Commission. Above all, there is no separation of powers. Arguments about subsidiarity, on which I shall not enlarge now, show that all too well. The mud, fluff, seminars and conferences about subsidiarity show that there is no proper division of powers, which is the hallmark of a genuine confederation or federation.

I share the concerns expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool. I am glad to know that he is worried about the quality of scrutiny—and scrutiny does not mean control but only ability to see. That is not awfully easy, either. The Select Committee on European Legislation is in constant correspondence with Ministers about the inability even of that Committee to see certain documents—and the House does things rather better than many Parliaments in the Community.

The Swedes have a strong and democratic procedure called the remiss, which is like an extended Green Paper. Before any law or change at almost any level in any organisation can be enacted, having been suggested by a committee or party leader, it must go all the way down to the lowest democratic level, and then comes back again. Only at that stage is the equivalent of a Bill printed.

The Swedes will have a bad shock when it comes to the EEC. I have continual fears for the quality of democracy in such countries, which so many of us admire. When I intervened in the speech of the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston), who is not in his place now, he did not have an answer. I asked whether accession to the treaties would tend at least to diminish the quality of democracy in the applicant countries—and certainly their satisfaction with and confidence in their own Parliaments.

We all know how much the Nordic states have contributed to world understanding. We can all think of names from recent history—Bernadotte, Trigve Lie, Dag Hammarskjold, Olav Palme and now Mrs. Brundtland. One thinks also of Brandt: although that distinguished gentleman was from Germany, he had Scandinavian connections. The commission to which he gave his name and which is continued in some respects by Mrs. Brundtland is indicative of that. We know of the part that those nations have played in humanitarian enterprises throughout the world—in the United Nations. A common foreign and security policy? Are they signing up to that.

"Oh," say some of my hon. Friends and other people, "we could do so much more together." That is the sort of trite phrase that we hear so often. Of course we can, if we are united and if we believe in the cement of free co-operation, and not in coercion through constant negotiation, which is the hallmark of the European Community.

Unfortunately, we have some examples before us. We all know that the tragedy of Croatia was partly due to a hurried, and perhaps ill-considered, recognition by the European Union—it was nearly a union by that time—brought about by political forces that we understand. How many organisations do we know of that cannot move because of internal politics?

The middle east is another great problem that has exercised the House for years. Did the European Union greatly accelerate the middle east problem to its solution? No. Norway greatly accelerated that process. Would it have been in a position to do so if it had been a member of the European Community from 1972? The thesis cannot be proved, but in all probability it would not.

The common currency is liable to undermine the ability of those fine communities in Scandinavia to operate their form of constitution and democracy, and may well undermine their way of life in the fields, forests, fjords and veldts. The enlightened analysis that is beginning to appear in this House ought to be available to the people of those fine nations before they decide in their referendums.

8.41 pm

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): As Front-Bench spokesmen are inclined to say, I think that we have had a good debate. We heard my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary saying that he is winning his arguments in Europe—I am not sure whether he also said, "again". We also heard my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) saying that we are all speaking as sceptics.

That made me very happy, until I read some parts of the treaty. Even in the preamble we find that the signatories are

"DETERMINED in the spirit of those Treaties to continue the process of creating an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe on the foundations already laid".

So, although I am grateful to learn that my right hon. Friends are in good heart, I wish that some of that could be conveyed to the treaty's draftsmen.

I am sorry that the treaty is not a fraction more contentious. Then some of us could have the uplifting, not to say novel, experience of wandering through the same Lobby as many of our colleagues when voting on European business.

The Bill is merely one page and seems reasonably uncontentious, but, for those who care to read it, it is based on a 389-page treaty, in which there is quite a lot of meat.

Many people say that, at the time, the Single European Act was thought merely to be an Act to enable the completion of the single market. The real relevance of qualified majority voting was perhaps realised only at a later stage. In other words, there was a sting in the tail, and I wonder whether this single page Bill has a sting in its tail, such as qualified majority voting.

I tend to view all such matters according to a speech that Disraeli once made when he advised all Conservative Governments to maintain the constitution, to uplift and uphold the conditions of the people and adequately to defend the country. I shall skip the part about adequately defending the country, on the basis that Mr. Deputy Speaker might rule me out of order and it might tempt the Whip on duty to reach for his pencil. As regards the advice to uphold the conditions of the people, the billions of pounds paid to cohesion funds, to build roads across Spanish deserts or Italian ravines, might better be spent on the national health service, education or even on reducing the public sector borrowing requirement.

On the question of maintaining the constitution, may I offer one example—article 44, which, in the main, is gobbledegook. It begins:

[Mr. Roger Knapman]

"The share of Community fishing opportunities for stocks which are regulated by a catch limit, to be allocated to Norway, shall be fixed as follows, by species and by zone".

Many pages of zones and references follow and there are 20 explanatory notes at the bottom of the page. Having thought about the article at the weekend—not fully understanding how one can have a percentage of 88,543(13)(19), but never mind that—Norway seems to have got a very favourable deal. I am not sure, as a result, what right the British fishing industry—assuming that we still have one—will have to fish in Norwegian waters.

Can my hon. Friend the Minister tell me whether, if British fishing companies purchase Norwegian companies after article 35 has expired three years from the date of accession, they can bypass article 44, having regard to the judgment in the Factortame case? I think that my hon. Friend would refer me to annexes 11 and 12, but there is a problem because if my hon. Friend tells me that the Norwegians have found a way and have a derogation to get round the Factortame case, may we please have one for our fishing industry? Equally, if the Norwegians have not found a way around the Factortame case, surely we ought to let the Norwegian public know about that before they vote in the forthcoming referendum.

A number of constitutional issues are involved, but in view of the time I shall not dwell on any more. Another issue worries me, however. There is no money resolution attached to the Bill. I wonder why the business managers of the House have not found such a resolution necessary. I wonder whether they do the House a disservice by not providing one. How can we know that no money resolution is necessary? If money is required for new purposes, surely the treaty would be void unless we have a money resolution, according to the rules of this House.

I take as my text a House of Commons Library research paper. I shall not read it but intend to make extensive use of the notes. It states that

"Spending covered by headings 3 to 6 of the financial perspective was not touched on in the enlargement negotiations. A new financial perspective setting out the spending projections and own resource ceilings for the years ahead has not yet been agreed. Adjusting the ceilings for the different headings of the budget is likely to generate much debate. For example, it is not clear what increase, if any, there should be in the administrative budget."

Potentially, new money might be required for new members. Yet the explanatory memorandum to the Bill states:

"The Bill, however, will have no direct financial consequences in the UK."

I wonder if that is so.

How will our contribution be judged? In terms of increased gross national product, the inclusion of the four EFTA states represents an increase of about 8 per cent., whereas in terms of the number of countries, their inclusion will represent an increase of 33 per cent. The Library brief continues:

"It is unknown which of these increases, if either, will be used as the basis to justify an increase in administrative spending . . . the UK has a clear interest in restricting any increase"

in spending on external action since it is

"outside the Fontainebleu . . . system."

If that is the case, I wonder whether we can rely on the statement in the explanatory memorandum that

"The Bill, however, will have no direct financial consequences."

The emphasis seems to me to be on the word "direct".

I am reasonably happy about the Bill—certainly happier than I have been about any previous European legislation—because it deals primarily with the question of accession. Some of us believe that, in general, widening is good—notwithstanding what was said by my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen)—while deepening, if we ever establish what it is, is not.

I would vote for the treaty, on the assumption that it is mainly about enlargement. According to the 398 pages of the treaty, however, under revised qualified majority voting we are ensuring more power for the centre and the substitution of bureaucracy for democracy. I am prepared to vote for the treaty because my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister secured what I hope will prove an immensely valuable—indeed, epoch-making—triumph at Corfu, and therefore deserves our support.

During the forthcoming weeks and months, of course, many of us will wish to judge both my right hon. Friend and the Foreign Office on whether all the business in Corfu is purely temporary rhetoric—given treaties such as this, devoted to ever-closer union, we must have some misgivings about it—or whether Corfu signals a real determination to stand up for British interests. Along with most of the men and women on the street, in the pub and in the shops, I fervently hope that the latter is the case.

8.51 pm

Mr. Denis MacShane (Rotherham): Like others who have spoken, I welcome the accession of the new member states: two republics and two kingdoms with republican tinges will add to the democratic orientation of Europe.

The problem of neo-fascism is now raising its head. I was disappointed at the way in which the Foreign Secretary gave the brush-off to widespread concern in Europe about the entry into the Italian Government of supporters of neo-fascism—open supporters of Mussolini and anti-semitism. It is clear that we must have diplomatic relations with the Italian Government, but Opposition Members are dismayed that the Foreign Secretary will not join those in other European countries in expressing at least some concern about those developments.

We look forward to the arrival of Nordic and Austrian Members of the European Parliament and their quota of officials in Brussels. They will get something of a shock, of course, when they discover the immense secrecy which surrounds the Council of Ministers. I do not know how many hon. Members are aware that every Swedish citizen has the right to see every letter to, and from, the Swedish Prime Minister's office; I cannot imagine No. 10 Downing street wanting Lord Archer's billets-doux spread all over the newspapers, but I commend that policy of freedom of information to my hon. and good Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), whose occupancy will begin in a year or two.

I salute the struggle undertaken by the *Financial Times* and *The Guardian* to obtain details of the voting of the Council of Ministers—the release of which was blocked by our own Government, with others. I hope that the arrival of new Ministers from the four acceding states will help to dampen that British disease of secrecy and to shape a more democratic and open Europe.

As a materialist, I am grateful for the fact that—as the explanatory memorandum of the Bill makes clear—there will be no cost to our country. According to the latest Eurostat figures, Britain has for the first time moved into

the bottom half of the league table of economic wealth in the European Union, expressed in terms of per capita gross domestic product; we are below the average for the 12 European member states, and we shall be even further into the second division—along with Greece, Portugal and Spain—when Sweden, Austria and Norway join the Union.

Perhaps the Spanish question had something to do with the fact that the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, the right hon. Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Portillo), went to Spain recently—or rather not to Spain, but to Catalonia: we are being very particular about nations tonight—where he made a speech in which he criticised the values of the European Union as expressed by most of its member states. He was kind enough to send me a copy of that speech in the original Spanish, and it was most illuminating. Nowhere in it are the words "European Union" or "European Community" to be found; the vision of Europe —the only term used in the speech—expressed by the Government through the Chief Secretary in Barcelona was a vision of a simple free trade area, with no barriers to the exchange of goods and services.

We all know that the Chief Secretary has a major vision of the future—or perhaps I should say a post-Major vision —in which the values and necessities that have led the acceding countries to join the European Union are not considered. I await with interest his thematic speech on national sovereignty, in which he must distance himself still further from the Government's position on Europe if he is to be true to the course on which he has embarked.

I do not know whether the Chief Secretary went to see a bull fight during his stay in Barcelona, but I am assured by my many Spanish friends that Britain will be a truly European country only when bull fights are allowed in Hyde park. I am sure that no House of Commons of which I would wish to be a member would permit such a thing; for the humble Spanish business man who wants to export his sport to Britain, however, to ban bull fighting is to interfere with his right to trade.

I have no problems with British sovereignty when it comes to banning bull fighting, but I understand that British farmers are not happy with the sovereignty of the German Parliament when it comes to banning British beef. I also understand that British airline companies were not happy when the French sovereign Parliament and Government wanted to ban flights to Orly, and that British ferry operators are not happy about the Spanish Government's current refusal to run a service between Spain and north Africa. Certainly, steel workers in my constituency of Rotherham are not happy about the sovereign Parliament-backed decision of the Italian Government to maintain subsidies for steel plants in Italy, thus damaging the competitive market that steel producers rightly demand in Europe.

I remain a great believer in the sovereignty of free peoples and nations in deciding their destiny, and their right to join like-minded nations in common projects— NATO, the Nordic Union mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) or, indeed, the European Union itself. Conservative Euro-sceptics, however, should be careful before making the Chief Secretary to the Treasury their standard bearer. He is not at all interested in the sovereignty of the British people in Parliament; he is interested only in the sovereignty of the global capitalist market. If every last British citizen were employed by a foreign firm, if every economic decision affecting the United Kingdom were taken in the United States of America or Japan, if English land were sold to stage Spanish bull fights at a profit, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury would not care because for him neither the nation nor its citizens count for aught against his beloved global market.

The Chief Secretary's position is coherent. It involves the new totalitarianism of the market, in which all human values are replaced by money values. His argument is not about British sovereignty or protecting the nations that make up the United Kingdom, a subject on which many Conservative Members spoke so eloquently during debates on the Maastricht treaty and today.

How can such sovereignty be protected? I turn to the question posed by my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South and that faced by the proud Nordic nations. They have decided that their sovereignty can best be enhanced through co-operation with the other nations of Europe. Austria, which more than any other state in 20th century Europe knows what it means to lose her sovereignty, has decided both through parliamentary debate and through a referendum that the best protection for Austrian values and prosperity lies in full partnership with the rest of Europe.

Unlike the British people, countries such as Austria and Finland have experienced the full raging of communist, capitalist and fascist totalitarianism in the 20th century. The new intolerance of the uncontrolled, unaccountable and unregulated market is in full flow across the world. Day by day, unemployment lines grow, civil wars break out and our streets are less safe to walk in. That shows the new totalitarianism of money power over human and democratic values.

Mr. Oliver Heald (Hertfordshire, North): Will the hon. Gentleman explain in his analysis why the least regulated markets throughout the world have the highest level of employment? One has only to consider countries such as the United States of America or those in the far east to realise that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. I think that hon. Members should return to the subject of Europe.

Mr. MacShane: I shall return to that subject and cite Switzerland, where I worked for many years, which has maintained full employment and which is the most regulated country in Europe. As they say in Switzerland, if it is not forbidden, it is compulsory.

The new European Union must succeed in defeating the new totalitarianism of money power if we are to create a world that is both economically efficient and spiritually and socially rewarding. I welcome the accession of the four new members to the European Union because they will strengthen the human and democratic values of Europe. While working with the grain of the market, they will not blindly worship Mammon, the God of the new, all-powerful market totalitarians.

9.1 pm

Mr. David Lidington (Aylesbury): I am grateful for the opportunity to make a speech in what has been a fairly wide-ranging debate. I hope that the hon. Member for Rotherham (Mr. MacShane) will forgive me if I do not follow his interesting but idiosyncratic analysis of the way in which European and modern world economies are developing.

[Mr. David Lidington]

I gladly welcome the likely accession to the European Union of Austria, Sweden, Norway and Finland for the reasons given by hon. Members, from whichever party —those countries' European cultural and democratic traditions and their participation in the economic and security structures that have developed in our continent since the last war. The Bill and the treaty are at best no more than an interim measure, a halfway house towards the new constitutional structure that we shall need in a wider and more diverse European Union and that we are perhaps midway to creating.

The hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) alluded to some of the decision-making difficulties that were bound to arise with the widening of the European Community. The hon. Member for Rotherham said that he welcomed the fact that there would be new Members of the European Parliament from new member states and that new quotas of officials from Scandinavian countries and Austria would be arriving at their Brussels offices for the first time. A considerable proportion of those officials will be made up of the numerous translators who will be needed to cope with the additions to the list of official working languages that will be used in the European Community. Commissioners from the new member states will be appointed to a college of Commissioners which, even after the reforms introduced under the Maastricht treaty, is struggling pretty hard to find a worthwhile job for each member of the college.

Most important is the fact that, with the enlargement of the Community—with the four potential new members now, with the likely accession of the four Visegrad countries in the next five or 10 years and with the possible inclusion of other new member states in southern and eastern Europe thereafter—there will be a real problem over the decision-making process within the European Union. We saw that point illustrated in the debates—the Council of Ministers had to arrive at an acceptable formula for qualified majority voting. The hon. Member for Durham, North mentioned the problem of trying to strike the right balance between the right of small member states to be properly represented when the Community makes decisions and the right of the large nations, representing the largest share of the population of the Community, to have their influence fairly expressed.

In a Union in which unanimity will still be required for many important decisions, it will become increasingly difficult to take effective decisions and to manage business if we stick to the present allocation of competences as laid down by the existing treaties and to the present system for voting within the Council of Ministers. In the future, it will be easy for one small state to block the decision of, perhaps, the 19 or 24 other member states that form the majority. We have seen that difficulty arising already over, for example, the Greek blockade of Macedonia in defiance of the express wishes of the other member states of the Union. There is a risk that we shall end up either with a Community that is incapable of taking any decisions or with a Community whose policies are determined by the lowest common denominator of what might be agreed.

The constitutional problem could be tackled in various ways. One coherent, logical approach is the federal approach. Although I do not agree with the arguments put forward by Commissioner Delors, one must accept that his proposals amount to a logical, carefully thought-out solution to the constitutional difficulties that are inevitable in a larger, wider European Union. Nor do I think that we should see the federal model as being the Delors model only. Chancellor Kohl is a man who, as a university student, helped to tear down the border posts between France and Germany. He is a man who, throughout his career, has been openly committed to some sort of united states of Europe. His may be a much more decentralised model than that coming from Mr. Delors, who springs from the French political tradition. The Chancellor would probably wish to see a European Union that amounted to the Federal Republic of Germany writ large on the continental scale—a very decentralised political structure, but a uniform political structure with the same political responsibilities being allocated to each member state and a common core of decision-making powers being held at the centre.

Such a federal Europe might be, in the words of the hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson), a more democratic Europe, but it would be democratic only in the sense that there would be a right on the part of the majority of elected representatives across the continent to outvote the minority even if that minority included an almost unanimous expression of national opinion in one or two dissenting countries. Therein lies the trouble with the federal approach.

It is my firm belief that, although in some continental countries, especially among the political leaders of those nations, there is still strong support for the federal approach to Europe, the referendums in France and Denmark and the discontent in Germany at the prospect of losing the deutschmark show growing disquiet on the continent, and not solely in this country, about where that approach to the political future of Europe may lead. I do not believe that people here see themselves as Europeans first. They see themselves as British people first and their allegiance is to the affection for, and loyalty to, the nation. Perhaps, after that, their allegiance is to the common cultural and political traditions that we share with other nations on the continent of Europe.

British interests would be best served by a simpler, looser political structure of the European Union in the future. That cannot simply be a free-trade area. Anyone who holds to that belief needs only to pick up a history book to see that no British ruler or British Government over many centuries doubted that British interests involved seeking to influence the outlook and the policy of the major powers of the continent of Europe. Even if, as the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) said, we have the wrong treaty at the moment, it is for that reason that it is the duty of any patriotic British Government who seek to act in the best interests of their citizens to engage with the political and constitutional structures that exist on the continent of Europe and to seek to advance our interests, negotiation by negotiation, treaty by treaty, as my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary and his ministerial team are doing.

Sir Russell Johnston: I am interested in the hon. Gentleman's argument, but the weakness of it is that he equates patriotic British interest with Conservative attitudes. He says that they are the same and they are not the same. Not only hon. Members on the Liberal

Democrats' Bench but, obviously, those on the official Opposition Benches interpret interest in a very different way.

Mr. Lidington: I have far too great a respect for the hon. Gentleman to seek in any way to impugn his wish or that of other Opposition Members to advance the British interests as they see them, but we would differ on how to identify those interests over particular political decisions.

I shall move on to how I see those arguments relating to the agenda which faces the Government as they approach the next IGC in 1996 or, perhaps, in 1997. The looser-knit European political structure—the simpler European Union, which would be in our best interests—will probably be beyond our capacity to achieve precisely because in many of our partner nations the wish to drive towards a much closer political union on the model envisaged by the founding fathers of the Community remains so strong. I honestly doubt whether public opinion in those countries, even in France and Germany, will catch up with that view of the political elite in time to influence the IGC wholly in the direction that we wish to go. The idea of a multi-speed Europe, which was advocated by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister during the recent European election campaign, provides us with a way forward which may accommodate different views about how Europe should develop.

My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes)—I am sorry that he is not in the Chamber at present—is utterly wrong in believing that the approach of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to Europe has failed to chime with the instincts of the British people. I am not aware of the feeling in Harrow, but in my constituency many people, Conservative supporters and others with no strong political affiliation, have told me that my right hon. Friend's approach is the way in which we should seek to establish the future of the European Union.

Do we describe that approach as multi-speed Europe, variable geometry, made-to-measure Europe or, as one journalist has described it, a Europe of consenting adults? Those terms offer only a choice of labels. The key is that the constitutional arrangements for Europe should be tailored to take account of the diversity of the Community that we are creating. That way forward will enable us to reconcile the need to develop European unity to ensure material prosperity in future and to ensure that we maintain the peace that has prevailed in the western half of the continent since 1945, thereby checking the destructive nationalism that has brought European civilisation to the brink of ruin twice this century.

At the same time, I believe that the approach of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to Europe will enable us to deal with the reality of diverse national histories and national interests, along with the fact that most people's affection and loyalty lie first with the nation state and not with the supranational administration. It would be foolish indeed if we ceded the patriotic themes to the representatives of atavistic nationalism. I fear that that would happen if the European Union again started to take the federalist, centralist route and tried to place a straitjacket on the diverse ways of a Community that wears a costume originally devised for a Community of six in the 1950s.

As we approach the intergovernmental conference, I am not as pessimistic as my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen). I always enjoy my hon. Friend's speeches but I felt that this evening he sounded rather like the Tory grandees of the early 1980s, who used to say that we could not dare to tackle trade union powers, old boy, and that the climate of the times was against us. Such sentiments were usually broached shortly before a grandee was elevated suddenly to another place. I would not like my hon. Friend to get measured for his ermine immediately.

When I talk to German politicians—especially those of a younger generation—I find that they want to discuss how to limit the accretion of competence to supranational level. They are well aware that the accession of Poland and other central European countries to the Union will break the common agricultural policy. They understand that that will have to be faced because the accession of central European countries is recognised as a critical matter of German national interest. Even French politicians are talking about variable geometry.

As we British politicians approach 1996 we must outline a robust agenda for constitutional change in Europe. We need to question the extent of the acquis communautaire. We must ask which competences we should consider repatriating to national level. We should raise in debate matters such as the Commission's sole right of initiative, the powers of the presidency and the balance of interest between the larger and smaller nations.

Although we have not yet won the debate, the time for ideas to prevail in the end is now more propitious than at any stage during the past two decades. I believe that the Europe of which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister speaks is one that not merely is in Britain's best interests but offers prosperity and peace for the continent as a whole.

9.19 pm

Ms Joyce Quin (Gateshead, East): Despite differences of view on many aspects of the European Union, today in the House there has been virtually unanimous agreement about, and support for, enlargement. The accession of Austria, Finland, Norway and Sweden has been welcomed by hon. Members on both sides of the House. I hope that people in those four countries will be encouraged, when they read accounts of this debate, by the solid support for their accession to the European Union which has been expressed in the House.

This wide-ranging debate contained many interesting contributions about the future development of the European Union after enlargement. My hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson) referred to some of the habitués of these debates about Europe. Despite some new contributions, there was a sense of continuity about the debate, in particular in relation to those who took part in it.

Before coming to the Chamber today, I read through the reports of the proceedings on the Single European Act. Many of the hon. Members who spoke today or who made interventions also took part in the debate on the Single European Act, including my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) and the right hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston).

Conservative Members who participated in the debates on that crypto-federalist measure, the Single European Act, and who spoke today included the hon. Members for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) and for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes). We have heard today

[Ms Joyce Quin]

interventions from the hon. Members for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor), for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) and for Stafford (Mr. Cash), who took part in the earlier debate, and I was intrigued to read that the hon. Member for Stafford said:

"We tend to exaggerate the dangers of majority voting."—[*Official Report*, 23 April 1986; Vol. 96, c. 378.]

Mr. Cash: And I will repeat those remarks today. However, I also tabled an amendment to the effect that nothing in that legislation should derogate from the sovereignty of the United Kingdom Parliament. I am glad to say that that amendment was signed by one other Member of this place, and that was the former right hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West, Mr. Enoch Powell.

Ms Quin: There is at least continuity in respect of the views of Members for Wolverhampton, South-West.

Even the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the hon. Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory), who is to reply to the debate, surfaced briefly in the Committee stage of the measure. Rather to my surprise, he supported an amendment in the name of his hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East. Perhaps the Minister had fallen prey to a bout of Euroscepticism at the time. Towering over that debate, as he admitted himself today, was the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen). He referred today rather graphically to his stained hands in relation to the former debates.

I am glad that there has been a wide welcome for enlargement of the European Union. I hope that we all want the Bill to receive a speedy passage through the House. It has been allocated two days for debate about which many people are happy. None the less, at the end of that time, we hope that there will be a ringing endorsement of enlargement. Labour will not support amendments which seek to delay or place obstacles before enlargement.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House have paid tribute to the four applicant countries. I echo those tributes, particularly the tributes to their fine democratic and social democratic traditions. I want to refer to the outstanding role that the four countries have played in foreign policy, particularly through the United Nations, where their activities have probably not been equalled by other countries. I pay tribute to the Norwegian Labour Prime Minister, Gro Harlem Brundtland, for the work she has done to highlight and draw attention to the issues of environment and development on a world scale.

My hon. Friends spoke in particular about the strong links between the Labour party and its counterparts in the four applicant countries and the similar views we hold on social, environmental, economic, regional and industrial issues. The hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West stressed the links between the Labour party and the traditions and beliefs of those four countries. He felt that that meant that a natural alliance would be established between the Labour party and those countries in the Union in future. The Opposition welcome their commitment to the social chapter, although it is not surprising to us given their record on social issues.

I am sure that those countries will be warmly welcomed in the European Union. As many hon. Members have already pointed out, however, referendums need to be held in the three Scandinavian countries, where public opinion has varied from semi-enthusiasm to hostility. I hope that it will be persuaded of the merits of accession when the referendums take place in the autumn. It is encouraging that the terms of the accession treaty have been accepted in those four countries, so there is no outstanding difficulty about those terms. That augurs well for the future.

Many hon. Members who referred to enlargement talked about widening and deepening Europe—my hon. Friends the Members for Hartlepool and for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) stressed that. Some Conservative Members expressed the hope that widening the European Union would dilute it and that we would move towards establishing a free trade area. That is wishful thinking, and I am glad that some Conservative Members explicitly recognised that. The hon. Member for Harrow, East described it as phantasmagoric mythology.

I do not believe that the applicant countries would have applied to join the European Union if they had thought it was simply a free trade area. They are, after all, already members of the European economic area, and if they were completely satisfied with that arrangement it is unlikely that they would have applied for and been granted full membership of the Union.

Many hon. Members spoke about the effects of enlargement on the institutional arrangements in the European Union. We all agreed that we hoped that it would strengthen the democratic element in the Union. Hon. Members disagreed, however, on various aspects—for example, the extent of the Government's achievements, if they can be described as such, at Ioannina were disputed.

The Foreign Secretary said, once again, that we had won a review of the qualified majority voting system, but that was always the case, because it was mentioned in previous presidency conclusions that it would be possible to raise anything related to the institutional workings of the union at the 1996 intergovernmental conference. It was always on the agenda and a wide-ranging statement, a catch-all clause, in previous presidency conclusions made that absolutely clear.

Mr. Hurd: Let us be clear about this: what was possible, as the hon. Lady correctly said, is now certain.

Ms Quin: It was certain before, because a wide-ranging clause allowed countries to raise anything they wanted. Between now and 1996 other issues may crop up that Governments may want to raise and they will be able to do so because of the wide-ranging provision that already exists. We must bear that in mind.

There was a large measure of agreement in the House about making the decisions of the European Union subject to democratic scrutiny. Many of us who took part in the debate on enlargement in European Standing Committee B felt that it should have reached a wider audience and should have been part of a debate on the Floor of the House. Perhaps I could appeal to the media not to ignore the work of the European Standing Committees. Valuable work is done there by Members on both sides but, unfortunately, little attention is paid to their work.

The Commission's role in an enlarged European Union was also mentioned by hon. Members on both sides of the House, although who will preside over that Commission is still uncertain. Having vetoed a European Conservative, the Government seem to be prepared, according to one rumour, to rush into the arms of an Italian socialist as president of the European Commission. I wonder whether

the Minister of State will enlighten us about the current position, as we should be grateful for any information that he can give us. We wonder whether history will repeat itself and the Government will repeat the actions of the former Prime Minister, the noble Baroness Thatcher, who apparently agreed to the appointment of Jacques Delors as Commission President when all that she knew about him was that he was intelligent and energetic.

Many hon. Members on both sides of the House discussed the preparation of the intergovernmental conference of the enlarged European Union. That is an important matter. Many thoughtful contributions were made about the kind of issues that we could raise at the IGC. While my hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool raised the spectre of another Maastricht in terms of how we might deal with the matter in the House, he spoke for all of us when he said that he hoped that we would look seriously at all the options open to us regarding the future of the European Union.

Mr. Jenkin: Will the hon. Lady explain what the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) meant when he said that he was against a federal Europe but in favour of deepening and of nation states? I notice that he is now telling the hon. Lady the answer.

Ms Quin: The hon. Gentleman's intervention was not so extraordinary that I could not have coped with it myself. The hon. Gentleman's concept of "federalism" seems to equate to the idea of a centralised super-state. May I say firmly that we have not criticised the Government for over-centralism suddenly to accept centralism at a European level. When my right hon. Friend spoke about "deepening", he was referring to areas on which we are on record as wanting further co-operation in Europe, particularly but not exclusively social and environmental matters. We want this country to play a full part in those negotiations and are worried that the Government's policy simply puts us on the sidelines.

Many hon. Members, again on both sides of the House, made some thoughtful contributions on future enlargement of the European Union. My hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) discussed the Baltic states and common foreign and security policy. I agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Copeland on the application of Cyprus and Malta, and I add my voice to the general welcome given to eventual enlargement including countries of central and eastern Europe. Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia are all candidates in the short or medium term. Obviously, there will be problems with further enlargement, but many of them can be dealt with through transitional periods and special recognition of particular problems. Opportunities, too, will arise in any enlargement to include the countries of central and eastern Europe. For example, it is hard to imagine that the common agricultural policy could keep its present structure if many more countries join, especially if those countries already have a strong agriculture. We should therefore take the positive and constructive opportunities open to us.

Mr. Marlow: Further to the philosophical arguments about deepening and so on, is the hon. Lady in favour of a multi-track Europe, or does she believe that all member states must eventually move at the same speed?

Ms Quin: To a certain extent, given that enlargement will take place in phases, it is true that not all countries will be at the same stage. However, we are worried that there will be a two-speed Europe, with Britain in the slow lane. That would not be in Britain's interest and we are very much against it.

Social policy has been mentioned by many of my hon. Friends. That is not surprising. I was delighted that in the conclusions to the Corfu summit the European Council welcomed the additional impetus coming from the new countries and described them as being

> "in the vanguard of the efforts to promote environmental and social protection, transparency and open government, areas considered essential by a large part of the Union's citizens".

I certainly endorse that.

We feel as strongly as ever that this country should be part of the European social chapter. In a debate last Friday, my hon. Friend the Member for Rotherham (Mr. MacShane) and I spoke about some of the appallingly low wage rates that are all too common in Britain today and the poor employment protection which gives people at work little say about their work and little protection against such things as unfair dismissal.

We believe strongly that the recent improvements in employment law in Britain have resulted from the impetus from Europe. For example, the right to a written statement, maternity rights and better rights for part-time workers spring from the European dimension, and that is something which we welcome strongly. Certainly, the examples cited by my hon. Friends, including that of Austria, show once again that there is simply no link between poor employment conditions and a high level of employment.

Earlier today, the Prime Minister spoke about Britain having a larger proportion of its population in work than most other European countries. Of course, the country which has a greater proportion of its population in work than we have is Denmark, which has high levels of social protection and good wages. Once again, that proves that there is no facile link between the two—poor wages and high employment—as the Conservatives constantly tell us.

On environmental policy, we feel close to the new countries, as, indeed, we do on economic policy. The former Swedish Finance Minister, Allan Larssen, helped to draw up an economic policy document for the Socialist group in the European Parliament and for the Confederation of European socialist parties—a publication which I would recommend to Tory Members in terms of its commitment to economic growth.

We have heard very different views about Europe from the Government side. From the beginning of the debate, the Foreign Secretary came under considerable pressure from his own Back Benchers. The Government seem to get buffeted this way and that. As they get so buffeted, it becomes less clear what the Foreign Secretary and his colleagues in Government think and what is their strategy for Europe in the future.

It is also not clear who will win the battle. The right hon. Member for Shropshire, North predicted that the Euro-sceptics would sweep all before them, although he referred at the beginning of his speech to the "virus" of Euro-scepticism. The thought of such a virus spreading across Europe caused me some alarm.

The right hon. Gentleman also paid a tribute to the former leader of the Conservative MEPs, Sir Christopher Prout. Many of the things that we have heard in this debate are completely at odds with the commitments made by Sir Christopher Prout and his former colleagues in the European Parliament—when the number of Conservative

[Ms Quin]

MEPs was more than it is now—when they considered the matter of enlargement. They committed themselves to abolishing the unanimity provisions in the treaty and giving the President of the Commission a stronger role, and they implied that future revisions of the treaties could be carried out without the current requirement for unanimity and ratification by all national Parliaments. Those are different views from the ones expressed by Conservatives today. Within the space of a week, we have also had the astonishing spectacle of the Chancellor of the Exchequer saying one thing about a single European currency and the Chief Secretary to the Treasury saying something completely different. I was asked about a multi-speed Europe. It seems that the Conservatives are not only in favour of a multi-speed Europe; they are also a multi-speed party in their consideration of these issues.

I conclude by strongly welcoming this enlargement of the European Union. I am pleased that the Labour party will be in the European mainstream during the enlargement process. We believe that we should all share the commitment by these new countries to a social Europe, an environmental Europe and a Europe of economic growth. With these four new countries in place and, I hope, with the support of a Labour Government in place in Britain even before the IGC, I trust that we shall be able to deliver policies that will mean a more prosperous Europe. That will be good news for Britain and for the British people.

9.39 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory): This has been a wide-ranging debate, as expected. It has ranged from the origins of the enlargement negotiations to a forward look at the prospects of bringing in more states in Europe in subsequent enlargement rounds—a process to which we look forward. Many right hon. and hon. Members have touched on our aims in the European Union. The Government believe strongly that the Union must maintain its free-trading vocation, which is why we put so much store by the successful conclusion to the Uruguay round last year.

We also believe that the EU must attend to the health or otherwise of the European economy. We must pay more attention to the problems of unemployment and of how we can turn economic growth into more jobs. That is why the Conservatives promote policies of deregulation, of lightening the burden of employment costs and of making labour markets work better.

The United Kingdom opt-out from the social chapter has become ever more important over the months, a point frequently made this evening by Conservative Members. There has also been greater cohesion in European foreign policy, and measures are being taken to tackle crime and justice matters by means of the intergovernmental pillars set out in the Maastricht treaty.

We realise that all this is not enough for the European Union to regain its dynamism; it must continue to expand. Thus it was that the idea of four new member states joining the Union had long been advocated by the Government. It was during the British presidency of two years ago that the negotiations were finally given the necessary impetus. In the event, they took rather more than a year, but that was still easily a record compared with previous enlargement rounds.

All four Eftan states are instinctively free trading, all are fully democratic and all have a well developed sense of nationhood—a point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney) among others. All are already in the European economic area, so they already enjoy a good measure of free trade with the EU. But their Governments believe that that is not enough. They want to be on the inside, shaping the rules and participating in the development of a common European foreign policy instead of being relegated to the status of spectators as the EU develops.

The European Union is now exerting a strong magnetic field on surrounding European states. Many speakers in this debate have therefore looked beyond this enlargement round to the next, and even to the one after that. Already six additional states have applied to join the EU: Turkey, Switzerland, Poland, Hungary, Malta and Cyprus. Some of them are not proceeding at present, for various reasons, but it was absurd and wrong of the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) to suggest that the Prime Minister was ruling out Cypriot accession before a resolution of the dispute in the island. My right hon. Friend was rightly facing up to the difficulties of bringing a divided island into the European Union because, at least on the face of it, that would conflict with the requirements for free movement of people and goods in the Community.

Dr. Cunningham: How is it that we could contemplate a divided Germany in Europe but not a divided Cyprus?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The right hon. Gentleman is a master of misleading analogies. If he had studied better the problems of Cyprus, he would know that bringing in a community with ethnic divisions which date back to the invasion of northern Cyprus by Turkey during the period of office of a Labour Government would create substantial difficulties. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was right to draw attention to those problems. That is not being negative: it is being realistic and constructive and facing the issues. That is what government is about.

Future enlargement of the Union will raise important institutional questions touching on such matters as the size of the Commission and the qualified majority voting arrangements, and will also raise problems of cost. My right hon. Friends the Members for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) and for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) rightly and eloquently spoke about the difficulties of contemplating enlargement to include central and eastern European countries in the light of the common agricultural policy. It is doubtful that the CAP as structured at present and the current structural funds could survive if countries from behind the former iron curtain joined the Union.

The present round of enlargement has not put the CAP under such pressure. Agricultural prices in three of the four countries are substantially higher than those that obtain in the rest of the Community. Bringing them down to the same level will mean substantial expenditure. However, because the four states, with the possible exception of Finland, will be net contributors to the budget, the problem of unacceptable and unsustainable costs does not arise at this stage.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) suggested that we should engage with the

countries of central and eastern Europe in foreign and security policy before they join the Community in their entirety. I entirely agree with my right hon. Friend. We can make progress on some of those issues now but others will remain for the intergovernmental conference in 1996.

Mr. Cash: Would my hon. Friend care to repeat what I understood him to say during the European elections—that he regarded a single currency as liable to dilute our sovereignty and that, from his point of view at any rate, although not speaking on behalf of the Government, it was not a satisfactory move in the right direction?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I was correctly reported during the press conference to which my hon. Friend draws attention.

The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) raised the question of the study or reflection group.

Mr. Budgen: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I am sorry. I am answering a point raised in the debate. It is incumbent on me to reply to points already raised rather than to respond to new ones.

I can assure the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney that the group will consider a wide range of contributions not only from member states but from non-governmental sources. I hope that, through channels such as Select Committees, the House will find ways of contributing in the run-up to the intergovernmental conference. The right hon. Gentleman courteously informed me that he would not be here for the conclusion of the debate, so perhaps I can send him a message through the *Official Report*, which he may read tomorrow. The Luxembourg compromise, about which he was concerned, still exists. He was anxious about its health. I can confirm that, whereas it may be asleep, it is none the less alive—indeed, the French Government reaffirmed their support for it during their Maastricht debate.

Mr. Spearing: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, but I have a number of points to answer.

There was some speculation about the attitudes of applicant states and how they would use their influence in the European Union after they had joined. My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) believes that they will be enthusiastic volunteers for a deeper, more integrated community. They are all vigorous democracies and all views have been expressed within them.

It is worth referring to recent remarks by Cabinet Ministers in those states. In particular, I want to quote Carl Bildt, the Prime Minister of Sweden. He thanked this country for our influence in smoothing the way to accession and said that Britain was

"instrumental in the shaping of a new Europe that is larger, more open and less intrusive."

On the question of social issues, which was raised more than once in the debate, the same Prime Minister said:

"While the European Community should have a social dimension, most of the social policy issues are better dealt with at local, regional and national level."

I hesitate to paraphrase my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen), but I think that he was saying that the advent of the four countries would make monetary union more likely. I can give him some reassurance because Sweden's Finance Minister, when asked about Sweden's participation in the third phase of European monetary union, said:

"That depends on when we satisfy the entry requirements and also on when we want to be included . . . Sweden will not automatically become a member of the final monetary union just because we ratify our membership of the EU."

I hope that that note of caution will be of some reassurance to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: If I have a few minutes to spare at the end of my remarks I will give way to hon. Gentleman, as I know he has not made a speech.

We all recognise that the four member states will not line up with us on all issues. It would be odd if they did and that would not be the sort of European Union in which they believe. They have different attitudes, traditions and interests. Defending those interests is fully compatible with membership of the European Union. That was evident during the negotiations, which were long and hard fought. We protected our interests and they protected theirs.

On the question of fisheries, I assure my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman) that in all important respects we fully protected the British fishing industry. Indeed, the chief executive of the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations wrote to the Government after the negotiations saying:

"The satisfactory outcome to the accession negotiations . . . is very welcome indeed."

My hon. Friend raised a number of specific issues about fisheries which I do not have time to respond to now, but I will write to him.

The debate raised a new and startling development in Labour policy. Labour's Front-Bench spokesmen still retain the capacity to surprise us. We heard news of a new opt-out by the Labour party. The right hon. Member for Copeland announced a ban on any dealings with Ministers in the new Italian Government from the National Alliance party. *[Interruption.]* I am getting it exactly right. The right hon. Gentleman called them neo-fascists, although, contrary to what the right hon. Gentleman said, that is not how they describe themselves. The right hon. Gentleman is digging himself into a deeper and deeper hole. He is saying that any future Labour Government would boycott any meeting with those individuals, including any Council meeting. Five Ministers from that party are in the new Italian coalition Government. In the unlikely event of there being a Labour Government, we would have an empty British chair at Transport, Agriculture and Environment Council meetings. Whether or not the right hon. Gentleman intended this, he is advocating an opt-out by the United Kingdom not only from policies discussed at those Council meetings but from any chance of defending Britain's national interests at those meetings.

I cannot imagine a more fatuous policy based on such a petulant reaction to the result of an Italian general election. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North rightly said, that attitude is bizarre and sanctimonious—and it is almost incomprehensible from a Labour Front-Bench spokesman with any pretension or aspiration to office.

The Bill and the treaty are an invitation to the House to approve and to ratify the accession of four new member states. Those countries do not countenance membership to

[Mr. Heathcoat-Amory]

submerge themselves in a formless and shapeless Union or to lose their identity like lumps of sugar in a cup of tea. As Finland's Prime Minister said recently:

"The European Union is made up of independent and sovereign states that have voluntarily decided to exercise their jurisdiction together on certain issues."

All of us on the Conservative Benches agree with that sentiment.

We hope that the three referendums yet to be held in applicant states will endorse membership. The last referendum will be held at the end of November, which is why the Bill is presented to the House now. If one or more of the referendums were to fail, no renegotiation of the treaty would be necessary. A Council decision would be taken to make the consequential changes that may be necessary to such matters as qualified majority voting.

Earlier, my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) asked what would happen to the treaty's qualified majority voting figures if one or more of the applicants failed to ratify. The answer is that the allocation of votes to the non-acceding country would be deleted from the treaty and any new voting threshold set. Article 2 of the treaty provides for that. The threshold would be reset at a lower level, but that would not alter in any way the decision made at Ioannina, which protects our position when 23 votes are in opposition to a prospective decision or piece of European legislation.

The debate made clear the support that exists in all parts of the House for entry of the four EFTA states. We see that not only as a welcome step in its own right, but as a milestone on the way to a Europe that is whole—a Europe that achieves freedom while respecting diversity. I urge the House to give the Bill a Second Reading.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

Committee tomorrow.

Scottish Business

9.59 pm

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Ian Lang): I beg to move,

That with effect from the beginning of the next Session—

(a) Standing Orders No. 93 (Public bills relating exclusively to Scotland), No. 94 (Scottish Grand Committee), No. 96 (Scottish estimates) and No. 97 (Matters relating exclusively to Scotland) shall be repealed, and the following Standing Orders A to H below shall have effect;

(b) Standing Orders No. 13 (Arrangement of public business), No. 89 (Procedure in standing committees) and No. 91 (Special standing committees) shall be amended as set out below; and

(c) other Standing Orders shall have effect subject to the foregoing provisions of this Order.

A. Scottish Grand Committee (composition and business)

(1) There shall be a standing committee called the Scottish Grand Committee, which shall consist of all Members representing Scottish constituencies; and of which (subject to paragraph (6) of Standing Order H (Scottish Grand Committee (sittings)) the quorum shall be ten.

(2) The business of the Committee shall include—

(a) questions tabled in accordance with Standing Order B (Scottish Grand Committee (questions for oral answer));

(b) short debates held in accordance with Standing Order C (Scottish Grand Committee (short debates));

(c) ministerial statements proceeded with in accordance with Standing Order D (Scottish Grand Committee (ministerial statements));

(d) bills referred to it for consideration in relation to their principle, in accordance with Standing Order E (Scottish Grand Committee (bills in relation to their principle));

(e) motions relating to statutory instruments or draft statutory instruments, referred to it in accordance with Standing Order F (Scottish Grand Committee (statutory instruments, &c));

(f) motions for the adjournment of the committee, notice of which has been given in accordance with Standing Order G (Scottish Grand Committee (substantive motions for the adjournment)); and

(g) motions for the adjournment of the committee, to be made after the interruption of business, as provided in Standing Order H (Scottish Grand Committee (sittings)).

B. Scottish Grand Committee (questions for oral answer)

(1) Notices of questions for oral answer in the Scottish Grand Committee by Scottish Office ministers or Scottish law officers on a day specified in an order made under paragraph (1) of Standing Order H (Scottish Grand Committee (sittings)), may be given by members of the committee in the Table Office.

(2) Notices of questions given under this order shall bear an indication that they are for oral answer in the Scottish Grand Committee.

(3) No more than one notice of a question may be given under this order by any member of the committee for each day specified under paragraph (1) of Standing Order H (Scottish Grand Committee (sittings)) for the taking of questions.

(4) On any day so specified under paragraph (1) of Standing Order H (Scottish Grand Committee (sittings)), questions shall be taken at the commencement of the sitting; no question shall be taken later then three-quarters of an hour after the commencement of the proceedings thereon; and replies to questions not reached shall be printed with the Official Report of the committee's debates for that day.

(5) Notices of questions under this order may be given ten sitting days before that on which an answer is desired:

Provided that when it is proposed that the House shall adjourn for a period of fewer than four days, any day during that period (other than a Saturday or a Sunday) shall be counted as a sitting day for the purposes of the calculation made under this paragraph.

C. Scottish Grand Committee (short debates)

(1) Notices of subjects to be raised in short debates in the Scottish Grand Committee, on a day specified in an order made under paragraph (1) of Standing Order H (Scottish Grand Committee (sittings)), may be given by members of the committee in the Table Office.

(2) Subjects of which notice is given under paragraph (1) of this order must relate to the official responsibilities of Scottish Office ministers or Scottish law officers.

(3) Not more than one notice of a subject may be given under this order by any member of the committee for each day specified under paragraph (1) of Standing Order H (Scottish Grand Committee (sittings)) for the holding of short debates.

(4) On any day so specified such debates shall be held at the commencement of the sitting or, if the order under paragraph (1) specifies also the taking of questions on that day, immediately after questions.

(5)(a) No member of the committee except the minister or law officer replying to the debate shall be called to speak later than half an hour after the commencement of the first such debate.

(b) The Member who gave notice of the subject and the minister or law officer replying to the debate may each speak for five minutes. Other members of the committee may speak for three minutes.

(c) The chairman may direct any member of the committee who exceeds the limits in sub-paragraph (b) to resume his seat forthwith.

(6) Notices of subjects under this order may be given ten sitting days before that on which they are sought to be raised:

Provided that when it is proposed that the House shall adjourn for a period of fewer than four days, any day during that period (other than a Saturday or a Sunday) shall be counted as a sitting day for the purposes of the calculation made under this paragraph.

D. Scottish Grand Committee (ministerial statements)

(1) The chairman of the Scottish Grand Committee may permit a Scottish Office minister or a Scottish law officer, whether or not a member of the committee, to make a statement, of which prior notice has been given to him, and to answer questions thereon put by members of the committee.

(2) Ministerial statements may be made for the purpose of—

(a) facilitating the questioning by members of the committee of the minister or law officer, as the case may be, about a matter relating to his official responsibilities as provided in the second column of the eleventh sub-paragraph of paragraph (2) of Standing Order No. 130 (Select committees related to government departments), in which case proceedings under this order shall be brought to a conclusion not later than three-quarters of an hour after their commencement; or

(b) announcing the policy of the Government on a matter relating to Scotland or the response of the Government to an event relating to Scotland, in which case proceedings under this order shall be brought to a conclusion at the discretion of the chairman.

(3) Ministerial statements may be made—

(a) at the commencement of a sitting; or

(b) if questions are taken, immediately after the conclusion of proceedings thereon; or

(c) if short debates are held, immediately after the conclusion of those proceedings.

(4) A minister or law officer making a statement under paragraph (1) of this order, who is not a member of the committee, may not do so from the body of the committee; and such a minister or law officer shall not vote, make any motion or be counted in the quorum.

E. Scottish Grand Committee (bills in relation to their principle)

(1) After any public bill has been first printed, the Speaker shall, if of the opinion that its provisions relate exclusively to Scotland, give a certificate to that effect:

Provided that a certificate shall not be withheld by reason only that a provision of that bill amends Schedule 1 to the House of Commons Disqualification Act 1975 or Schedule 1 to the Northern Ireland Assembly Disqualification Act 1975.

(2) On the order being read for the second reading of a bill so certified, a motion may be made by a member of the Government (or in the case of a private Members' bill, by the Member in charge of the bill), 'That the bill be referred to the Scottish Grand Committee'; and the question thereon shall be put forthwith and may be decided notwithstanding the expiration of the time for opposed business:

Provided that such a motion may be made by a private Member only with the leave of the House.

(3) A bill so referred to the Scottish Grand Committee shall be considered on a motion, 'That the Committee has considered the bill in relation to its principle;' and, when the committee has considered that question for a total of two and half hours (whether on one or more than one day), the chairman shall put the question necessary to dispose of the motion, and shall then report accordingly to the House (or shall report that the committee has come to no resolution), without any further question being put thereon:

Provided that a member of the government may, immediately before the motion 'That the Committee has considered the bill in relation to its principle' is made, make without notice a motion to extend the time-limit specified in this paragraph; and the question on such motion shall be put forthwith.

(4) A bill in respect of which a report has been made under paragraph (3) above shall be ordered to be read a second time on a future day.

(5) On the order being read for the second reading of a bill to which paragraph (4) above applies, a motion may be made by a member of the government (or, in the case of a private Member's bill, by the Member in charge of the bill), 'That the bill be committed to a Scottish Standing Committee (or to a special standing committee)': and the question thereon shall be put forthwith and may be decided notwithstanding the expiration of the time for opposed business.

(6) If a motion made under the preceding paragraph be agreed to, the bill shall be deemed to have been read a second time, and shall stand committed to a Scottish Standing Committee (or to a special standing committee).

F. Scottish Grand Committee (statutory instruments, &c.)

(1) Where—

(a) a Member has given notice of a motion for a humble address to Her Majesty praying that a statutory instrument be annulled, or of a motion that a draft of an Order in Council be not submitted to Her Majesty in Council, or that a statutory instrument be revoked or be not made, or that the House takes note of a statutory instrument, or

(b) a Minister of the Crown has given notice of a motion to the effect that a statutory instrument or draft statutory instrument be approved,

a motion may be made by a member of the government, 'That the instrument (or draft instrument) be referred to the Scottish Grand Committee'; and the question on such motion shall be put forthwith and may be decided notwithstanding the expiration of the time for opposed business.

(2) The committee shall consider each instrument (or draft instrument) referred to it on a motion, 'That the Committee has considered the instrument (or draft instrument)'; and the chairman shall put any question necessary to dispose of the proceedings on the motion, if not previously disposed of, not later than one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings thereon; and shall thereupon report the instrument or draft instrument to the House without any further question being put.

(3) If any motion is made in the House of the kind specified in paragraph 1(a) or 1(b) of this order, in relation to any instrument or draft instrument in respect of which a report has been made to the House in accordance with paragraph (2) of this order, the Speaker shall put forthwith the question thereon; which may be decided notwithstanding the expiration of the time for opposed business.

G. Scottish Grand Committee (substantive motions for the adjournment)

(1) On each of the days specified in an order of the House under paragraph (1) of Standing Order H (Scottish Grand Committee (sittings)) for the consideration of motions for the adjournment of the Scottish Grand Committee, such motions of which notice has been given in accordance with paragraphs (2) and (3) below shall have precedence.

(2) A member of the committee giving notice of a motion for the adjournment of the committee under this order shall—

(a) also give notice of the subject to which he intends to call attention on the motion for the adjournment of the committee, and

(b) give such notice of motion and of the subject in writing not later than ten sitting days before that on which the motion is to be made:

Provided that the subject to which attention is called must relate to Scotland.

[Mr. Ian Lang]

(3) The days specified for the consideration of motions for the adjournment of the committee under this order shall be allocated as follows—

(a) six at the disposal of the government;

(b) four at the disposal of the Leader of the Opposition;

and, in respect of parties other than that of the Leader of the Opposition,

(c) one at the disposal of the leader of the largest opposition party; and

(d) one at the disposal of the leader of the next largest opposition party:

Provided that a day specified in an order of the House under paragraph (1) of Standing Order H (Scottish Grand Committee (sittings)) on which business is to be interrupted at or after half-past three o'clock shall, if no business other than that to which this order applies is set down for consideration on that day, be deemed to be two days for the purposes of this order.

(4) For the purposes of this order, the 'largest' and 'next largest' opposition parties in Scotland shall be those parties, not being represented in Her Majesty's Government and of which the Leader of the Opposition is not a member, which have the largest and next largest number of Members who represent constituencies in Scotland, and of which not fewer than three Members were elected to the House as members of those parties.

H. Scottish Grand Committee (sittings)

(1) A motion may be made by a member of the government providing (or varying previous provision) for the Scottish Grand Committee—

(a) to sit on specified days at a specified place in Scotland, the sitting commencing at half-past ten o'clock, and proceedings being interrupted at such hour as may be specified;

(b) to sit on other specified days at Westminster at half-past ten o'clock;

(c) to take questions under Standing Order B (Scottish Grand Committee (questions for oral answer)) on certain of the days specified under paragraph (a) or paragraph (b) above;

(d) to hold short debates under Standing Order C (Scottish Grand Committee (short debates)) on certain of the days so specified; and

(e) to consider substantive motions for the adjournment of the committee under Standing Order G (Scottish Grand Committee (substantive motions for the adjournment)) on not more than twelve of the days so specified.

and the Speaker shall put forthwith the question on such a motion, which may be decided after the time for opposed business:

Provided that nothing in this order shall prevent the committee from considering further at a sitting at Westminster business adjourned at a previous sitting in Scotland, nor from considering at a sitting in Scotland business adjourned at a sitting at Westminster.

(2) The provisions of Standing Order No. 88 (Meetings of standing committees), so far as they relate to the naming of a day in respect of business by the Member appointed chairman and the committee's appointment of future days in respect of business not completed at a sitting, shall not apply to the Scottish Grand Committee.

(3) Other than as provided in paragraph (1) of Standing Order G (Scottish Grand Committee (substantive motions for the adjournment)), the government shall determine the precedence of the business appointed for consideration at any sitting of the committee.

(4) The chairman shall interrupt proceedings at the time specified in relation to the sitting by an order made under paragraph (1) above, or, in the absence of such provision, at one o'clock, subject to paragraph (2) of Standing Order No. 88 (Meetings of standing committees).

(5) At the moment of interruption, proceedings under consideration and not disposed of shall stand adjourned (except substantive motions for the adjournment of the committee under Standing Order G (Scottish Grand Committee (substantive motions for the adjournment)) which shall lapse).

(6) After the interruption of proceedings, a motion for the adjournment of the committee may be made by a member of the government, and, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 88 (Meetings of standing committees) the chairman shall, not later than half an hour after the motion has been made, adjourn the committee without putting any question; and in respect of business taken under this paragraph, the quorum of the committee shall be three.

That Standing Orders be amended as follows—

(i) Standing Order No. 13 (Arrangement of public business), by adding at the end of line 91 the words—

"(11) A private Member's bill to which the provisions of paragraphs (2) to (6) of Standing Order E (Scottish Grand Committee (bills in relation to their principle)) have applied, and which has been considered by a Scottish Standing Committee (or by a special standing committee), shall not be set down for consideration on report so as to have precedence over any private Member's bill so set down which was read a second time on a day preceding that on which the bill was reported from the Scottish Grand Committee under paragraph (3) of that Standing Order";

(ii) Standing Order No. 89 (Procedure in standing committees), in line 1, by leaving out the words "Standing Order No. 94 (Scottish Grand Committee)" and inserting the words "Standing Order A (Scottish Grand Committee (composition and business))"; and

(iii) Standing Order No. 91 (Special standing committees), by inserting at the end of line 13 the words—

"Provided that, in the case of bills certified under paragraph (1) of Standing Order E (Scottish Grand Committee (bills in relation to their principle)) and committed pursuant to paragraph (5) thereof to a special standing committee, the three morning sittings may be held in Scotland".

I am glad to have the opportunity to put before the House this evening the changes to Standing Orders—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Will those Members who are standing and having a conversation please do so outside or sit down?

Mr. Lang: I am glad to have the opportunity to put before the House the changes to Standing Orders, which relate primarily to the work of the Scottish Grand Committee, and were envisaged in the White Paper, "Scotland in the Union: A Partnership for Good", published in March last year. The changes will substantially complete the implementation of the proposals made in the White Paper, which have been, and will be, beneficial for Scotland.

The White Paper followed a serious and detailed consideration of Scottish constitutional issues and of Scotland's place in the United Kingdom, following a pledge given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister shortly before the 1992 general election. That was the process that became popularly known as "taking stock."

In the White Paper, we reaffirmed our belief in the importance of the Union to Scotland and of Scotland to the Union. At the same time, we acknowledged that, from time to time in Scotland, there has been real concern that the Union may not have been functioning as effectively as it might, and we faced up squarely to the need to make the proposals address such shortcomings. The White Paper sought to identify new ways to build on the existing strengths of the Union, recognising that that was a part of a continuing process with the overall aim of strengthening Scotland's place in the Union—an aim which few in the House will challenge.

I shall summarise the main elements of our proposals, so as to bring the House up to date on the most significant changes, before turning to the Standing Order changes.

The White Paper emphasised our commitment to Scotland's place in Europe. We have met our commitments to secure substantial representation for Scotland on the Committee of the Regions and to host a Europartenariat,

which was held in December 1993. Scottish Ministers and Scottish Office officials continue to attend meetings of the Council of Ministers when a discussion has a clear bearing on Scottish interests, and positive steps have been taken to further Scottish links with other parts of Europe.

The White Paper did much to bring to Scotland more decisions affecting Scotland, and much work has been done to transfer certain functions and powers to the Scottish Office. I shall draw attention to two particularly important examples.

First, the transfer to me of responsibility for the Scottish Arts Council took effect, as planned, from 1 April this year. It is now established as an independent body with its own royal charter, and I am confident that the council will serve the Scottish arts world well. With the creation of the new council, there is, for the first time, a unified funding structure for the arts in Scotland—all central Government support coming from the Scottish Office.

Secondly, I also took over responsibility for training policy in Scotland on 1 April. We already had in place unique institutional arrangements for the delivery of Government-funded training programmes with the establishment of Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Island Enterprise and the local enterprise companies, leading to a better understanding of local economic demands and of the training required to meet them. My assumption of responsibility for training policy builds on that.

Significantly, it also rounds out my capacity to influence industrial development by enabling me to consider education and training in an integrated way. It accords well with the additional responsibilities that I recently assumed for funding the universities in Scotland—Scottish institutions, with United Kingdom and international stature, and an important part to play, along with other elements of the education and training system, in the enhancement of the skills base that is vital to our economic success.

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): The Secretary of State will know that, as a member of the Select Committee on Employment, I have followed developments—as has his Parliamentary Private Secretary—in local enterprise councils and training and enterprise councils, which developed from the experience of Boston private industry councils. In the Boston PICs, a responsibility was placed on the training manager to place people in employment, which is something that we welcome.

Given the present recession, does the Secretary of State accept that the quotas that he is demanding that those providing training should meet should not apply to those who are training people with special training needs or with physical or mental disabilities? A number of companies —especially those connected with the Scottish Association for Mental Health—are experiencing increasing difficulty in having their contracts renewed because of the quota arrangement.

Mr. Lang: I understand the specific point that the hon. Gentleman is making. If he wishes to pursue it with me, I shall be happy to look into the details. In general, however, I think that the local enterprise companies have a vital role to play—just as the training and enterprise companies do in England—in co-ordinating and delivering training schemes in the enterprise company areas for which they are responsible. Members of LECs, more than anyone else, know the specific needs of their areas, and know how schemes can be adapted and made more flexible to suit particular requirements.

Those are just one or two examples of the many improvements in the handling of Scottish affairs that flow from the White Paper. Overall, the Government have a highly creditable record of success in delivering what the White Paper promised, improving the way in which the Union works and bringing important benefits to the people of Scotland.

In that context, and in the same vein, let me deal with the formal business that we are discussing—the changes being made to our Standing Orders to implement the proposals in chapter 6 of the White Paper "Scotland in the Union". Let me remind the House briefly what they are designed to achieve.

As the White Paper acknowledged, the criticism has often been made that there is too little time in our crowded Westminster schedule for Scottish affairs to be discussed fully and properly. We could debate that criticism at length, but I do not propose to do so; it would be hard to argue that there is too little time for Scottish business when we recently devoted 178 hours to the Committee stage of the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill, and two and a half days to Report and Third Reading.

For many years, under Governments of both complexions, there has been a solid programme of Scottish legislation. That programme has given the House opportunities to debate Scottish issues, either on their own or within the framework of United Kingdom debates to which they are relevant. More recently, the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs—also established by a Conservative Government—has provided a forum for particular issues to be examined in depth.

The Government have decided, however, that, in the spirit of Scotland in the Union, it is appropriate to seek ways of increasing the opportunities for parliamentary discussion of Scottish affairs. I emphasise that our measures are in no way intended to diminish opportunities for Scottish business to be taken on the Floor of the House; it is the Government's firm intention that matters which merit debate in the Chamber should continue to be given that opportunity. The changes that we are making are intended to provide additional opportunities, rather than a diversion of what we have now.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): According to records that I have obtained from the Library, the Scottish Grand Committee last met in Edinburgh on 1 February last year. Why have no sittings taken place in Edinburgh since that debate on local government reform?

Mr. Lang: The question when the Scottish Grand Committee should meet and the question when estimates should be debated are the subject of negotiation between the usual channels. Part of the reason is that there has been less pressure than normal for meetings to take place in Scotland. I hope, however, that the measures that I am announcing will provide more opportunities for such matters to be debated not only in Edinburgh, but elsewhere in Scotland.

The Standing Orders are designed to produce the improvement that I have described from the beginning of the next Session. Our approach turns on providing an

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expanded role for the Scottish Grand Committee: in effect, we would be creating for it a mini-Order Paper, modelled, in many respects, on the procedures of the House.

The Committee will be able to conduct general debates and debates on Second Reading of Bills, as now. In addition, it will have the opportunity for a question time; the opportunity to hear statements and take evidence from Scottish Office Ministers, including, where appropriate, those who sit in the other place; the opportunity to consider statutory instruments relating to Scotland; and the opportunity to have short Adjournment debates. We are also proposing a new procedure—unique to the Grand Committee—for short debates, with short speeches, on particular subjects raised by Scottish Members.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): New Standing Order D, entitled "Scottish Grand Committee (ministerial statements)", states:

"The chairman of the Scottish Grand Committee may permit a Scottish Office Minister or a Scottish law officer, whether or not a member of the committee, to make a statement, of which prior notice has been given to him".

How much prior notice must be given to the Chairman?

Mr. Lang: Clearly, sufficient prior notice would be required before a Committee sitting took place as a result of a motion on the Order Paper, unless such notice had already been tabled in a sessional order or an order that had laid down the precise dates throughout a particular term of the Session. The point of the exercise is to act by consent and agreement across the Floor of the House, so the usual channels would be involved in negotiating precise details.

The Standing Orders provide a framework within which a calendar can be laid out at the beginning of each Session —or, more likely, each term. That might set out the dates of meetings in Scotland and at Westminster and identify those meetings at which questions, short debates and general debates are to be taken. The objective would be to achieve, by agreement through the usual channels, a satisfactory pattern of business that avoided difficult clashes with the other parliamentary demands on hon. Members' time. A calendar of that sort should ensure that days available for general debates in the Scottish Grand Committee were deployed to best advantage.

Our key change from the present arrangements would be the replacement of the present pattern of up to six estimates days and up to six matter days by provision for up to 12 general debates. It has been clear for some time that the present distinction between estimates debates and matter days debates is largely artificial. Both are in effect general debates on issues of current concern.

In addition, the present arrangements have led to difficulties and uncertainties over timetabling, which has created problems. That has been a particular feature of the estimates debates, which have traditionally tended to be bunched together in late June and early July. Those debates are at the discretion and disposal of the Opposition, who, for whatever reason, have not had full advantage of them in recent years. The minority parties have been particularly disadvantaged in that regard.

It is against that background that we propose the move to up to 12 general debates, to take place on substantive motions for the Adjournment, as provided under new Standing Order G. Of those general debates, four will be at the disposal of Her Majesty's Opposition, and one each would go to the two next largest Opposition parties in Scotland, provided that they have not fewer than three hon. Members. In providing for days to be available in that way, we are following the principles that relate to Opposition days in the House, which work successfully.

I envisage that some of the general debates will be on matters that arise regularly: the "hardy perennials", such as public expenditure in Scotland. The timing of those debates and the way in which they count against each party's allocation of time would, as for other aspects of our proposals, be settled by agreement through the usual channels.

I do not propose to dwell at length on the technical details of the new arrangements. There has been ample opportunity for consultation with the Opposition parties, and the text of the Standing Orders, together with a detailed explanatory note, has been available in the House of Commons Library since 10 February.

The intention of the new procedures is not to displace the Second Reading of major Bills from the Floor of the House, but to provide an alternative route that may be more appropriate for measures such as law reform Bills, which are often squeezed out at present. The intention is also, in certain circumstances, to enable private Members Bills relating exclusively to Scotland to have a proper Second Reading debate.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): The Secretary of State is aware that a Bill to enact many of the recommendations of various reports on legislation affecting children in Scotland would enjoy considerable cross-party support and might lend itself to some of the procedures that he is suggesting. Can we expect such a long-overdue measure in the next Session?

Mr. Lang: As the hon. Gentleman will know, I cannot anticipate the Queen's Speech, but I note what he says, and I take from that his party's willingness to contemplate the Second Reading of such a Bill in those circumstances.

In drafting the Standing Orders, the opportunity has been taken to simplify some of the complex and confusing procedures relating to the reference of business to the Scottish Grand Committee, and to the handling of Bills that have a Second Reading there. Those are explained in more detail in the companion to the Standing Orders, which has been in the Library since February, and I am sure that the procedures will be found to be simpler and more effective.

Overall, the proposed changes will contribute to making the Scottish Grand Committee a more effective forum for debate.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Although the Scottish Grand Committee may well become an effective forum for debate, can the Secretary of State explain how on earth that will extend democracy in Scotland? What is the use of having another talking shop if the Scottish Grand Committee will not have an effective vote on the principle of legislation? Surely one cannot have credible democratic scrutiny and accountability if one cannot vote.

Mr. Lang: If the hon. Gentleman thinks that democracy is confined to voting, he does not understand what democracy is all about. It happens to be quite a lot about debating and talking. The word "Parliament" derives from the French word "parler".

It may be appropriate to say a word about what I envisage for the Committee's sittings in Scotland. I think that areas other than Edinburgh should occasionally have the opportunity to host the Committee's meetings. I have asked my officials to provide assistance to the House authorities, who are ultimately responsible for making arrangements for sittings of the Scottish Grand Committee, to identify suitable premises.

I should also mention briefly the other changes to the Standing Orders proposed tonight. The main one is the amendment—

Sir David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): Does the Secretary of State recognise that if the Scottish Grand Committee goes on tour, it is even more important that we have proper notice of the meetings of the Committee? One of the greatest criticisms over the years has been of the idea that Members of Parliament are sitting around with free Tuesday and Thursday mornings waiting for the Scottish Grand Committee to meet. That is not true. Notice has been lamentable, especially this Session.

Mr. Lang: I absolutely agree with the right hon. Member. I recall that, when I was the Scottish Whip many years ago, that was a complaint he had then, and he still has it now; he has been consistent in the matter. I am happy now to be able to meet his concern by bringing forward proposals that will give him precisely the predictability he seeks. Except in the case of occasional statements, which may have to be made at relatively short notice, the programme will be laid down well in advance.

I refer especially to the amendment to Standing Order No. 91, which deals with Special Standing Committees. It will enable Special Standing Committees on Scottish Bills to meet in Scotland for the three sittings of oral evidence for which the Standing Order provides.

As I have said, I believe that the changes will provide a fuller opportunity for Scottish affairs to be debated in a Scottish context, although at the same time fully within the framework of the procedures of this House and the existing constitutional arrangements, which have served Scotland well. I commend them to the House.

10.16 pm

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): The amendments to the Standing Orders derive, as the Prime Minister said, from the exercise that has become, he claimed, "popularly known"—I believe unpopularly named—as the "taking stock" exercise. It was embarked on by the Prime Minister in response to widespread public concern in Scotland about the fact that, in the 1992 general election, 75 per cent. of the people voted for parties in Scotland calling for one form of constitutional change or another and only 25 per cent. of the electorate voted for the Conservative party—a party that was pledged and committed to making no serious change in the constitutional arrangements relating to Scotland inside the United Kingdom. That left a serious problem of credibility for the Government—a problem that remains.

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson (Aberdeen, South): Is the hon. Gentleman seriously suggesting that everyone who voted for his party, for the Liberal Democrats or for the Scottish National party voted exclusively and solely for constitutional change?

Mr. Robertson: No, I am not saying that. I am saying that they voted for those three parties, and that it was integral to the programme of those parties that there would be constitutional change and that there would be a Scottish Parliament. It is a bit rich of the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Robertson) to say that. Shortly after the general election, he was appointed vice-chairman of the Conservative party in Scotland. Its support went from 25 per cent. of the electorate in the general election to 2.3 per cent. of the electorate in the Monklands, East by-election two weeks ago in which the hon. Gentleman played a starring role. The hon. Gentleman is not in much of a position to speak as he does here.

Mr. Salmond: I hope to be helpful to the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson). I was interested in the intervention by the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Robertson). Is the hon. Member for Hamilton aware that, in the most recent opinion poll that tested these matters, no fewer than 51 per cent. of Conservative supporters were in favour of some form of constitutional change? Admittedly, it was a very small sample.

Mr. Robertson: I find myself in the astonishing position of thanking the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) for an intervention. I know that he has problems of his own inside his party and that may be why he is being helpful on this occasion. I notice that Mr. Jim Sillars, the former Member of Parliament for Glasgow, Govan, said that the result in Monklands, East was a protest vote. He continued:

"anyone who denies that is denying reality, so in a sense it almost didn't count."

However, I still welcome the comment of the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan. In that opinion poll, 48 per cent. of those who said that they supported the Scottish National party supported a Scottish Parliament inside the United Kingdom, which is the policy of the Labour party. The party of government had at that point a serious problem of credibility and sought to address it through a taking-stock exercise.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): If a future Labour Government did not have a majority of seats in England and did not have a substantial vote of support in England in percentage terms, as the hon. Gentleman has quoted, does that mean that a future Labour Government would make no constitutional changes affecting England?

Mr. Home Robertson: The cheque is in the post.

Mr. Robertson: That is not an expensive question at all. However, I assure the hon. Gentleman that if, in the next general election, the Labour party puts forward a prospectus calling for a Parliament in Scotland, an Assembly in Wales and, ultimately, regional assemblies throughout England, we shall pursue that prospectus because we believe in decentralisation in the United Kingdom. The reality of the vote in 1992 was that 75 per cent. of the population—convincing by any standards—voted for parties which called for major constitutional change, yet we were faced with a Government who said that the answer to that was no change at all.

I recall that in March, in a profile of the Secretary of State for Scotland in *The Guardian*, he acknowledged the dilemma that he faced. He acknowledged that he led a party in Scotland which did not have a majority, as part of a Government elected by United Kingdom figures. He said

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that that had led him to deal with problems with a little circumspection. Of course, the difficulty is that there is precious little circumspection in any of the policies that the Government are now following.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Robertson: I have given way enough in this brief debate. Welcome though visitors to the debate are, I should move forward.

In the light of that problem of credibility, in the light of that result in 1992, the new Standing Orders are a pathetic and totally inadequate response—

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. The hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) has just referred to visitors in the Chamber. Is not this indeed the Parliament of the United Kingdom? Can you confirm that there are absolutely no visitors in the Chamber tonight?

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. Every hon. Member here is a democratically elected Member of this House. All hon. Members have a right to speak in the House and I am pleased that the hon. Gentleman brought that point of order to my attention.

Mr. Robertson: I agree with you, Madam Speaker. However, I do not think that the use of the word "visitors", or even of the word "passengers" could be possibly ruled out of order. I have never been one to say that anybody should be denied the right to speak, but hon. Gentlemen who are coming to such debates for the first time do not have a proprietorial right to intervene on any speech that happens to be made, however much respect I have for the hon. Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe), who may have had a greater interest in the previous debate.

The new Standing Orders are pathetic and a totally inadequate response to the overwhelming public demand for a directly elected Scottish Parliament in Scotland. That is what is wanted, that is what is needed and that is what the people of Scotland have repeatedly asked for. The Secretary of State's opening speech underlined the need for that Parliament by describing the new powers which have come to him as a result of the exercise. He has taken upon himself responsibility for the Scottish Arts Council. He has taken upon himself the powers over training policy and the way in which that is to be integrated into industrial policy. He has taken upon himself the control of university finance in Scotland. The panoply of powers controlled directly by the Secretary of State for Scotland has increased dramatically and the only accountability that we are being offered is through the new Standing Orders.

The Standing Orders in no way remove the obligation to look much more radically at what the people of Scotland want, especially in the light of the further collapse of Conservative support from 25 per cent. at the previous general election to under 14 per cent. in the regional council elections and in the European elections. Let us not overlook the fact that Conservative support in the most recent by-election dropped to a mere 2.3 per cent., the smallest proportion and the lowest absolute vote scored by the Conservative party since, I believe, 1874. Surely Conservative Members should be concerned about that. Conservative Members must regard 1992 as the halcyon days when their party was achieving a 25 per cent. share of the vote. No doubt they think back to that time with considerable nostalgia.

The proposals before us will improve the handling of Scottish parliamentary business and, therefore, are to be welcomed. There will be greater opportunities to question Ministers. We shall be able to cross-examine Ministers in the other place. These measures constitute a small but valuable step forward. Other improvements are the ideas of structured and timetabled Grand Committee debates on pre-determined issues, Adjournment debates and Special Standing Committees in the context of specific Scottish Bills. I welcome those concepts and look forward to the negotiations that will take place between all the parties to try to establish a timetable and a framework that will be to the convenience of us all. It is not just the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel), who has now left the Chamber, who has been inconvenienced by the way in which previous debates were arranged.

Mr. George Kynoch (Kincardine and Deeside): Will the hon. Gentleman confirm that the representation of Scottish Labour Members this evening—about 20 per cent. —is representative of the attendance that we might expect at future Scottish Grand Committees? That would be in line with the most recent Scottish Grand Committee, which was held at Edinburgh, when Labour attendance was poor.

Mr. Robertson: The hon. Gentleman should put the matter to the test at a Scottish Parliament in which real legislative powers are vested. That would be the ultimate test. The proposals before us represent only a small move forward, but one which I am willing to welcome. They do not, however, take us anywhere near what the Scottish people want and deserve.

Mr. Rowe: I am grateful to the hon. Member for allowing me to intervene, whether he describes me as a visitor or a passenger.

It is a legitimate English interest to explore a little further what the Labour party means by a Scottish Parliament. If it means that a Scottish Parliament will, for example, be debating and deciding upon Scottish education or Scottish health, we in England, much as we shall miss the representation from Scotland, which takes such an interested part in our debates on such large matters, will be unwilling to hear Scots debating matters here that we are not allowed to debate in Scotland.

Mr. Robertson: The hon. Gentleman comes from Kent, yet another part of the country which voted Labour in the European elections. I am sure that that is part of his interest in the wider debates that are taking place here.

We do not have a neat arrangement in the United Kingdom. We do not have something that would easily be described in the neat checks and balances of a written constitution. There are obvious problems. The hon. Member for Mid-Kent is sitting behind the Secretary of State for Scotland, who exercises huge powers over specifically Scottish legislation. As has been said, the Government are in the process of ramming through a measure to reorganise Scottish local government. The Bill, in all its manifestation, is bitterly unpopular in Scotland. That is one of the reasons for the Conservative party being so unpopular north of the border. It is dropping down almost out of sight in electoral terms. The Secretary of

State is able to proceed, however, because a majority of Members come from south of the border. Such is the nature of the United Kingdom.

The creation of a Scottish Parliament with accountability for the decisions taken on Scottish legislation, with the involvement of the Scottish people, would produce yet another facet of the developing union that the Government talk about with such great pride. I believe that such a Parliament would strengthen that union. If the Secretary of State examined the proposal in greater detail, I believe that he, too, would welcome it.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Robertson: I was moving to a lengthy point, but in the light of that, I will accept an intervention.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Does not the hon. Gentleman appreciate that, if a Scottish institution produces Scottish legislation that affects England and all other parts of the kingdom in respect of road traffic, safety or health, we shall be creating a schismatic situation which will destroy the Union, not strengthen it?

Mr. Robertson: I entirely disagree with the hon. and learned Gentleman. I remind him of an incident a couple of months ago when he attempted to speak in the First Scottish Standing Committee which was considering sheriff courts fees. A conspiracy of Whips and others prevented the hon. and learned Gentleman, as a Scottish Member, even expressing a view in that Committee. At the end of that Committee, the hon. and learned Gentleman expressed anger and disgust at the fact that a measure had been pushed through without a Scottish Conservative voice being heard. That is an anomaly which the hon. and learned Gentleman is apparently willing to swallow. Therefore, I do not see why he should not be willing to accept that the democratic will of the Scottish people, through a Parliament inside the United Kingdom, should have just as much validity as what he swallowed on that occasion.

Mr. Wallace: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Robertson: No, I cannot give way at this point. It would be unfair to the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) and to others if I were to accept this as a dialogue between Members rather than a brief speech.

Labour, and I personally, have consistently argued for the early implementation of these changes to the Standing Orders. Agreement was reached between the parties in the House at the end of 1993 and I have sought, through correspondence and conversation, to make the Government introduce the changes earlier. By contrast, the Secretary of State has done his level best to hold them up. Only after endless delays and excuses about so-called non co-operation is he now grudgingly bringing the changes before the House.

People will remember the answer that the Secretary of State gave to my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson). He said that democracy is about more than voting. That is very true when the Conservative party has dropped right out of the scale of voting in Scotland and has virtually no support among the population of Scotland.

The Government behave without circumspection but with complete arrogance, and that behaviour will consign them to being almost permanently on the margin of Scottish politics. As the former Chancellor of the Exchequer said, this is a Government

"in office but not in power."—[*Official Report*, 9 June 1993; Vol. 226, c. 285.]

They have lost, decisively, comprehensively and perhaps permanently, the support of the Scottish people.

Like the old, near-senile rulers of the old eastern European regimes, the Government strut around the Scottish stage without backing, consent or popular authority. Just like those relics of the past, when they cannot win elections, they blame the electorate. Apparently the electors got it wrong. They have been confused, bemused or taken down blind alleys by other political parties. The Government never admit that they have got it wrong and that they should change.

Just like the Brezhnevs of the past, manipulating small families and huge families, the Scottish Tory family simply takes those who have lost elections and places them on the quangos that are increasingly running Scotland. Scarcely a quango, large and powerful or small, is complete without a failed Tory candidate and now, of course, there is no other version. Just like the eastern European relics, they will be consigned to the museum.

Let me be constructive as well as critical of the Government. As the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland has rightly pointed out, we have missed out and the people, and especially the vulnerable children, of Scotland have missed out because no comprehensive legislation has been introduced in Scotland to mirror the Children Act 1989, which applies to England and Wales.

The Government's promised Children's Bill should have appeared last year, but it was pushed aside for local government reorganisation. Scotland is already five years behind England in its reform of laws for children. The Government, however, are apparently still arguing that there will be no time for the Bill even in the next Session. That is scandalous. No attempt has been made by Ministers of any variety to deny the stories about that which have appeared in the press. A Children's Bill that was properly drafted to ensure cross-party support could be referred to the new Scottish Grand Committee and to the new procedures that we will agree tonight. I therefore challenge the Secretary of State to choose the route of cross-party co-operation in the interests of Scotland's vulnerable children.

The Opposition offer our support for such a Bill. The Government may put Scotland's children in second place to the gerrymandering of Scottish local government, but the Labour party puts children first. That is why we make it clear tonight that we shall give our co-operation to such a Bill being considered in Scottish Grand Committee, thereby avoiding the pre-empting of precious parliamentary time.

There will be other opportunities to use those channels to raise issues that we have been unable to raise under the present procedures. We shall be able to consider the Rosyth naval base and the betrayal of its work force. They were given promises repeatedly but now, apparently, they are to be withdrawn, cavalierly and brazenly, by a Government who treat promises with absolutely no faith. The new procedures will also allow us, I hope, to interrogate, once again, Lord Fraser about the Fyfe-Peterken row. Perhaps we shall get closer to the truth than any Government statements up to now have allowed us to get. I notice that Lord Fraser does not even bother to attend Scottish

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Question Time now to hear the answers to questions put about his Department. That will change, to the slight benefit of Scottish democracy.

The tide of history will see the cosmetic changes offered as purely tinkering at a system that needs radical change. They are, and will be seen as, a superficial and unconvincing—although perhaps in the short term welcome—attempt to hide the depth of the centralisation that is sapping our national strength. A new Government are coming, who, with a Scottish Parliament as the first stage to a decentralised United Kingdom, will usher in a new and revived spirit of a vibrant, growing and democratic United Kingdom.

10.37 pm

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson (Aberdeen, South): Given the strict time limit on the debate, I shall be brief. I know that you, Madam Deputy Speaker, will keep me to the point.

I welcome the debate and the terms of the motion moved by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. It is worth recalling briefly, as the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) did, the background to the debate on our standing orders.

In the days immediately preceding the general election of April 1992, in Scotland we were told almost daily by the media and by each of the Opposition parties that the Scottish Conservative party was facing electoral annihilation. We were told that we would be down to two Members of Parliament, if we were lucky, and that more than 50 per cent. of our fellow Scots wanted outright secession from the Union. We were told that, frankly, the days of the Union were numbered. We were also told that to be an unionist was to have a death wish and that what our opponents called and still call the status quo could not last. We read that by our perceived intransigence it was we unionists who were threatening the Union.

Without doubt there is some truth in the thinking that argued that rigid, dogmatic, almost doctrinaire adherence to the status quo was and, indeed, is dangerous. As the party of the Union, it falls uniquely to us to fight for and preserve the historic bond between our two countries. If we do not, no one else will. It is up to us to make the Union positive and relevant and to make it work. My right hon. Friend moved his motion in that spirit.

A valid and proper question that must be asked is whether to be a unionist today is to be a defender of the constitutional status quo and to say no—no to change, no to any change, no to every change. I remind the House of the fate of the last Member in this House who said, "No, no, no."

The Union of 1707 has changed and will change. To survive, it must change. That is what we are debating tonight. Unionism is not blind, unquestioning adherence to present constitutional arrangements.

Mr. Salmond: If I catch the hon. Gentleman's drift correctly, the former right hon. Member whom he mentioned said "Yes" to the Rosyth naval base. How does the hon. Gentleman feel about that?

Mr. Robertson: I shall stick to the issue in question. The hon. Gentleman may be able to fit that matter into his own speech.

By its very nature, the status quo must change. The Union that we have today is not that of 1707. How could it possibly be? It has constantly adapted to changing circumstances, moved with the times and been flexible. The partnership between Scotland and England is not stagnant but dynamic, and my right hon. Friend is asking the House to embrace that dynamism. Freeing the Scottish Grand Committee from the shackles of meeting only in Edinburgh and London, giving it new powers and enhancing its role is the next step in the Union's evolution.

To answer the question that I posed, Conservative Members are not frightened of change, but we differ from each of the Opposition parties—which, to be fair, also offer change—because to any change, however great or small, we always apply a fundamental, non-negotiable criterion: will it strengthen or weaken the Union? If it passes that test and truly enhances the Union, we shall be found right behind it, battling hard for it. But if it fails the test and weakens or threatens the Union, we shall fight it to the end with every conviction and every sinew of our being.

That is why we oppose the plans proposed by the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) and all the Opposition parties and support my right hon. Friend. The Scottish National party wants to destroy the United Kingdom and consign it to history. At least that is honest. The Liberal Democrat and Labour parties offer a half-way house which is untenable in the long term and offers nothing but chaos, instability and misery in the short term.

It is hard to see how a directly elected tax-raising Assembly could ever pass the test of whether the Union would be strengthened. The one offered by the constitutional convention certainly does not: under it, Scotland would become the most highly taxed part of the kingdom, driving out jobs and investment. Political tensions would be great when dilemmas like the West Lothian question became real issues rather than mere academic debating points. The regional imbalances within Scotland would result in an Assembly dominated by central Scotland, with no sensitivity to the north and north-east. Policies would be tailored for the central belt and paid for by Grampian.

We oppose the unilateral devolution on offer, not because it comes either from the convention or our opponents, but because in the short term it threatens the Union and in the long term will destroy it completely.

As a Unionist party, we have never been frightened to question how and if the Union is working, and to look at its failings as well as its strengths. The changes envisaged by my right hon. Friend are fundamental, radical and visionary—*[Interruption.]* Opposition Members may scoff and sneer, but what do they have to fear in allowing the Grand Committee to meet in Glasgow, Aberdeen, Dundee, Inverness or their own constituencies? Are they concerned that their constituents might see Scottish Members debating Scottish matters which affect them? Are they frightened that the Grand Committee will take on a new relevance, or that their constituents might demand their attendance and—horror of horrors—their participation?

Mr. Kynoch: The Scottish people should see the Opposition Benches now, with only six Labour Members present. Is that not representative of Labour Members' attitude to the future of Scotland and their interest in what goes on in this place?

Mr. Robertson: My hon. Friend raises a valid point. As he said earlier, the last time the Grand Committee met in Edinburgh only half the Scottish parliamentary Labour party bothered to turn up. Do the Opposition parties oppose what we are doing tonight because they fear change themselves? Do they believe that we are about to deny them our greatest weapon?

Mr. George Robertson: I hate to interrupt such a polished speech, but the hon. Gentleman has clearly failed to spot the fact that we support these changes today. I know that that might cut out a large chunk of his speech, but he should change it if he does not want to look absolutely ludicrous tomorrow.

Mr. Robertson: The hon. Gentleman may support what we are doing tonight, but has he heard his colleagues jeering in the background? Has he seen them shaking their heads at what he said or what my right hon. Friend said? If they are supportive, why is there only a one-line whip? Why are they not whipped in the House to vote for the measures?

Is it simply that Opposition Members know that we are right and agree with the hon. Member for Dumfermline, East (Mr. Brown), the shadow Chancellor, when he wrote in *The Herald* on 3 May 1993:

"I think we are making a great mistake if we just assume there is huge enthusiasm for home rule in Scotland."

In conclusion, Scotland's place is as a full and equal partner in the United Kingdom. Only the Conservative party is committed to that. The Scottish people have shown time and again that they do not want to see the saltire ripped from the Union flag. The Union has endured because it can change and it will endure. It is dynamic and has changed, and it will change again. These reforms are an important staging post in its history. In time, if not tonight, they will be seen as just as important as previous reforms, such as the creation of the Scottish Office and the position of the Secretary of State, and the setting up of the Select Committee—as important as the creation of the Grand Committee itself. As a unionist, I have no hesitation in supporting the reforms and commending them to the House.

10.46 pm

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): We have just listened to what I suspect is the authentic voice of Tory unionism. If what we are being asked to support this evening is a measure of dynamism and vision, heaven help Scotland. I accept that they are pragmatic measures and measures which we, indeed, will support, but they fall far short of anything that will address the malaise within the Union arrangements.

When I heard the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Robertson) say that, if anything threatened the Union, he would use every sinew—or words to that effect—to defend the Union at all costs, I am sure that those are the sort of words that were spoken from the Tory Benches in 1912 and 1914 when Liberal Governments tried to introduce measures for the government of Ireland. Of course, it was that type of attitude that led to the one event that we have had in this century where the Union broke up. The Conservatives achieved the break-up of the Union by their unwillingness to endorse and embrace some genuinely and visionary measures which would sort out the government of this country.

When people talk about anomalies that might arise, I do not recall, during the years before Stormont was abolished, that many Tory Members objected to the fact that they had the support of Ulster Unionist Members of Parliament, albeit that matters affecting the domestic affairs of Ulster were dealt with at Stormont and Ulster Members were still free to debate, come to this House and vote on all other measures affecting other parts of the United Kingdom. That was an anomaly. It is an anomaly which would be cured by federalism. However, it is clearly an anomaly which Tory Members were prepared to accept as long as it suited their own book.

Both the Secretary of State for Scotland and the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) have referred to the taking-stock exercise which, after a long gestation period, produced a mouse. When one looks at what has happened in the interim, even if the announcement of taking stock was a disappointment, the subsequent events have been something of a disappointment, too. We are told, and we now know, that there are facilities for people to make local telephone calls to ask the Scottish Office questions. What is the point of asking questions if one gets answers which reflect the minority view within Scotland?

We also heard from the Secretary of State—indeed, he paraded it as one of the great achievements—that he has responsibility for training in Scotland. As I recall, paragraph 7.5 of the document "Taking Stock" says that training will be done within the framework of overall strategic priorities, initiatives and policies developed by the Secretary of State for Employment in consultation with colleagues and collectively agreed.

As one who is always willing to give credit where credit is due, I acknowledge that on 7 February this year the Secretary of State made an important announcement that he heralded as a further step in developing the policies set out in the White Paper "Scotland in the Union: A Partnership for Good". On that day, in reply to a question from the hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Kynoch), he proudly announced that, with the agreement of the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, formal responsibility for the administration of treasure trove in Scotland had been transferred from the Treasury to the Scottish Office.

The body politic in Scotland is still quaking after the dynamic, visionary and radical decision made that day. If they are still looking for the treasure, it is not to be found in the White Paper—

Mr. Kynoch: If the people of Scotland followed the hon. Gentleman's recommendation of a Scottish Parliament, with all the implications that that might have for increased taxation, would they regard being probably the highest taxed part of the United Kingdom as treasure?

Mr. Wallace: I have never accepted the proposition that a Parliament would necessarily lead to higher rates of tax. Taxation powers are important if any legislative body is to have some means of fiscal discipline—*[Interruption.]* As my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) reminds me, that was precisely Lord Home's argument before the 1979 referendum.

The power to raise taxation also involves the power to lower it. If Scotland wanted to gain some competitive advantage, it might reduce taxes—a possibility that Tory Members refuse to countenance because it undermines their other arguments.

Mr. Salmond *rose—*

Mr. Gallie *rose—*

Mr. Wallace: No. I am trying to make some progress.

We were told in the document that the Government's objective was to find ways of handling Commons business relating to Scotland, including legislation

"which maximises the involvement of Members of Parliament for Scottish constituencies and increases the responsiveness of the system to Scottish considerations."

In this Session, there have been two important measures affecting the criminal law of Scotland and police powers. They were essentially English Bills to which Scottish provisions had been tagged on. On the Committees that scrutinised those Bills, only two Scottish Members were able to serve—yet one of them concerned an important issue for Scotland about which we have all received many letters: aggravated trespass. When the Scottish aspects of that issue were debated, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton) rose, kept his head down, and for three minutes read out a truncated version of his brief. Then he sat down. So much for sensitivity to Scottish considerations.

Such Scottish legislation as there is we find often tagged on to whatever will go for England and Wales. A Scottish Parliament would not have defaulted on introducing measures to safeguard and to implement many of the recommendations and reports that have emerged on the welfare of children in Scotland. That was a serious omission from this year's legislative programme. We hope that reports that there will be no such legislation next year either are wrong.

If the Government introduce a Children Bill for Scotland in the next Session, it will receive the support of both sides of the House. We shall of course want to look at the details; a Special Standing Committee of the type to which the Secretary of State referred would offer an ideal mechanism for scrutiny of the legal niceties involved in the welfare of children. I greatly hope that the right hon. Gentleman will take encouragement from this debate to introduce such a Bill soon.

Although we welcome the new Standing Orders, I note that there will be no real votes in the Grand Committee. No matter what we debate, or how passionately we debate it, we will ultimately only be debating whether to adjourn or whether to report to the House that we have considered an issue. I cannot wait for the touring circus to turn up in the old Parliament hall in St. Andrew's, where we will spend two and a half hours passionately debating the economy of Scotland, only at the end to vote on whether to adjourn. If that is the kind of picture that Scottish people will see on location about how Scotland is governed, they will not draw the conclusions that Conservative Members expect people to draw.

I welcome the fact that there will be additional time for questions. It is frustrating to us all that Scottish Question Time occurs only once in every four parliamentary weeks. On a whole range of subjects our English colleagues have an opportunity to question individual Ministers, but we have to pick and choose between all those subjects on one occasion. We will have an opportunity to question the Minister of State in another place and the Law Officers. The last time on which there was a separate period to put oral questions to the Law Officers was in 1987. Since then, there has been the Lockerbie air disaster and Piper Alpha and other important issues which intimately involved the actions of Law Officers. But we have not had a proper opportunity here to ask questions on those matters, and this proposal is particularly welcome.

I warmed to the Secretary of State's suggestion that we might get a calendar for timetabling Scottish Grand Committee meetings. We shall certainly do our best to co-operate to try to achieve that. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel) has said, we are not all sitting with empty diaries to slot in meetings of the Scottish Grand Committee at four days' notice.

The distribution of debates is six for the Government, four for the principal Opposition and one each for the other Scottish Opposition parties. That is not exactly proportional representation, but it is probably better than the current arrangement and it is at least a start.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): Perhaps I may intervene to allow my hon. Friend to replenish his supply of water. He mentioned my right hon. Friend the Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel). Does he recall that in, I think, 1965, shortly after he was elected, my rt hon. Friend wrote a pamphlet for the Scottish Liberal party, as it was then, entitled "Out of Control"? That pamphlet contained practically all the Government's proposals.

Mr. Wallace: I do not have a contemporaneous recollection of that: I was only 11 at the time. However, I subsequently read the pamphlet, which is very good. I am sure that the Secretary of State must have had it very much in mind when he presented his proposals. In 1912 Mr. Asquith said that the centre was congested and that it was time to start divesting some of the congestion.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): My hon. Friend the Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) remembers that.

Mr. Wallace: I do not accuse my hon. Friend of remembering Mr. Asquith. I recall a pamphlet written by the present Secretary of State in the late 1970s which seemed to favour the concept of some sort of devolution. The Secretary of State shakes his head. Perhaps we can look in the files to see whether we can find it. It obviously did not make the same impact upon me as the one written by my right hon. Friend the Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale. However, I remember that the Secretary of State for Defence made impassioned speeches in the House in favour of Scottish devolution in the 1970s. He may still hold that view but feels that he cannot say so.

Whether we can have ad hoc statements or whether they can be made only on days when there is a meeting of the Scottish Grand Committee is not entirely clear. For example, statements on student grants or on other matters which affect the whole of the United Kingdom are invariably made by English Ministers and Scottish Members do not have an opportunity to ask detailed Scottish questions. It is not clear whether statements on Scottish matters could be made at relatively short notice in the Scottish Grand Committee.

The doubt is that the proposed legislation amounts to anything like that which is necessary to address the needs of the Scottish people. Our party is unequivocally a party of home rule because we believe that that offers the Scottish people the opportunity to elect those who will determine Scotland's political priorities for its domestic

affairs while leaving matters such as defence, foreign affairs and macro-economic policy to what we see as the federal Parliament. That is the only way in which the Union can be preserved. Many aspects of the Union are worth preserving, but the one way to destroy it is to make only small adjustments to it or none at all.

As I said, Mr. Asquith thought that the centre was congested in 1912. It is even more congested now, and probably facing gridlock. It would be for the better government of Scotland to divest this place of many of its responsibilities. The measure goes a short way towards improving the government of Scotland, and that is why we support it. But people are kidding themselves if they think that it addresses the central question.

10.59 pm

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr): I shall be brief, which I am sure all hon. Members will be glad to hear.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on presenting the new Standing Orders and I fully identify with them. I welcome the support generally expressed by Opposition Members, although I was disappointed with the negative approach of the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson). He did not really deal with the issues, but instead began a tirade about home rule and a Scottish Parliament. He rehearsed the argument that 75 per cent. of Scottish electors voted for those who wanted major constitutional change. He ignored the fact that they actually voted for the retention of the Union. That is an important point.

The hon. Gentleman suggested that the Government lost the last election in Scotland. In fact, they won it in the Union and on the basis—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Hamilton should not snigger. He represents a party of the Union, so he should respect the wishes of all the citizens of the Union. The Conservative party stood adamantly against the establishment of a separate Scottish Parliament. Whether or not the hon. Gentleman likes it, the fact is that the Conservative party won the argument throughout the United Kingdom. There will not be a separate Scottish Parliament under a Conservative Government.

Mr. Rowe: My hon. Friend's argument is strengthened by the fact that, throughout the last general election campaign, Kent was honoured by a whole series of Scottish Members of Parliament preaching the Labour cause. Any suggestion that they were viewed as either visitors or passengers would have been ridiculous.

Mr. Gallie: I accept what my hon. Friend says. Indeed, if senior members of the Labour party with Scottish seats had not gone to Kent to speak on behalf of the Labour party, there would have been few other senior members available to do so because the party depends so heavily on the Scottish input.

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) referred to taxation under a Scottish Parliament. He suggested that it would cut taxes in Scotland. That could be achieved in one of two ways—either Scots would pay less in national taxation or a Scottish Parliament would draw in cash from Scottish local authorities and therefore reduce their cash base—

Mr. Henry McLeish (Fife, Central): Rubbish.

Mr. Gallie: Does the hon. Gentleman want to defend the remarks of the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland? Can he suggest another way that a Scottish Parliament could cut taxes in Scotland? If so, perhaps he would get to his feet and tell us.

Mr. Kynoch: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Gallie: No; I want to hear from the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish).

Mr. McLeish: Where has the hon. Gentleman found a reference to funds for a Scottish Parliament coming from local authorities?

Mr. Gallie: The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland said that a Scottish Parliament would reduce taxes for the Scottish people. I am suggesting two means of achieving that. I am not suggesting that it is written anywhere else.

Mr. Wallace: How many election speeches has the hon. Gentleman made arguing that lower taxation could increase accrued revenue and that that could be better for the economy?

Mr. Gallie: Many, and I firmly believe that. I argued the case in national terms, but the hon. Gentleman is suggesting some sort of two-tier national taxation system in Scotland, which is totally irrational. The hon. Gentleman's comments earlier this evening do not hold water.

Mr. Kynoch: Does my hon. Friend accept that the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) has finally admitted tonight that the Liberal Democrats are firmly for home rule? The hon. Gentleman was very cagey about the fact that that would mean increased taxation in Scotland. Is my hon. Friend aware that in my constituency, at the last general election, the message was given loud and clear to the Liberal Democrats that my part of the world would not tolerate being governed by the central belt or a higher rate of taxation with Liberal Democrat or Labour policies in Scotland?

Mr. Gallie: I do not know what the Liberal Democrats were saying in Kincardine and Deeside, but almost certainly something different was said in Ayr. That is the nature of the Liberal Democrat party.

I envisage that the new Scottish Grand Committee will reflect the on-going activities of Parliament at Westminster. It will do so with the introduction of Question Time, which I much welcome. Also, my hon. Friend the Minister for State will be able to participate in the Scottish Grand Committee in future, which is most important. I welcome also, together with Opposition Members, the participation of the Law Officers.

I welcome the introduction of short debates and the time limit of five minutes on introductory speeches, including by Ministers, and of three minutes on subsequent speeches, which will produce sharp and interesting debates. I welcome also the provision for mobility. However, I recall the poor attendance at Scottish Grand Committees in the past in Edinburgh—particularly at the last meeting on local government, which was attended by only a few Opposition Members. That meeting was not on a Tuesday or Thursday but on a Monday, when Scottish Members traditionally stay in Scotland. If the Committee meets on Tuesdays or

[Mr. Gallie]

Thursdays in different towns in Scotland, it will create many difficulties for hon. Members who want to participate in debates on wider issues.

The hon. Member for Hamilton referred to local government changes. I bear in mind the criticisms levelled against my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and other Ministers—

Mr. McLeish: Over raising tax levels?

Mr. Gallie: We have no intention of doing that. Our aim is to reduce taxes, not increase them—but that is another matter.

Opposition Members have criticised the speed at which local government reform will be introduced in Scotland. [Hon. Members: "Hear, hear."] I hear positive acknowledgement of that. I must express puzzlement, therefore, at the words of the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), who told the United Kingdom that if a Labour Government are ever elected, they will introduce a Parliament in Scotland in the first 12 months. Given the criticism from Labour Members, that is most surprising.

Mr. McLeish: Does not the hon. Gentleman accept that there is an important difference? Unlike the local government reorganisation Bill—on which there is no consensus, and which is half-baked and not wanted—a Scottish Parliament will be supported by the overwhelming majority of Scots, and we will implement it at the earliest possible opportunity.

Mr. Gallie: I do not accept that the overwhelming majority endorse such a move.

The hon. Gentleman, however, has provided me with a means of winding up my speech. He referred to the Government's intention in regard to local government reforms, which was a Conservative party manifesto pledge. We promised single-tier authorities; we are about to deliver them. At the same time, many Conservative Members promised that, if elected, they would move towards the re-establishment of a Scottish Select Committee. That has happened, and I believe that it has provided many valuable means of analysing business in Scotland recently. Above all, Conservative Members promised a review of the Scottish Grand Committee and its involvement. I thank my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for living up to those manifesto pledges, and for coming clean with these excellent proposals.

11.10 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): May I address some factual questions to the Leader of the House? New Standing Order D, on page 4438 of the Order Paper, states:

"The chairman of the Scottish Grand Committee may permit a Scottish Office Minister or a Scottish law officer, whether or not a member of the committee, to make a statement".

Let us suppose that an hon. Member wanted a debate on Lockerbie. What would be the procedure? Would that hon. Member have to persuade whoever was the Chairman of the Scottish Grand Committee, and are we talking about the alternative Chairman who now exists?

Paragraph (4) of new Standing Order D states:

"A minister or law officer making a statement under paragraph (1) of this order, who is not a member of the committee, may not do so from the body of the committee".

What exactly does that mean, and to what extent would the Lord Advocate or the Solicitor-General be responsible? In what form could written questions then be put to him, as the responsible Minister?

New Standing Order H(1)(d), on page 4440 of the Order Paper, states that it will be possible for the Scottish Grand Committee

"to hold short debates under Standing Order C . . . on certain of the days so specified".

How would those debates be chosen? If a Government did not want a debate on, for example, Lockerbie, would it not be easy to crowd out a request for one? What would be the rights of Back Benchers—in particular, those whose requests might not be supported by those on the Opposition Front Bench? Is there any provision to allow debates that have been requested but may not be wanted by those on either Front Bench? Both may take the view—quite legitimately—that there are other more important subjects to be debated. I am concerned about requests from Opposition Back Benchers and, indeed, from minority parties with minority opinions. What chance would those of us with minority opinions on, say, Lockerbie have of securing a debate?

It is all very well to say, refer to Scottish Ministers and the Lord Advocate. In what circumstances could a Committee Chairman ask for the presence of a Minister in a United Kingdom Department? Let us again take the example of Lockerbie. I questioned the Prime Minister about the lead Department involved. The answer was that in certain circumstances it was the Crown Office, but that the Foreign Office dealt with other aspects of the Lockerbie crime—for such it was. Can the Scottish Grand Committee ask for a Foreign Office Minister to deal with Lockerbie? I had better not confine myself simply to Lockerbie. What about Rosyth? It might be very important to have a Defence or a Trade and Industry Minister deal with that.

To what extent can the Scottish Grand Committee ask, in reasonable circumstances—as judged by the Chairman—for Ministers from Departments other than the Crown Office or the Scottish Office?

11.14 pm

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): I shall make no comment on the interesting questions raised by the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), except to say that I have noticed from some of his recent interventions that he is growing increasingly sceptical of some of the institutions and procedures of the Union, which he once so strongly defended.

The speech of the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) interested me, but more for the extravagant use of hand gestures throughout his discourse. The Liberal Democrats seem to regard such gestures with great suspicion, as they are increasingly of the view that they may be directed at them.

I was especially interested in the remarks made by the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Robertson), who said two things that are worth reflecting on. First, he said that the attendance of Conservative Members was very good. It is indeed quite spectacular. I notice seven out of the 11 Scottish Tories on the Conservative Benches. I put that down to the continuing contest to see who will inherit the poisoned chalice from the Secretary of State for Scotland, if he shakes off the mortal coil of being Secretary of State in the next week or so. After reading the *Sunday*

Post poll of his constituency, I advise him to devote as much time to constituency affairs as possible during the next couple of years.

Secondly, the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South reminded us of his memorable address to this House after the regional elections, in which he assured us that, despite Conservatives falling like ninepins in the rest of Scotland, the Conservative vote was holding very firm in his constituency. I spent some time in the hon. Gentleman's constituency on European election day. I apologise for not giving him notice of that. I could not detect any great upsurge of interest in the Conservative party at the polling stations, despite the doubtless continuing inspirational leadership that he is giving the party in that area.

It is very difficult for the Conservative party to gainsay the assertion that the collapse in its fortunes in Scotland during the 18 months since the "taking stock" was first announced—what the hon. Member for Hamilton (Ms Robertson) described as the halcyon days—has been anything other than dramatic.

I remind the Secretary of State of what he said at the time, in May 1993:

"We have, to use the vernacular, taken stock—and it's the opposition who are in the soup."

I do not know if the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South is in the soup in Scotland, but the Conservative party certainly seems to be boiling in oil, given the collapse in support from the 26 per cent. that it obtained in the general election to 12 per cent. in the regional elections, 14 per cent. in the European election—the Conservatives officially quoted that as a great improvement in its fortunes—and to the 9 per cent. that was cited for Conservative party fortunes in the Gallup poll Scottish sample published last Friday.

Political parties—my own included—have had low points in their fortunes at various times and have been as low as 9 per cent. In the late 1980s, the Social and Liberal Democrats reached such a low figure—

Mr. Wallace: Lower than that.

Mr. Salmond: I am informed that it was lower. I cannot, however, think of any party in government which has sunk so low in the estimation of the people on whose behalf it is governing. Even the Conservatives in Canada, en route to their near total wipeout in the Canadian elections, still obtained between 17 per cent. and 18 per cent. of the vote. It is unprecedented for a party in Government, and claiming a mandate, to be at 9 per cent. in the latest poll of the party affiliations of the Scottish people.

I disagree with the hon. Member for Hamilton in his reflections on the support for constitutional options. I heard what he said about the remaining amount of support for devolution in the ranks of the Scottish National party. I took the trouble to dig out the opinion poll to which I was referring, in *The Scotsman* on Wednesday 8 June. As far as I know, it is the most recent sounding of the feeling of the people of Scotland about the various constitutional options. I remember it well. I recollected, and can now confirm, that the front page was headed "Poll boost for independence". According to the sample, no fewer than 74 per cent. of SNP voters, 31 per cent. of Liberal Democrat voters, 49 per cent. of Labour voters and even 22 per cent. of Conservative voters agreed with the proposition that Scotland would be better off as an independent country within a European context than as part of Britain. Overall, 48 per cent. of all voters agreed with the notion while 15 per cent. disagreed.

On the straight constitutional question—given the three options of independence in Europe, a Scottish Parliament within the United Kingdom and the status quo—the hon. Member for Hamilton was right to note that support for independence among SNP voters was by no means unanimous. It had the support of 55 per cent. of SNP voters but, at the same time, only 51 per cent. of Labour voters agreed with Labour's policy of devolution and only 49 per cent. of Conservatives voters, in an admittedly small sample, agreed with the Conservative policy of maintaining the status quo. I have the figures here if the hon. Member for Hamilton would like to see them. According to this sample, support for independence in Europe was greater even than the exceptionally high levels of support currently recorded for the SNP.

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: The hon. Gentleman is good at citing figures and quoting newspaper articles, but what does he have to say about his party's old slogan "Scotland Free in '93"?

Mr. Salmond: The hon. Gentleman knows that politics is a continuing process. I can promise him that at the next election I shall not campaign with the slogan, "We'll be in heaven in 1997." Nevertheless, I am extremely satisfied with the 33 per cent. level of support recorded by the SNP in the European elections last month. I should have been extremely disappointed if we had recorded the ridiculously low level of 14 per cent. recorded by the hon. Gentleman's party. Does the hon. Member for Hamilton wish to intervene?

Mr. George Robertson: I certainly do, but I am unsure whether we are providing illumination by bandying around the results of opinion polls. I draw the attention of the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) to the System 3 poll, which asked a precise question about the preferred constitutional arrangements. It found that 48 per cent. of SNP supporters favoured a Scottish Parliament within the United Kingdom.

However, I also draw to the hon. Gentleman's attention what Mr. Jim Sillars is reported as saying in yesterday's edition of *Scotland on Sunday*:

"I am not sure what the present SNP objective is. People will say: 'Of course it's independence,' but is it? Because if it's independence then you never miss an opportunity of using that word. So when a party uses the language of the Labour party —like 'strong Scottish parliament' —then I've got a question as to whether the objective is independence."

Perhaps the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan is using our vocabulary because he knows that the bulk of those who might be inclined to support the SNP support a strong Scottish Parliament within the United Kingdom within Europe.

Mr. Salmond: Perhaps Mr. Sillars had the misfortune to believe Labour party press statements about the Monklands by-election. I took the trouble to bring along the SNP by-election address because I had heard the hon. Member for Hamilton make a similar point before. I shall read it to him. Its fairly large headline is

"The Scotland I want to see".

Our candidate in Monklands argued:

"I want Scotland to be equal with the other nations of Europe. To have our own Parliament which will give a Scottish solution to Scottish problems. With Independence, Scotland will be free to

[Mr. Salmond]

choose her own government, rather than having a Tory government from Westminster foisted upon us. Then we will be able to vote in elections for any party of our choice."

The address goes on to deal with benefits for 16 and 17-year-olds—a matter which the hon. Gentleman debated with us last Thursday—and pensions and argues why the concept of independence for Scotland should be favoured by the Scottish people. I should think that there are very few people in Scotland who do not now realise that the SNP stands for full national independence within a European context.

I was, however, interested in the Sunday newspapers and especially in the remarks of the hon. Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth Mr. Hogg) who openly questioned the Labour party's commitment given by all three leadership candidates to enact devolution legislation in the first year of a Labour Government. I noticed that the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) used the words "at the earliest possible opportunity" a few moments ago. I do not know whether he is mediating—

Mr. McLeish *rose—*

Mr. Salmond: If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I shall make a few more points before allowing him to intervene. I heard him clearly say "at the earliest possible opportunity"—we can check the record.

I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman is mediating between the hon. Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth and the leadership candidates of the Labour party. All I will say is that I found the matter fascinating, not so much for what the hon. Member Cumbernauld and Kilsyth said, although that was interesting in itself, but for the fact that he identified within the Labour party what he called "devolution sceptics"—opponents of devolution—who would cause enormous difficulties to the progress of a devolution Bill, as he said in a closely argued article. Is the hon. Member for Fife, Central aware who those people in the parliamentary Labour party are? Is he prepared to name them this evening?

Mr. McLeish: Let me make it quite clear from the Labour Benches that we will legislate for a Scottish Parliament in the first year of a Labour Government. We shall succeed in that first year. Although everyone in the party is entitled to his or her opinions, we can give that cast-iron guarantee. More important, let me ask whether the Scottish National party will support Labour in its attempts to establish a Scottish Parliament in the first year of a Labour Government.

Mr. George Robertson: If the Scottish National party is here.

Mr. McLeish: As my hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) says, if the Scottish National party is here.

Mr. Salmond: The hon. Gentleman should refer back to the Usher hall debate during the last election campaign, during which I was asked exactly the same question. I made it quite clear that, just as we shall support these minor changes tonight, the Scottish National party always operates in the interests of the Scottish people. The hon. Gentleman can be absolutely clear that we shall go into an election campaigning for independence for Scotland within Europe. That is the proposition that we shall put before the Scottish people. Unlike the hon. Gentleman, I shall be able to be reasonably clear that all the members of my party campaigning in that election will believe in our commitment.

Clearly, I do not know whether there will be a special manifesto in Cumbernauld and Kilsyth at the next election or whether the hon. Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth, that experienced member of the Labour party in Scotland —who is more experienced than the hon. Member for Fife, Central—will be given a special codicil to exempt him from the general policy. Alternatively, will disciplinary action be taken against the hon. Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth for not agreeing with this central tenet of Labour party policy?

I believe that the argument tonight is about the "taking stock" reforms and about whether they can live up to the claim that was made by the Conservative party 18 months ago that the whole exercise was one involving listening to the Scottish people. More than any other single factor, the reason for the plummeting of the Conservative party's political fortunes in Scotland over that period has been the issue of Scottish water—and, in particular, the dramatic illustration in the Strathclyde water ballot of the fact that, far from there being an exercise involving listening to the views of the Scottish people, any excuse and any pretext would be regarded as sufficient opportunity to disregard the views that were being expressed.

I remind the House that in a 71.5 per cent. poll, 1,194,667 people rejected the Government's plans to take water out of local authority control. A mere 33,956—2.8 per cent.—actually supported them. Despite all that, and despite that dramatic demonstration of will by the Scottish people in the Strathclyde region, the Government, far from living up to their promise to listen to the Scottish population, were apparently determined to cast those views aside.

The real test of the proposals was alluded to by the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland when he made the distinction between being able to question, debate, ask and listen, and being able to decide. There is absolutely nothing in the procedures that gives the people of Scotland any opportunity to extend the decision-making ability of Scottish representatives, even over the simplest matters of Scottish life—even over areas on which there might be a consensus in Scotland.

I looked through the records of the House and it was significant that I could not find a single piece of Scottish legislation whose progress the Government were willing to entrust to Scottish political representatives. Indeed, the only area in which I could find that there was a majority of Scottish Members—I think mistakenly—was the vote on 1 February when the hon. Member for Hamilton, in some sort of emotional spasm, decided to go into the Lobby with the Conservative party to back the powers of the House and the right of five Conservatives from English constituencies to dictate the progress of Scottish local government and the removal of water from local authorities. On no other issue can I find any consensus among even the unionist Scottish parties. Therein lies the reason why there is no decision-making power within the proposals which is to be entrusted to the Scottish Grand Committee, even in its reformed context.

Mr. George Robertson: The hon. Gentleman uses the technique of constantly reiterating something which is simply not true. The Labour party voted that night with the

other Opposition parties, with the exception of the Scottish National party, to give the Chairman of the First Scottish Standing Committee the power to stop juvenile displays by the Scottish National party, in its attempts to block progress in that Committee. It had nothing whatever to do with the rights of five English Members of Parliament to be on that Committee. The SNP, as ever, decided that it would indulge in a publicity gimmick. Labour Members were not involved in that. We wanted to ensure that that Committee proceeded without a guillotine. The SNP did not. I wish that the hon. Gentleman would be accurate in what he tells the House and the outside world.

Mr. Salmond: Yet again, I have touched a raw nerve with the hon. Gentleman. That vote was significant for two reasons. I cannot remember any other motion in the House of Commons proposed by the Leader of the House the only Front-Bench speech in whose favour was made by the hon. Member for Hamilton. Secondly, the most memorable of the interchanges in that debate was when the hon. Member for Hamilton looked across at the hon. Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman)—keen water privatiser that that hon. Gentleman is—and informed him, against the overwhelming view in Scotland, that that hon. Gentleman, representing Stroud, with his privatisation views on Scottish water, had "a perfect right" to be on that Scottish Committee.

Mr. Gallie: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Salmond: If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I shall make some progress.

The reason why there are no decision-making powers for the Scottish Grand Committee in the proposals is quite simple. There is no area of policy—I refer even to areas which should be non-party political—on which the Secretary of State for Scotland is prepared to trust the elected representatives of the people of Scotland with effective decision-making powers. It is rather like the events of the past week—an issue of show rather than substance. People in Scotland will long remember that, while—perhaps under the influence of the taking-stock proposals—there was a royal pageant in the streets of Edinburgh, in London the decision was effectively being made to close the Rosyth naval base. What better illustration could there be of the difference between the form and the show of the decision making? There was a sop to the Scottish people while, at the same time, here in London, real decisions and power were being exercised over the Scottish people.

The hon. Member for Aberdeen, South said that he and his colleagues would look at the proposals in the context of what was good for the Union. My hon. Friends and I will look at them, and any other proposals concerning Scottish business which may come before us, in the context of what is good for Scotland. Our judgment is that such minor, tinkering incremental proposals for the Scottish Grand Committee, although containing nothing of substance, will none the less afford a further opportunity for a questioning process about the wrongs being done to the Scottish people by the Government who, clearly, have no mandate in Scotland. On that basis, we are content to let them go through the House, but with the clear statement that the Scottish National party's campaign is for national self determination and national self respect for the people of Scotland.

11.32 pm

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I shall be brief as other hon. Members wish to speak and time is rushing by.

Before I ask my questions of the Minister, I should say that, no matter how Conservative Members dismiss the idea of growing dissatisfaction with the Government in Scotland, it is palpable. It is certainly the case in my constituency, where many people are deeply dissatisfied with the way in which their lives are governed from what they see as a Westminster Parliament. That cannot be gainsaid. The Conservative party is deeply unpopular in my constituency. There is one Conservative councillor in the whole of Inverclyde district council.

In that regard, I well remember the sensible words offered by the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston), who once said in this place that we benefit enormously in Scotland from the fact that the secessionist movement in our country is so peaceful and that the dissatisfaction to which I have just referred is vented in peaceable, democratic ways. The hon. Gentleman was right. We are fortunate in that regard, and long may we be so. I think that I echo the hon. Gentleman's words of four or five years ago.

At the same time, there is widespread alienation. The hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Robertson) says that it is right that people should question the way in which Scotland is governed and should question the union between England, Wales and Scotland. It is my experience in the part of Scotland that I represent that more and more people are voicing their dissatisfaction with the way in which Scotland is governed. The proposals before us do not go anywhere near meeting the widespread alienation that is to be found.

I take up the question of my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) about section D(4) on column 4438 of the Order Paper, which provides that a statement can be made by a Law Officer but not

"from the body of the committee".

Does the Secretary of State envisage such a statement being analogous to one made by a Minister to a Select Committee, after which the Minister will be cross-examined? Would the procedure be analogous to that of a Minister making a statement to a European Standing Committee? In those instances the modus operandi is that the Minister makes a statement on which he is cross-examined for a specific period.

It is an important matter because in this context we have not had a Law Officer in the House since 1987. Since then, however, we have had the report of Lord Cullen of Ashbourne on the Piper Alpha disaster. We have also had Lord Clyde's report on the terrible affair on Orkney. In both instances it would have been useful to be able to cross-examine a Law Officer in this place.

Section E is headed "Scottish Grand Committee (bills in relation to their principle)". It states that a Bill can be committed

to a Scottish Standing Committee (or to a special standing committee".

Now that the Leader of the House has returned to the Chamber, perhaps he will tell me the position of a Law Officer when a Bill is sent to the Scottish Grand Committee or to a Special Standing Committee, which I think can hear evidence on four occasions before reporting to the House. Presumably a Law Officer could not be part of the proceedings of the Standing Committee, but would he be

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able to give evidence to a Special Standing Committee? That is important in the context of a law reform (miscellaneous provisions) (Scotland) Bill. When such a Bill comes before a Scottish Standing Committee, or as is envisaged a Special Standing Committee, members of that Committee should have the right to cross-examine a Law Officer.

Section F deals with statutory instruments. What power does the Scottish Grand Committee have to reject an instrument that has been referred to it? If we pray against it, do those praying against it have to specify that it should go before the Scottish Grand Committee?

I promised to be brief, so I will conclude. With regard to what has been described as a travelling circus, who will determine where such meetings will take place other than in Edinburgh and London? Will it be the usual channels or is it to be pre-ordained by Scottish Office Ministers?

I submit that the changes to the Standing Orders are slight. There are some advantages, particularly the right to question Law Officers. I make a plea for something that we desperately need in Scotland—an Act identical, or superior, to the Children Act 1989 which inevitably contains some imperfections. We should demand such an Act, the Second Reading of which should be taken in the Scottish Grand Committee.

11.40 pm

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): It is well known that the Government are in deep trouble and profoundly unpopular. They are trying to find ways of ingratiating themselves with people all over the country. There is something deeply unconvincing about the present Secretary of State for Employment suddenly discovering a concern about mass unemployment. It is equally unconvincing for the Secretary of State for Scotland suddenly to discover a concern about the accountability of the Government in Scotland.

The trouble is that the amendments to the Standing Orders come from the same stable as the poll tax, the local government legislation and the water quango legislation. There is nothing in the amendments to the Standing Orders to prevent a Government in future from being just as cavalier in their approach to legislation and administration in Scotland. I fear that the changes are little more than window dressing.

The amendments to the Standing Orders may be useful, but they are no substitute for democratic home rule for Scotland. Frankly, they will be short-lived. The Scottish Grand Committee will not operate under the provisions of these Standing Orders for long, because we shall have a Parliament in Scotland to scrutinise the government of Scotland, legislate for the people of Scotland and manage Scotland's budget in future within the United Kingdom.

The changes are far too little, far too late. Since 1979, we have had four general elections and a referendum in which people have made it abundantly clear that they want control of the government of Scotland to be placed in the hands of an elected parliament in Scotland. But what has happened? We have had the poll tax and all the rest over the past 16 years.

The amendments to the Standing Orders started life in the document, "Scotland in the Union: A Partnership for Good." I am afraid that the Government have poisoned that partnership economically and politically to the extent that they have driven their own right-wing supporters to turn in droves to another right-wing nationalist party. The same people who voted enthusiastically for Baroness Thatcher over all those years are now voting for the Scottish National party; and, in a sense, who can blame them? Anyone who wants to keep the United Kingdom together and establish good government in Scotland must follow the line of devolution and home rule for Scotland within the United Kingdom.

Mr. Salmond: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Home Robertson: No, there is no time. The hon. Gentleman has had quite enough time already. However, as the hon. Gentleman has drawn my attention to him again, I remind him that he is sitting between two hon. Members —the hon. Members for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh) and for Moray (Mrs. Ewing)—whom I vividly remember going into the Lobby to vote to bring down the Labour Government and put Mrs. Thatcher in power. They made it impossible for us to have a Scottish Parliament in 1979. But for them, we could have had one by now.

The amendments to the Standing Orders include the interesting idea of a Scottish Question Time in the Scottish Grand Committee. No doubt the changes offer an intriguing chance to various English Tories to avoid the need to be present in the House to vote on Scottish business in the future. The crucial point, which the Secretary of State tried to brush aside when I intervened in his speech, is that we cannot vote on controversial legislation as it affects Scotland. The right hon. Gentleman tried to shrug off the importance of the vote in our democratic system, but it is crucial.

The hon. Member for Mid-Kent (Mr.Rowe) asked why more Labour Members were not present at sittings of the Scottish Grand Committee in Edinburgh.

Mr. Raymond S.Robertson: Answer.

Mr.Home Robertson: I will explain that to the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Robertson). Why should the members of the majority on the Scottish Grand Committee go along to its sittings simply to act as an audience to listen to idiotic speeches from the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) or whoever when we shall not even be able to vote on a substantive motion at the end of the debate? Frankly, it is a waste of public money to ask people to attend debates of that nature. It does not achieve anything.

What we want is accountable government in Scotland. If we are to achieve that, effective votes must be cast by the democratic representatives of the people of Scotland on legislation and administration in Scotland. In the past 16 years, Scottish votes have been ignored with impunity and with malice by Scottish Office Ministers. Scotland must have its own Parliament. The amendments to the Standing Orders may be a small step in the right direction, but they are no substitute for home rule in Scotland within the United Kingdom.

11.45 pm

Mr. Henry McLeish (Fife, Central): At this point I am supposed to say that the debate has been interesting, but it would be difficult to suggest that some of the contributions have risen to the dizzy heights that we normally describe.

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: Like the speech of the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson).

Mr. McLeish: The hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Robertson) is still talking from a sedentary position; it is simply astonishing to think that he can still say in the House that the Conservatives and the Unionists are still doing well in Scotland. Does he not realise that the people of Scotland do not believe the Government? They do not trust, nor have any confidence in, the Government and, increasingly, they do not even vote for them. The Monklands by-election was a graphic illustration that proved to the Conservatives that they simply do not matter.

Mr. Robertson: A majority reduced to 1,600.

Mr. McLeish: The hon. Gentleman continues to mouth, so I must remind him that he had a spectacular role—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. The House knows my views about seated interventions. If the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr.Robertson) seeks to catch my eye on another occasion, I might be slightly short-sighted.

Mr. McLeish: I would not presume to make a comment after that judgment. Suffice it to say that the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South had a simply spectacular role in that by-election as the minder to end all minders. After that recollection, he sits in his place in humility.

It is simply remarkable that, at a time when we are discussing the taking stock initiatives, the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond), speaking on behalf of the Scottish National party, wanted to talk about Rosyth. His party has done nothing in Scotland to fight for the retention of either the dockyard or the naval base. It is simply hypocritical for him to think that hon. Members on either side of the House can take any instructions from him on that issue.

Mr. Salmond: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. McLeish: No, I will not. We will not allow the nationalists to shed any crocodile tears in the House about one of the most important institutions—

Mr. Salmond: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. McLeish: No, I will not.

Mr. Salmond: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is it in order, in the course of the speech of the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish), to ask, through you, where that hon. Member was two weeks ago, when I was lobbying on behalf of Rosyth outside the Scottish Office with some of his colleagues?

Madam Deputy Speaker: That is not a proper point of order.

Mr. McLeish: I believe that my comments about the nationalists' role in the Rosyth campaign represent the reality and most hon. Members would nod in agreement.

The interesting point about the debate is that it has revolved around two important issues. First, the Government have presented a minimalist set of proposals, aimed at improving not the government of Scotland in Scotland but the government of Scotland at Westminster. Secondly, the Opposition parties passionately believe that one cannot do anything significant about the governance of Scotland until one introduces a Scottish Parliament, sitting in Scotland, dealing with essentially Scottish business.

In their document published last year, the Government reminded us that we could celebrate the 300th anniversary of the union of the Parliaments in 2007—a mere 13 years away—and that the first Secretary for Scotland was established in 1895, so we could look forward to the 100th anniversary of that occasion in 1995. The point is that the Government are simply betraying those interested in both those changes because their electoral support has plummeted to new political depths. Why will not a party that has been annihilated in regional and European elections and a recent by-election take the governance of Scotland seriously enough to introduce substantial change?

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. McLeish: I am not giving way.

The Scottish people are simply sick and tired of a Government who provide tokenism at Westminster but no significant change in Scotland. The Labour party believes that, when the gap between the Government and the governed becomes so large, it is a cause for widespread concern. It is a matter not just of processing government in this House but of what is discussed and why it is discussed. Substantial issues that have dominated Scottish politics recently include water. In any measure of public opinion, the Government's proposals on water are simply not wanted. It would not matter if a Grand Committee were held every week in this House or if the Government set up extraordinary procedures to quiz Ministers. Scots simply do not want some of the public policy changes which the Government propose.

When the Leader of the House winds up, will he assure us that, not only will the process of government change, but that the Government will dump the unwanted, badly conceived proposals that lie at the heart of the political crisis facing the Government in Scotland?

Mrs. Ewing: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. McLeish: I am not giving way. On local government—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. There are too many conversations and interjections going on. The hon. Member who has the Floor is perfectly entitled to be heard.

Mr. McLeish: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Leader of the House should be aware that the Government's proposals on local government are not wanted. Will he reassure me that he will think not only about improving the government of Scotland at Westminster but that, when proposals are not only disliked but detested in Scotland, the Government will start to listen?

On the processing of decision making and the discussion of important measures in the House, why have the Government decided, behind closed doors, to close a significant economic unit called Rosyth? That is the point about tokenism and real decision making. The minor changes which the Secretary of State has announced to the Standing Orders will facilitate greater debate. He will agree that it is pointless to change how we debate issues if, on water, local government, the packing out of quangos by

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Government placemen and issues such as Rosyth, we continue to be given proposals that Scots will not tolerate. That is reflected to a great extent in the Government's parliamentary and political unpopularity.

We believe that Scotland's interests can best be served in this century and into the next by a Scottish Parliament established in Edinburgh. In our attempts to ensure that the United Kingdom has a future, the first step should be to look at measures to introduce a Scottish Parliament. We have given the commitment repeatedly on the Floor of the House that, in the first year of a Labour Government, we shall legislate for a Scottish Parliament. That is what Scots want.

I hope that the Leader of the House will say that he regards the Standing Order changes as only a small first step and that the Government will start to embrace the real need for significant change. When we see the needs and aspirations of Scots going in tandem with the practical policies of the House, we shall regard that as a success, but at present we shall wait and see. Of course, we support the changes being made, but they are a very small step forward.

11.54 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): The hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) started his speech by declining to describe the debate as interesting. As someone who does not have the privilege of attending such debates as frequently as he does, I found it extremely interesting. Indeed, it had a special flavour of its own which is rarely replicated in our proceedings in the House. I shall certainly hold it in my mind with the fascination that it deserves.

Apart from the excellent speeches of my hon. Friends the Members for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Robertson) and for Ayr (Mr. Gallie), with two honourable exceptions on the Opposition Benches, which I shall come to in a moment, I heard relatively few speeches which appeared to be other than loosely connected with the Standing Orders—although I accept entirely that they were within the rules of order by definition. They appeared to have rather more to do with fighting longer-running battles—indeed, some of them were resolved at the last general election—which are in the minds of hon. Members in various parts of the House.

I said that there were two honourable exceptions. I would not want to let my short time disappear without making some response to the straightforward questions asked by the hon. Members for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) and for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman).

The hon. Member for Linlithgow raised a number of points, including the seating arrangements for a Minister who is not a member of the Scottish Grand Committee. The provision is simply intended to make it clear that the Minister in question is not a member of the Committee and takes no part in its proceedings, beyond making his statement and answering questions. The seating arrangements will not prejudice his ability to respond to questions or make his statement; they are simply designed to emphasise that procedural point. I hope that that is reasonably clear.

The hon. Gentleman was also concerned about the possibility, as he saw it, that the rules concerning the proposed short debates—an interesting and worthwhile innovation in my judgment—could crowd out Back Benchers. The fact is that the topics of the short debates will be determined by shuffle, like oral questions, so the Government or, indeed, the Labour Front Bench will have no control over the subject matter; it will be determined in the same way as for oral questions. While that will not guarantee the hon. Gentleman an opportunity to raise the subject of Lockerbie, it will certainly mean that he cannot be frustrated in such an intention or such a wish by either the Government or the Labour Front Bench.

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Newton: I have only a few minutes and it would be right for me to respond to the hon. Member for Linlithgow.

As for the initiative in the selection of subjects for a statement by the Lord Advocate—another point raised by the hon. Gentleman—it would be up to the Lord Advocate or the Scottish Office Minister to volunteer a statement to the Committee. The Standing Orders do not provide for him to be summoned or compelled to make a statement on a particular topic, but that is no more than analogous with the position as it applies to the whole House or to Select Committees.

Lastly, the hon. Gentleman asked whether the Scottish Grand Committee could ask to hear from Ministers other than those in the Crown Office or the Scottish Office. The answer—I say this straightforwardly—is no. The Standing Orders provide only for statements from Scottish Office Ministers or Scottish Law Officers, but of course there are opportunities in the House as a whole for the hon. Gentleman or anyone else to questions Ministers with United Kingdom responsibilities.

Mrs. Ewing *rose—*

Mr. Newton: I hope that the hon. Lady will forgive me for not giving way.

The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow asked me some questions as well. In particular, he wanted to know whether the Committee would have the power to reject Scottish statutory instruments. Reference to the Scottish Grand Committee is a matter for the House, and the House takes the decision after the Grand Committee debate. That, too, is the same as current statutory instrument Committee procedures here.

The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow also asked about the position of Law Officers in the SGC or a Special Standing Committee. They can attend, under Standing Order No. 87, at present. They could appear as witnesses before a Special Standing Committee, by invitation and with their agreement, under the proposed new procedures. I hope that that gives the hon. Gentleman some reassurance.

Where the Committee might meet elsewhere in Scotland would be decided on the recommendation of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, but he would expect, on this as on many other matters, to consult—through the usual channels—others with an interest in the decision. The physical facilities would have a great deal to do with the decision.

It being Two hours after the motion was entered upon, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Order [8 July].*

Question agreed to.

Resolved

That with effect from the beginning of the next Session—

(a) Standing Orders No. 93 (Public bills relating exclusively to Scotland), No. 94 (Scottish Grand Committee), No. 96 (Scottish estimates) and No. 97 (Matters relating exclusively to Scotland) shall be repealed, and the following Standing Orders A to H below shall have effect;

(b) Standing Orders No. 13 (Arrangement of public business), No. 89 (Procedure in standing committees) and No. 91 (Special standing committees) shall be amended as set out below; and

(c) other Standing Orders shall have effect subject to the foregoing provisions of this Order.

A. Scottish Grand Committee (composition and business)

(1) There shall be a standing committee called the Scottish Grand Committee, which shall consist of all Members representing Scottish constituencies; and of which (subject to paragraph (6) of Standing Order H (Scottish Grand Committee (sittings)) the quorum shall be ten.

(2) The business of the Committee shall include—

(a) questions tabled in accordance with Standing Order B (Scottish Grand Committee (questions for oral answer));

(b) short debates held in accordance with Standing Order C (Scottish Grand Committee (short debates));

(c) ministerial statements proceeded with in accordance with Standing Order D (Scottish Grand Committee (ministerial statements));

(d) bills referred to it for consideration in relation to their principle, in accordance with Standing Order E (Scottish Grand Committee (bills in relation to their principle));

(e) motions relating to statutory instruments or draft statutory instruments, referred to it in accordance with Standing Order F (Scottish Grand Committee (statutory instruments, &c));

(f) motions for the adjournment of the committee, notice of which has been given in accordance with Standing Order G (Scottish Grand Committee (substantive motions for the adjournment)); and

(g) motions for the adjournment of the committee, to be made after the interruption of business, as provided in Standing Order H (Scottish Grand Committee (sittings)).

B. Scottish Grand Committee (questions for oral answer)

(1) Notices of questions for oral answer in the Scottish Grand Committee by Scottish Office ministers or Scottish law officers on a day specified in an order made under paragraph (1) of Standing Order H (Scottish Grand Committee (sittings)), may be given by members of the committee in the Table Office.

(2) Notices of questions given under this order shall bear an indication that they are for oral answer in the Scottish Grand Committee.

(3) No more than one notice of a question may be given under this order by any member of the committee for each day specified under paragraph (1) of Standing Order H (Scottish Grand Committee (sittings)) for the taking of questions.

(4) On any day so specified under paragraph (1) of Standing Order H (Scottish Grand Committee (sittings)), questions shall be taken at the commencement of the sitting; no question shall be taken later then three-quarters of an hour after the commencement of the proceedings thereon; and replies to questions not reached shall be printed with the Official Report of the committee's debates for that day.

(5) Notices of questions under this order may be given ten sitting days before that on which an answer is desired:

Provided that when it is proposed that the House shall adjourn for a period of fewer than four days, any day during that period (other than a Saturday or a Sunday) shall be counted as a sitting day for the purposes of the calculation made under this paragraph.

C. Scottish Grand Committee (short debates)

(1) Notices of subjects to be raised in short debates in the Scottish Grand Committee, on a day specified in an order made under paragraph (1) of Standing Order H (Scottish Grand Committee (sittings)), may be given by members of the committee in the Table Office.

(2) Subjects of which notice is given under paragraph (1) of this order must relate to the official responsibilities of Scottish Office ministers or Scottish law officers.

(3) Not more than one notice of a subject may be given under this order by any member of the committee for each day specified under paragraph (1) of Standing Order H (Scottish Grand Committee (sittings)) for the holding of short debates.

(4) On any day so specified such debates shall be held at the commencement of the sitting or, if the order under paragraph (1) specifies also the taking of questions on that day, immediately after questions.

(5)(a) No member of the committee except the minister or law officer replying to the debate shall be called to speak later than half an hour after the commencement of the first such debate.

(b) The Member who gave notice of the subject and the minister or law officer replying to the debate may each speak for five minutes. Other members of the committee may speak for three minutes.

(c) The chairman may direct any member of the committee who exceeds the limits in sub-paragraph (b) to resume his seat forthwith.

(6) Notices of subjects under this order may be given ten sitting days before that on which they are sought to be raised:

Provided that when it is proposed that the House shall adjourn for a period of fewer than four days, any day during that period (other than a Saturday or a Sunday) shall be counted as a sitting day for the purposes of the calculation made under this paragraph.

D. Scottish Grand Committee (ministerial statements)

(1) The chairman of the Scottish Grand Committee may permit a Scottish Office minister or a Scottish law officer, whether or not a member of the committee, to make a statement, of which prior notice has been given to him, and to answer questions thereon put by members of the committee.

(2) Ministerial statements may be made for the purpose of—

(a) facilitating the questioning by members of the committee of the minister or law officer, as the case may be, about a matter relating to his official responsibilities as provided in the second column of the eleventh sub-paragraph of paragraph (2) of Standing Order No. 130 (Select committees related to government departments), in which case proceedings under this order shall be brought to a conclusion not later than three-quarters of an hour after their commencement; or

(b) announcing the policy of the Government on a matter relating to Scotland or the response of the Government to an event relating to Scotland, in which case proceedings under this order shall be brought to a conclusion at the discretion of the chairman.

(3) Ministerial statements may be made—

(a) at the commencement of a sitting; or

(b) if questions are taken, immediately after the conclusion of proceedings thereon; or

(c) if short debates are held, immediately after the conclusion of those proceedings.

(4) A minister or law officer making a statement under paragraph (1) of this order, who is not a member of the committee, may not do so from the body of the committee; and such a minister or law officer shall not vote, make any motion or be counted in the quorum.

E. Scottish Grand Committee (bills in relation to their principle)

(1) After any public bill has been first printed, the Speaker shall, if of the opinion that its provisions relate exclusively to Scotland, give a certificate to that effect:

Provided that a certificate shall not be withheld by reason only that a provision of that bill amends Schedule 1 to the House of Commons Disqualification Act 1975 or Schedule 1 to the Northern Ireland Assembly Disqualification Act 1975.

(2) On the order being read for the second reading of a bill so certified, a motion may be made by a member of the Government (or in the case of a private Members' bill, by the Member in charge of the bill), 'That the bill be referred to the Scottish Grand Committee'; and the question thereon shall be put forthwith and may be decided notwithstanding the expiration of the time for opposed business:

Provided that such a motion may be made by a private Member only with the leave of the House.

(3) A bill so referred to the Scottish Grand Committee shall be considered on a motion, 'That the Committee has considered the

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bill in relation to its principle;' and, when the committee has considered that question for a total of two and half hours (whether on one or more than one day), the chairman shall put the question necessary to dispose of the motion, and shall then report accordingly to the House (or shall report that the committee has come to no resolution), without any further question being put thereon:

Provided that a member of the government may, immediately before the motion 'That the Committee has considered the bill in relation to its principle' is made, make without notice a motion to extend the time-limit specified in this paragraph; and the question on such motion shall be put forthwith.

(4) A bill in respect of which a report has been made under paragraph (3) above shall be ordered to be read a second time on a future day.

(5) On the order being read for the second reading of a bill to which paragraph (4) above applies, a motion may be made by a member of the government (or, in the case of a private Member's bill, by the Member in charge of the bill), 'That the bill be committed to a Scottish Standing Committee (or to a special standing committee)': and the question thereon shall be put forthwith and may be decided notwithstanding the expiration of the time for opposed business.

(6) If a motion made under the preceding paragraph be agreed to, the bill shall be deemed to have been read a second time, and shall stand committed to a Scottish Standing Committee (or to a special standing committee).

F. Scottish Grand Committee (statutory instruments, &c.)

(1) Where—

(a) a Member has given notice of a motion for a humble address to Her Majesty praying that a statutory instrument be annulled, or of a motion that a draft of an Order in Council be not submitted to Her Majesty in Council, or that a statutory instrument be revoked or be not made, or that the House takes note of a statutory instrument, or

(b) a Minister of the Crown has given notice of a motion to the effect that a statutory instrument or draft statutory instrument be approved,

a motion may be made by a member of the government, 'That the instrument (or draft instrument) be referred to the Scottish Grand Committee'; and the question on such motion shall be put forthwith and may be decided notwithstanding the expiration of the time for opposed business.

(2) The committee shall consider each instrument (or draft instrument) referred to it on a motion, 'That the Committee has considered the instrument (or draft instrument)'; and the chairman shall put any question necessary to dispose of the proceedings on the motion, if not previously disposed of, not later than one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings thereon; and shall thereupon report the instrument or draft instrument to the House without any further question being put.

(3) If any motion is made in the House of the kind specified in paragraph 1(a) or 1(b) of this order, in relation to any instrument or draft instrument in respect of which a report has been made to the House in accordance with paragraph (2) of this order, the Speaker shall put forthwith the question thereon; which may be decided notwithstanding the expiration of the time for opposed business.

G. Scottish Grand Committee (substantive motions for the adjournment)

(1) On each of the days specified in an order of the House under paragraph (1) of Standing Order H (Scottish Grand Committee (sittings)) for the consideration of motions for the adjournment of the Scottish Grand Committee, such motions of which notice has been given in accordance with paragraphs (2) and (3) below shall have precedence.

(2) A member of the committee giving notice of a motion for the adjournment of the committee under this order shall—

(a) also give notice of the subject to which he intends to call attention on the motion for the adjournment of the committee, and

(b) give such notice of motion and of the subject in writing not later than ten sitting days before that on which the motion is to be made:

Provided that the subject to which attention is called must relate to Scotland.

(3) The days specified for the consideration of motions for the adjournment of the committee under this order shall be allocated as follows—

(a) six at the disposal of the government;

(b) four at the disposal of the Leader of the Opposition;

and, in respect of parties other than that of the Leader of the Opposition,

(c) one at the disposal of the leader of the largest opposition party; and

(d) one at the disposal of the leader of the next largest opposition party:

Provided that a day specified in an order of the House under paragraph (1) of Standing Order H (Scottish Grand Committee (sittings)) on which business is to be interrupted at or after half-past three o'clock shall, if no business other than that to which this order applies is set down for consideration on that day, be deemed to be two days for the purposes of this order.

(4) For the purposes of this order, the 'largest' and 'next largest' opposition parties in Scotland shall be those parties, not being represented in Her Majesty's Government and of which the Leader of the Opposition is not a member, which have the largest and next largest number of Members who represent constituencies in Scotland, and of which not fewer than three Members were elected to the House as members of those parties.

H. Scottish Grand Committee (sittings)

(1) A motion may be made by a member of the government providing (or varying previous provision) for the Scottish Grand Committee—

(a) to sit on specified days at a specified place in Scotland, the sitting commencing at half-past ten o'clock, and proceedings being interrupted at such hour as may be specified;

(b) to sit on other specified days at Westminster at half-past ten o'clock;

(c) to take questions under Standing Order B (Scottish Grand Committee (questions for oral answer)) on certain of the days specified under paragraph (a) or paragraph (b) above;

(d) to hold short debates under Standing Order C (Scottish Grand Committee (short debates)) on certain of the days so specified; and

(e) to consider substantive motions for the adjournment of the committee under Standing Order G (Scottish Grand Committee (substantive motions for the adjournment)) on not more than twelve of the days so specified.

and the Speaker shall put forthwith the question on such a motion, which may be decided after the time for opposed business:

Provided that nothing in this order shall prevent the committee from considering further at a sitting at Westminster business adjourned at a previous sitting in Scotland, nor from considering at a sitting in Scotland business adjourned at a sitting at Westminster.

(2) The provisions of Standing Order No. 88 (Meetings of standing committees), so far as they relate to the naming of a day in respect of business by the Member appointed chairman and the committee's appointment of future days in respect of business not completed at a sitting, shall not apply to the Scottish Grand Committee.

(3) Other than as provided in paragraph (1) of Standing Order G (Scottish Grand Committee (substantive motions for the adjournment)), the government shall determine the precedence of the business appointed for consideration at any sitting of the committee.

(4) The chairman shall interrupt proceedings at the time specified in relation to the sitting by an order made under paragraph (1) above, or, in the absence of such provision, at one o'clock, subject to paragraph (2) of Standing Order No. 88 (Meetings of standing committees).

(5) At the moment of interruption, proceedings under consideration and not disposed of shall stand adjourned (except substantive motions for the adjournment of the committee under Standing Order G (Scottish Grand Committee (substantive motions for the adjournment)) which shall lapse).

(6) After the interruption of proceedings, a motion for the adjournment of the committee may be made by a member of the government, and, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 88 (Meetings of standing committees) the chairman shall, not later than half an hour after the motion has been made,

adjourn the committee without putting any question; and in respect of business taken under this paragraph, the quorum of the committee shall be three.

That Standing Orders be amended as follows—

(i) Standing Order No. 13 (Arrangement of public business), by adding at the end of line 91 the words—

"(11) A private Member's bill to which the provisions of paragraphs (2) to (6) of Standing Order E (Scottish Grand Committee (bills in relation to their principle)) have applied, and which has been considered by a Scottish Standing Committee (or by a special standing committee), shall not be set down for consideration on report so as to have precedence over any private Member's bill so set down which was read a second time on a day preceding that on which the bill was reported from the Scottish Grand Committee under paragraph (3) of that Standing Order";

(ii) Standing Order No. 89 (Procedure in standing committees), in line 1, by leaving out the words "Standing Order No. 94 (Scottish Grand Committee)" and inserting the words "Standing Order A (Scottish Grand Committee (composition and business))"; and

(iii) Standing Order No. 91 (Special standing committees), by inserting at the end of line 13 the words—

"Provided that, in the case of bills certified under paragraph (1) of Standing Order E (Scottish Grand Committee (bills in relation to their principle)) and committed pursuant to paragraph (5) thereof to a special standing committee, the three morning sittings may be held in Scotland".

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That—

(1) at the sitting on Tuesday 12th July, the Speaker shall put the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motions in the name of Mr. Tony Newton relating to Procedure, and Mr. Colin Shepherd relating to Catering, respectively, not later than one and a half hours after each such Motion has been entered upon; and the said Motions may be entered upon and proceeded with, though opposed, after Ten o'clock; and

(2) at the sitting on Wednesday 13th July, the Speaker shall put the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motions in the name of Mr. Tony Newton relating to Members' Allowances and Members' Interests, respectively, one and a half hours after each such Motion has been entered upon; and the said Motions may be entered upon and proceeded with, though opposed, after Ten o'clock; and

(3) at the sitting on Thursday 14th July, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business), the Speaker shall put the Question on the Motion in the name of Mrs.Gillian Shephard relating to the Fishing Vessels (Decommissioning) Scheme 1994 not later than Seven o'clock. *—[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

Ordered,

That the Order [4th March] relating to private Members' notices of motions shall have effect as if for '22nd July' in line 4 there were substituted '21st October'; that the Members who were successful in the ballot held on 6th July for 22nd July shall be deemed to have precedence in the same order for 21st October; and that, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 13(9), notices of subjects to be raised on 21st October may be given at the Table or in the Table Office not later than 21st July. *—[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

Director General of Gas Supply

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

12 midnight

Mr. Robert Ainsworth (Coventry, North-East): I wish to use the opportunity of the Adjournment debate this evening to question the appointment, and the practices used in the appointment, of the Director General of Gas Supply.

Regulation and regulators are of growing importance in our lives, particularly when a state-owned utility has been turned into a private monopoly. Such is the case with the gas industry. If regulation is to work, it is essential not only that regulators operate within clear legislative guidelines in a manner that is open and understood; it is also essential that they be appointed in a fashion that establishes their integrity and their independence from political and Whitehall control, and that the persons appointed have the qualifications required to command respect within an industry.

In respect of the Director General of Gas Supply, the criteria called for a person with a reputation for fairness, discretion and independence, with good negotiating skills and the ability to understand complex legal issues. The documentation issued at the time also stated:

"Candidates will probably have substantial experience of dealing with competition issues in a business environment".

Moreover, any connections that they had with the gas industry were to be disclosed.

I have been assured by the Minister that the integrity of the appointments process was assured by the involvement of outside executive search consultants. We are, of course, expected to be further reassured by the fact that the entire process was overseen by our reliable, safe civil service system.

What actually happened was far from any ideal. The executive agency involvement gives us no reassurance, as it has been established that it did not head-hunt the successful candidate; rather, she sought out the agency. According to Ms Spottiswoode, having heard that Saxton Bampfylde procured interesting jobs, she phoned it up one Friday night, to learn that the agency was enthusiastic about her and had the ideal job. This enthusiasm was supposed to have been based on her public sector background, combined with her entrepreneurial skills.

The telephone call must have been a happy coincidence for Saxton Bampfylde, because at the time it had already submitted a short list for the job which had been rejected by the Department of Trade and Industry, for reasons that it has yet to explain. Ms Spottiswoode's name was in any case promptly added to the list. *[Interruption.]*

That unusual occurrence, which the Minister will have an opportunity to deny if he wishes, would be nothing more than that if it were not combined with the fact, which came to light, that the civil servant in charge of the appointment process had known the successful candidate for some years. I am talking about Mr. John Michell, who had worked with the director general at the Treasury some years before. As far as we are aware, he declared that fact to nobody, but he participated in the appointment process.

Ms Spottiswoode's explanation has been that she hardly knew him: she recognised him, but would not have done so in a crowd. We do not know whether that is the case, but we do know that they recognised each other and did not

[Mr. Robert Ainsworth]

declare that. Perhaps the Minister will tell us that they did, and that he had some reason to overrule the declaration and allow the appointment process to continue.

I shall now deal with connections to the gas industry. It seems that a gas consultancy called Economatters, which likes to be known as "the insider's consultancy", lent a hand to the job applicant. First, individual, one-to-one tuition was given, and then a place on a training course costing £2,200 was provided. The same consultancy printed in its May 1994 magazine the most astonishing tirade against members of the Select Committee on the Environment for daring to question Ms Spottiswoode's competence, and her "year zero" approach to her job.

I have had three different versions of who paid for the training. First, I was told that the Department of Trade and Industry paid for it, although I think that that has been denied. Perhaps the Minister will clear that up. When I asked whether any of the pre-appointment training had been paid for by his Department, I was told that it was not asked to contribute to the cost. Perhaps the Minister will say whether the Department made any contribution to that training.

Secondly, I was told that Ofgas paid for the training. I would find that remarkable, because no appointment had been made at the time. Thirdly, I was told that there was no charge, but that would be a little astonishing, because it would hardly enhance the standing of the new Director General of Gas Supply as independent.

Training was absolutely necessary, as the candidate did not know anything at all about the industry of which she was applying to be the regulator. I have a quote which proves that. It states:

"I went to university in the 1970s when people were concerned about oil and gas running out and one of the first things I did actually before I took the job was ask a lot of people about resources. I was quite surprised that actually there are a lot of resources left."

That displays a *Daily Mail* understanding of the gas and oil industry, if ever there was one.

Secondly, the fact has come to light that the obliging "insider's consultancy" is chaired by none other than the uncle of the Director General of Gas Supply. Was all that known by the DTI at the time of the appointment? Most particularly, did it know about the lack of knowledge of the industry, and who paid for the pre-appointment training? Did the DTI have any role in that, or did Ofgas, or was it provided free? Some clear answers on those issues would be helpful.

Throughout the controversy over this appointment, we have been treated to one overriding defence, which has been repeated ad nauseam. It is that Ms Spottiswoode was appointed because of her unique combination of public sector knowledge and entrepreneurial skills. That is what was supposed to have made her attractive to the headhunter. That is what is used as a substitute for the requirement in the job application papers to have

"substantial experience of competition issues in a business environment."

Mr. Jim Cunningham (Coventry, South-East): Listening to my hon. Friend, it is not strange that a question mark hangs over the appointment, its terms of reference and the qualifications necessary, because it appears that the appointee did not understand the job to which she was appointed.

Mr. Ainsworth: My hon. Friend makes his point well. It clearly relates to the training that took place—out of necessity, I believe—at somebody's expense. The Minister owes us an explanation of that tonight. The basic ability to do the job to which the director general has been appointed is under question.

The overriding excuse used for the appointment is the director general's supposed entrepreneurial skills combined with a public sector background. What exactly are her entrepreneurial skills? They appear to be, first, to have worked with a neighbour at a part-time silk importing operation, which was, we are told, sold for £30,000; and secondly, to have been a partner and director in a software company called Spottiswoode and Spottiswoode, where she gave up her directorship only months before the company went into a creditors voluntary liquidation owing £600,000 to creditors in October 1991. That appears to be the entrepreneurial experience used to justify the appointment.

What do we have? Our gas industry appears to be regulated by a failed entrepreneur who knew nothing about the industry at the time of her appointment; who has developed a close working relationship with the civil servant who helped to appoint her and did not declare that he knew her when he did; who has slandered her predecessor; who has displayed a Pol Pot-like "year zero" approach to her powers and responsibilities; and who has, with regard to the funding of the Energy Saving Trust, displayed a total inability to understand basic legal advice.

She has private advice sessions with senior Tory politicians on how to deal with the Environment Select Committee. According to its Chairman, she has driven a coach and horses through the entire energy strategy of the United Kingdom. Surely, in those circumstances, we are entitled to some explanation of the justification and reasons for the appointment, whether the appointment continues to be appropriate, and whether the individual concerned should continue in her post.

I believe that there is justification for a full and open inquiry into the appointment, and that is what I am calling for now. In conjunction with that, and with regard to the bigger issue of regulators, if the system is not to fall into total and absolute disrepute because of the way that it is being used and abused by the Government, as shown in this example, we need a proper commission to look into the appointment, the accountability and the role of regulators. That is needed if any credibility is to be brought back to the system.

12.13 am

The Minister for Energy (Mr. Tim Eggar): It is conventional to congratulate an hon. Member on his success in the ballot and on raising an important issue in an Adjournment debate. While it is absolutely right that important matters such as the appointment of regulators are raised on the Floor of the House—I have no complaint about that—I hope that the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Ainsworth) is thoroughly ashamed of himself for the way in which he has done so. It does no credit either to the House or to the hon. Gentleman to enter into an attempted attack on an individual using the privileges of the House in the way that he has done.

The hon. Member made a number of misleading and inaccurate accusations this evening, as he has done on previous occasions. I hope that, when he has been in the

House a little longer, he will recognise that is not the way to create a reputation for himself or to enhance the reputation of the House.

I am pleased to have the opportunity this evening to put on record the background to the appointment of Ms Spottiswoode. The previous director general, Sir James McKinnon, announced in February 1993 that he intended to take early retirement at the end of October 1993, rather than in August 1994, when his second term of office expired. Sir James felt that it would be more appropriate for a new director general to implement the possibly far-reaching recommendations of the year-long Monopolies and Mergers Commission inquiry into British Gas.

In March 1993, the decision was taken to employ executive search consultants, or head hunters. Following normal departmental practice, a number of executive search consultants were invited to apply, and at the beginning of May, Saxton Bampfylde International Ltd. was chosen on the basis of a competitive tender. Saxton Bampfylde had considerable experience in regulatory appointments. It was briefed by Department of Trade and Industry officials, by Sir James on the day-to-day requirements of his job, and by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade and myself.

As the hon. Member knows, we placed a copy of the full terms of reference in the Library. I do not intend to repeat tonight the full terms of the remit that we gave the head hunters or the contents of the public advertisement that appeared in mid-June, but it may be helpful to comment on the main features.

We were looking for someone with experience of managing a business at senior level, who understood competition in practice, in tune with the way in which markets operate, and with a feel for the ways in which the proper functioning of competitive markets can be obstructed or distorted.

We were looking for someone who could back up that practical experience with proven qualities of business and policy analysis, and a capability to deal with complex issues involving economics and accountancy. We were looking also for someone with the personal qualities to command the industry's full confidence and who could reach fair and firm decisions that would withstand detailed scrutiny. We made it clear that that called for thoroughness, discretion, independence, an ability to negotiate toughly and to take a firm stand when necessary, and good presentational skills.

The post was advertised in mid-May, and in the following days and weeks, Saxton approached nearly 200 sources and potential candidates. In mid-June, those candidates were whittled down to a long list of 20, whose qualifications were discussed with DTI officials. In the light of that, and after further research, Saxton came forward in early July with a short list of six candidates —one of whom withdrew his name shortly after. That list included the name of Ms Spottiswoode.

As a preliminary stage, and as usual, each of the five candidates was interviewed by two of my officials—Mr. John Michell, head of the Department of Trade and Industry's oil and gas division, and Mr. Mike Atkinson, head of the branch dealing with gas policy. Those interviews provided an opportunity for candidates to explore the requirements of the job and the main issues that were likely to arise.

Unusually, I decided to interview all five candidates. I say "unusually" because the normal procedure is that the Minister interviews either two or three candidates, officials having done the preliminary sifting of the short list. During those interviews, I had an opportunity to discuss with the candidates our policy for opening up the gas market to competition, and to form a view of how each candidate measured up to the criteria that I have outlined.

Having considered all that, and having interviewed each candidate most carefully, I concluded that Ms Spottiswoode was the best candidate. My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade concurred with my judgment, although he was unable to interview the candidates as had originally been planned because of his illness.

Following discussion of the terms of the appointment, I announced on 24 September that Ms Spottiswoode would join Ofgas on 1 October as director general designate, and would take over from Sir James McKinnon on 1 November. That was deliberately designed to allow a short hand-over period, to enable Ms Spottiswoode to familiarise herself more fully with the industry.

Ms Spottiswoode took up her appointment in the midst of the consultation process, following the publication of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report. The period since then has seen many decisions on a variety of aspects of the gas sector. There is no doubt that it has been a very challenging period for all concerned.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the training course on the gas industry that Ms Spottiswoode attended in September 1993, before she took up her post, and to her uncle's involvement in the company that ran the course. We were aware of that beforehand, and also of her uncle's involvement with the gas industry in New Zealand.

The course that the hon. Gentleman referred to was run by Alphatania—a company owned by Jonathan Sterne, James Ball and David Spottiswoode. The company was established in June 1986 and has been running courses for the gas industry since. Two other members of Ofgas had attended the course in previous years. Alphatania had dealings with Ofgas, therefore, long before Ms Spottiswoode applied for the post of director general. She attended the course, which is run for people with a high degree of economics understanding.

My Department was aware of her intention to attend the course, but was not asked to contribute to the cost. I understand that it was paid for by Ofgas, subsequent to Ms Spottiswoode accepting the post of director general.

The hon. Gentleman asked—not in his remarks tonight, but certainly in his remarks to the press—whether the Government's environmental policy, in particular the E factor, was mentioned during the interviews with Ms Spottiswoode. He asked that question with the benefit of hindsight.

At the time of the interviews, the key issue was the MMC report on British Gas, which was about to be published. There had been much speculation on its content. The most challenging issue, which was at the top of everyone's agenda, was the way forward for the gas industry. Another issue, which some candidates, including Ms Spottiswoode, raised, was British Gas's social obligations in a liberalised market—for example, its obligations towards the elderly and those who were unable to pay their bills. That area represents significant costs—£23 million for the elderly and disabled, and about £43 million for customers with payment difficulties.

[Mr. Tim Eggar]

The E factor was not raised by any of the candidates: it was simply not a live issue. The sums involved were small—

Mr. Jim Cunningham: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Eggar: No.

Compared with the cost of the social obligations that I mentioned, E-factor spending was running at only £0.5 million a year. Against that background, it is hardly surprising that none of the candidates raised the question of environmental spending with us—and, even if our side had raised it, there is little that any candidate could have said at the time except that, if appointed, he or she would examine the matter in the light of the legal advice offered—

Mr. Robert Ainsworth *rose—*

Mr. Eggar: I have no intention of giving way to the hon. Member for Coventry, North-East. He did not give way to me when I tried to intervene.

Mr. Cunningham *rose—*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. The hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Cunningham) must be aware that an Adjournment debate takes place essentially between the hon. Member who initiated it and the Minister who answers.

Mr. Ainsworth: The Minister has just claimed that I did not give way to him, and has used that claim as an excuse for not giving way to me. As far as I am aware, I was not asked to give way, and I therefore did not do so. The Minister is misleading the House.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. That is not an appropriate phrase for the hon. Gentleman to use; I hope that he will reconsider.

Mr. Ainsworth: The Minister is misleading the House. He just said—you heard him, Madam Deputy Speaker—that I had refused to give way to him, which I clearly did not do.

Mr. Eggar: I suggest that the hon. Gentleman read *Hansard*. I think he will find that the record shows that he said something along the lines of "The Minister will have a chance to make his own speech in due course." I took that as a clear indication that the hon. Gentleman was not going to give way to me. I am sorry if he meant what he said in any other sense, but I really do not think that I could possibly have misconstrued his words. I suggest that he read the record: I think that he will then appreciate the reasons for my previous remark.

The hon. Gentleman has made all sorts of accusations, both tonight and earlier, about the acquaintance between Ms Spottiswoode and Mr. John Michell. The position is this: Clare Spottiswoode and John Michell—who is now head of the DTI's oil and gas division—worked at the same time in different divisions of the Treasury in the late 1970s. They did not at that time work together on any issues, and were only very slightly acquainted. They had no contact whatever between the late 1970s and 1993.

I understand that, when Ms Spottiswoode's name was put forward by the head hunters engaged by the Department to advise it on the DGGS post, Mr. Michell recognised the name as that of a former Treasury colleague. He mentioned that to me during my consideration of the appointment. I also understand that some of the other names on the early lists suggested by the head hunters were known to Mr. Michell, including at least one other former Treasury colleague.

Such acquaintanceships are very likely to occur in such circumstances, and I see nothing irregular or untoward about it. The fact of the former acquaintanceship between Ms Spottiswoode and Mr. Michell made no difference whatever to my consideration of the shortlisted candidates for the DGGS post.

The hon. Gentleman's description of the way in which the candidates were chosen and put forward by Saxton Bampfylde bears absolutely no relation to what actually happened. I hope that, when he has read carefully what I have said this evening, he will write not only to me but to Mr. Michell and Ms Spottiswoode to apologise for his accusations.

I believe that Ms Spottiswoode has shown the fairness and firmness for which we looked when making the appointment. That is not to say that her judgments have always been popular with the industry, interest groups or all hon. Members, but no one should be alarmed about that. As the hon. Gentleman said at the beginning of his remarks, it is the independence of the regulator that matters above all else, and the director general has shown a readiness to take an independent line, and does so when she believes that it is required by the statutory duty under which she operates.

Having said that, I am more than a little surprised when I read that Ms Spottiswoode is accused of being too close to the industry and, at the same time, to the Government. She was appointed for her independence—a fact recognised by the hon. Gentleman.

I welcome the opportunity to put on record the process by which the director general is appointed. I am absolutely satisfied that the appointment was carefully and properly made at all stages. I am also satisfied that we chose the right person for the job.

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at half-past Twelve midnight.

House of Commons

Tuesday 12 July 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

CROYDON TRAMLINK BILL [*Lords*]

LONDON LOCAL AUTHORITIES BILL [*Lords*]

Read the Third time, and passed, without amendment.

HILL SAMUEL BANK AND UNITED DOMINIONS TRUST BILL [*Lords*]

Considered; to be read the Third time.

Oral Answers to Questions

EDUCATION

Pre-school Age Children

1. **Ms Corston:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he last met representatives of the National Confederation of Parent-Teacher Associations to discuss Government education policies for pre-school age children.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (Mr. Robin Squire): My right hon. Friend has not met the National Confederation of Parent-Teacher Associations recently to discuss education policies for pre-school age children. Arrangements are in hand for the Minister of State to meet the NCPTA shortly. The NCPTA has requested that the meeting cover issues other than education provision for under-fives.

Ms Corston: As this may be the last appearance of the Minister and the Secretary of State for Education at the Dispatch Box, will they agree as a matter of urgency to meet parent-teacher representatives to discuss the report from the National Foundation for Educational Research which supports Labour's policy of offering nursery education to all three and four-year-olds, and which flatly rejects the Government's inadequate compromise of putting children into school a year early? What is the Government's policy on nursery education?

Mr. Squire: I am sorry that on my 50th birthday and feeling like a mere boy I should be so dismissed by the hon. Lady. We shall wait and see.

On the issue of slightly greater substance, we note that the hon. Lady has committed her party to that policy on pre-school provision without seeing the bill for it. Our policy remains clear. We wish to see an expansion of the provision for under-fives across the range of different sorts of education as and when resources are available. We shall be coming up with more developments in the near future.

Mr. Win Griffiths: I thank the Minister—

Mr. Dicks: Wish him a happy birthday, then.

Mr. Griffiths: Not only do I wish the Minister a happy birthday, I wish him many more. I was pleased to hear that there is some inkling of support for nursery education and expansion from the Government. Why will not the Government introduce targets for developing the expansion of nursery education? Will the Minister take this opportunity to repudiate the article in the *Evening Standard* on 29 June where Sheila Lawlor said that she feared that the introduction of universal nursery education could be one of the most disastrous social experiments of our time? I hope that he will reject that and support Labour's policy for expanding nursery education.

Mr. Squire: My understanding is that Sheila Lawlor is not currently a member of the Administration, although —referring back to the question of the hon. Member for Bristol, East (Ms Corston)—who knows? I think that it is most unlikely. The fact remains that there are Conservative councils with a proud record on nursery education and in other areas of providing playgroups, which, I remind the hon. Gentleman, some 40 per cent. of three and four-year-olds currently attend. Many of those playgroups provide an excellent service for under-fives.

Parental Choice

2. **Dr. Wright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on the extension of parental choice of school.

The Secretary of State for Education (Mr. John Patten): The Government have given parents the right to express a preference for their choice of school, to a great deal more information and to a wider choice of schools through, for instance, the expansion of the self-governing grant-maintained sector, city technology colleges and technology colleges. Even greater diversity and choice is on the horizon with the possibility of schools specialising in other areas of study, such as languages or the arts, or selecting on grounds of aptitude and ability wholly or in part—including more grammar schools.

Dr. Wright: Does the Minister recall that, in each of the past two years, Five Ways primary school in my constituency, a successful and popular school, has had its application for expansion rejected by the Department on the ground that there are surplus places in schools within a two-mile radius? Parents and governors, having heard about the circular issued by the Department on 22 June —typically, replies were invited by 5 August—now believe that this successful school is to be allowed to expand. Are they right?

Mr. Patten: I cannot limit my discretion in the case of any school before considering it. I welcome the hon. Gentleman's question. I recall his raising it at least twice before during questions, and I believe that, in an Adjournment debate, he discussed the desire of the parents of Five Ways school to have it expanded—even though there are surplus school places and other, less popular, schools within a reasonable distance.

We shall consider any future application purely on its merits, but I applaud the way in which the hon. Gentleman is bringing to the attention of the House the fact that local parents want popular schools to expand.

Mr. Butterfill: When he next visits Bournemouth, will my right hon. Friend take the opportunity to see the wide variety of schools there? We have traditional grammar schools and comprehensive schools that are gaining better results than any others in the country, but we also have grant-maintained schools and secondary schools that offer a wide variety of vocational courses. There is also a thriving independent sector. Does my right hon. Friend agree that that is the sort of choice we need to offer parents? Will he condemn the Liberal Democratic and Labour parties for trying to close down that choice?

Mr. Patten: I have always condemned both those parties and, for good measure, I will include Plaid Cymru for wanting to close down the range of opportunities the other side of Offa's dyke. I am happy to condemn anyone else whom my hon. Friend wants me to condemn.

I am sorry to say that it is at least three weeks since I last visited my hon. Friend's constituency. I know that there is an excellent and wide range of schools in Bournemouth. Ideally, most towns would have the same range of choice. That is a great deal more difficult in rural areas, and we must bend our thoughts more towards how we can expand variety and choice in those areas and look after the small rural primary schools.

Mr. Pike: How does parents' choice square with the fact that a certain school in my constituency has to determine which children get places by drawing lots?

Mr. Patten: Nine out of 10 parents get their children into the school that they want—an extremely good piece of news—and there is an appeals mechanism for those who are dissatisfied. The hon. Gentleman is on to a good thing, however. I hope that he will lead other members of his party, including the hon. Member for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg), who represents the NUT, to swing in behind our policy of allowing popular schools to expand and to deliver local excellence.

Grant-maintained Schools

3. **Mr. Michael Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the latest figure he has for the number of schools that have now voted in favour of grant-maintained status.

Mr. Patten: I am pleased to report that, to date, parents at 1,134 schools in England have voted for self-governing GM status, compared with about 350 at the time of the previous general election. Unfortunately, parents at nine out of 10 schools have not yet had the opportunity to vote in a ballot.

Mr. Brown: Is not it true that there have been few successful ballots in south Humberside because of intimidation by the NUT and by Humberside county council? Until my right hon. Friend persuades the Secretary of State for the Environment to abolish the county of Humberside, we shall have much more work to do on this score in south Humberside.

Mr. Patten: I entirely agree with what my hon. Friend says about the unfortunate situation in his area. I will convey his views to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

I agree that we have a lot more work to do—although I welcome the support for our policies that is emerging from the Opposition. For instance, I understand that the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms Harman), shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury, is sending her son to a grant-maintained school in London in two months' time. That must make for interesting discussions in the shadow Cabinet, in which the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor), who is firmly in favour of abolishing grant-maintained schools, serves.

Mr. Jack Thompson: Is the Secretary of State aware that in Northumberland, the metropolitan boroughs of Tyne and Wear and Durham, only one school has opted out, and that was by a dubious two votes? Does not that reflect the good sense of the people of the north-east of England?

Mr. Patten: As the late Sir Winston Churchill said, one vote is enough in all circumstances, including parliamentary elections. I regret the fact that there are not more grant-maintained schools in the north-east among the 1,134 that have voted to become grant maintained, but it is entirely right and proper that parents should have the chance to express their views. If, however, those parents and those schools are subject to the type of intimidatory action, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) referred, which took place in Humberside, in County Durham and in Newcastle, supported by the National Union of Teachers on every occasion, it is not surprising that that intimidation has sometimes worked.

Sir Anthony Durant: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the large number of schools that have become grant maintained. Will he, as a matter of urgency, consider Prospect school in my constituency, which had an outstanding ballot by the parents, and whose application the Labour party has done all that it can to block?

Mr. Patten: I shall consider the prospects for Prospect school as soon as I leave the Chamber.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: Will the Secretary of State accept the thanks of the Opposition for his attempts to trail the Labour party's education document—a document agreed by all three leadership contenders—which says that we must end GM status and abolish the Funding Agency for Schools? Will the Minister also confirm that, of the 24,706 primary and secondary schools in England and Wales, there are only 944 grant-maintained schools, which is about 4 per cent? Is not it a fitting symbol of the failure of the Secretary of State and his GM policy that, last month, not a single secondary school in the country decided to become grant maintained?

Mr. Patten: The mystery deepens, Madam Speaker. I am becoming more and more perplexed as to how it is possible for the hon. Member for Peckham, who is sending her boy to a grant-maintained school this September, to sit in the same shadow Cabinet as the hon. Member for Dewsbury, who wishes not only to abolish grant-maintained schools, but to abolish A-levels, city

technology colleges, performance tables, grammar schools, selection and almost everything else that has led to advances in children's education.

Education Association

4. **Mrs. Lait:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he expects to announce the use of the first education association.

Mr. Patten: I will not hesitate to transfer failing schools to education associations when appropriate. About 10 schools have been declared failing so far. A number of cases for the use of educational associations are under active consideration.

Mrs. Lait: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the issue of poorly performing schools has been swept under the carpet for too long? Can he assure me that he will be resolute in taking action against schools that fail pupils and parents, and introduce education associations as and when necessary?

Mr. Patten: When and if necessary, I will not hesitate to do so. I entirely agree that for too long information about schools was swept under the carpet. The hon. Member for Dewsbury and her Labour team oppose the regular and open inspection of schools and the publication of results. They oppose the publication of performance information for schools. They oppose giving parents the information that they need to help to promote the welfare of their children.

Mr. Jamieson: If the Secretary of State genuinely believes that education associations can combat low standards in schools, why does not he send an education association in to some of the private schools, such as Finborough school in Suffolk or Rodney school in Nottinghamshire, which receive a large proportion of their funding from the taxpayer through the service children's boarding schools allowance, and yet have the most damning inspectorate reports?

Mr. Patten: I am not aware of the reports to which the hon. Gentleman refers. I shall take the trouble to inform myself about them when I return to my Department this afternoon, because I know that the hon. Gentleman is a serious player in the education world. He is a member of the Education Select Committee which, as recently as a few weeks ago, heard a number of distinguished professors, including Professor Michael Barber, until recently a fully paid member of the NUT's team and now the professor of education at Keele, and Professor Mortimer, who said that we have to expect and demand more from children. Professor Mortimer, who is not exactly a running dog of mine and who is professor of education at the university of London, also said that, at long last, educators were looking at teaching in schools rather than at peripheral issues.

School Discipline

5. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he is taking to help improve levels of discipline in schools.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools (Mr. Eric Forth): In May, my right hon. Friend issued to all schools guidance on pupil behaviour and discipline based on existing good practice. The guidance aims to help them to maintain and improve discipline.

Mr. Coombs: Is my hon. Friend aware that the added emphasis on the important role of parents in disciplinary matters has been widely welcomed? How does he envisage that role being expanded? What experience does he have of other European Governments' attempts to tackle the important problem of maintaining discipline in schools so that children have the right environment in which to learn?

Mr. Forth: My hon. Friend makes two valuable points. We should always learn from others when that is appropriate, but I suspect that in this area, where so much is bound up in tradition and custom and in the approach of individual countries, what is done in other countries—no matter how excellent it may seem—may not in any sense be directly transferable to this country, but I would never rule it out.

My hon. Friend's point about parents is good. We have done everything possible to encourage parental involvement in schools, whether through parents being governors or through joining parent-teacher associations and so on. Their involvement in discipline is the key. We cannot expect teachers and head teachers to deal with discipline without the support of parents. Unless parents are whole-heartedly prepared to support what goes on in schools, we shall win only half the battle.

Mr. Bryan Davies: Does not good discipline start at the top? What is the world of education to make of a Secretary of State who plays truant during major stages of the Education Bill, who shows such a lack of self-discipline that he ends up in court, and who is rapidly becoming the Maradona of British politics? Is not it about time that he was shown the red card and sent home?

Mr. Forth: That ill-conceived question shows the absolute and desperate paucity of the Opposition's thoughts on education. We hear nothing from them about policy, about their thinking or anything else. The hon. Gentleman's disgraceful question sums up their attitude all too well.

Education SSA (Dorset)

6. **Mr. David Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education by how much Dorset's education standard spending assessment has increased in 1994-95 over the previous year in percentage terms.

Mr. Forth: Allowing for local authority changes of function, Dorset's education standard spending assessment is 4.2 per cent. higher in 1994-95 than it was last year. That is a higher than average increase across the counties.

Mr. Atkinson: Is my hon. Friend aware that the 4.2 per cent., which follows the 27 per cent. increase for the previous three years and which is well ahead of the rate of inflation, will come as some surprise to primary school teachers in my constituency and to those in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill), who were led to believe by Dorset local education authority that the fact that they have to face classes of up to 35 is due to a lack of Government funding? Will the Minister join us in welcoming the recommendation of the Local Government

Commission that Bournemouth should once again be responsible for its own schools? Will he assure us that any future Bournemouth education standard spending assessment will better reflect the needs and costs of an urban area rather than those of the west country, which is currently the case?

Mr. Forth: I am sure that, guided by my hon. Friends who so ably represent Bournemouth, the people of Bournemouth will make known to the commission their support for the recommendation. That is the best thing that they can do at this stage, following what my hon. Friend said. I agree that it is disgraceful that a large number of local education authorities pretend that, somehow, cuts in the money given to them by central Government are responsible for their mismanagement of local education. I join my hon. Friend in alerting people to the fact that under many of the new administrations that people so innocently elected a year ago something is rotten in the state of education.

Mr. Don Foster: In view of that answer, can the Minister explain why the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire), told a delegation from Dorset on 9 March that there were insufficient funds available to meet the educational needs of the children of Dorset?

Mr. Forth: I shall have to discuss that matter with my hon. Friend to find out whether what the hon. Gentleman says is true. Knowing my hon. Friend as well as I think I do, and even allowing for his age increase since that meeting, I doubt whether what the hon. Gentleman says is the case.

Every local education authority in the country is funded on exactly the same basis, derived from the same formula, in an even-handed way. One point on which I do agree with the hon. Gentleman is that there is an enormous variation in the efficiency and effectiveness with which local education authorities deploy the funds given to them.

Nursery Schools (Rotherham)

7. **Mr. MacShane:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what percentage of three to five-year-olds in Rotherham attend state-funded nursery schools.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Further and Higher Education (Mr. Tim Boswell): In January 1993, 44 per cent. of children under five were being taught in maintained nursery schools and classes in Rotherham local education authority, of whom 6 per cent. were in nursery schools.

Mr. MacShane: Will the Under-Secretary of State convey to the Secretary of State our objection to the unnecessary and offensive references to the children of hon. Members? Children of hon. Members, from both sides of the House, should not be used as political footballs.

On the question of nursery education, will the hon. Gentleman invite Conservative councils to achieve the same target as that achieved in Rotherham for three to five-year-olds?

Mr. Boswell: The hon. Gentleman has asked us not to pursue personal references, but the judgment of parents, including hon. Members, is the most eloquent possible testimony to the worth of the Government's education policies. Some 90 per cent. of children aged three and four enjoy some sort of pre-school nursery provision, which exemplifies the virtues of choice and diversity and the excellent provision of places according to need. We are anxious to build on that as resources allow.

Primary School Teachers

8. **Mr. Pickthall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on the Warwick university research into pressures on primary school teachers.

Mr. Forth: I pay tribute to the conscientious commitment of most teachers to the principle and implementation of the national curriculum for the benefit of pupils, as confirmed by that research. The findings of Warwick university's report on teachers' workload have been overtaken by the Dearing review and the Government's subsequent proposals for reductions in the content of the national curriculum.

Mr. Pickthall: Does the Minister appreciate the seriousness of much of what is in the Warwick university report, which shows that large numbers of primary school teachers suffer from what it calls burn-out from increased illness, increased drinking and an average 56-hour week? As that follows years of incessant change and increased bureaucracy, do the Government accept responsibility?

Would not it be a good idea if the Minister or one of his ministerial colleagues spent a month teaching a year six class in a primary school? They would then realise the Herculean task that faces teachers in that sector.

Mr. Forth: I counsel the hon. Gentleman against what the authors of the report described as premature extrapolation—taking some of its findings and drawing unmerited conclusions from them. If the hon. Gentleman seriously thinks that unqualified teachers should be allowed into classrooms, for whatever motive, he should ask the hon. Member for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg), who is sitting at his left hand, whether he would approve.

The report contains much that is worthy of thought and consideration and I would not want to dismiss it in any way. However, the picture that the hon. Gentleman portrays of our schools is wholly at odds with that which I and my ministerial colleagues see when we visit schools, as we do so often.

Sir Malcolm Thornton: Does my hon. Friend accept the evidence that has come before the Education Select Committee which shows that much of the work done by the Dearing review has resulted in a decrease in the workload in our schools? However, much remains to be done, especially in the area increasingly being called non-contact time. I refer my hon. Friend to the excellent Select Committee report, due to be published tomorrow, which deals with those very problems.

Mr. Forth: Lest prematurity become rampant, I—and I am sure my hon. Friend, who chaired the Select Committee so ably—would not want to reveal the contents of the Select Committee report at this stage. However, I very much look forward—as do we all—to studying it carefully, as I am sure that it will add greatly to our knowledge and inform us as to the way ahead.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: Does the Minister acknowledge that the report shows that all the Government's changes over the past few years have not succeeded in raising standards among young people; that they have increased stress and anxiety for many dedicated teachers; and that the picture is far from the rosy one that he was painting a moment ago? Will he confirm that early retirement of teachers on health grounds is now at record levels and costing taxpayers record amounts of money and that our schools are losing valuable and dedicated staff? Will he now accept that the frequent chopping and changing and the constant experimentation that have been the hallmark of the past two years have been costly to the taxpayer and, more important, have done great educational damage to our children?

Mr. Forth: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for reminding me to look closely again at the terms on which teachers are allowed to retire early, whether on health or on other grounds. Some of the schemes would bear closer examination than they have received until now. I am grateful to the hon. Lady for reminding me of the matter and, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State would say, I shall look at it as soon as I get back to the Department.

Grant-maintained Schools

9. **Mr. Duncan Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many schools have gone grant maintained.

Mr. Robin Squire: Nine hundred and thirty schools educating well over 500,000 pupils are currently self-governing. A further 125 schools have already been approved for grant-maintained status or have applications in the pipeline.

Mr. Duncan Smith: Is the Minister aware that parents at Whitefield school, which is a special school in my constituency, have voted to go grant maintained as a result of recent legislation giving them the power to do so? Does he agree that, despite the opposition of Labour-controlled local authorities, we should encourage all the other special schools to do exactly the same?

Mr. Squire: My hon. Friend no doubt accepts that I cannot give him from the Dispatch Box this afternoon a firm announcement on the outcome of that positive ballot. With regard to his other comments, I can assure him that we shall endeavour to meet the tight deadlines and guidelines on that particular application as soon as possible. I entirely endorse his recommendation that all schools—special and mainstream—should be considering grant-maintained status as a way forward.

Mr. Steinberg: I thank the Secretary of State for his constant references to the National Union of Teachers: they help us to maintain our high profile. I appreciate his constant mention of the NUT. Does the Minister accept that his predecessor was totally wrong when he said that there would be an avalanche of schools opting out, and that the whole system has now become a complete failure? Why cannot he be magnanimous in defeat and accept the policy as a highly expensive failure?

Mr. Squire: The House and the country will note that the hon. Gentleman writes off one in six secondary school children who are currently being educated in grant-maintained schools—and, of course, the number will be rising in September.

Further Education Charter

10. **Mr. Spring:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what new rights and entitlements are being given to students and employers under the charter for further education.

Mr. Boswell: The further education charter sets out, for the first time, the information and services that students, employers and others have a right to expect from the sector. It explains what is being done to ensure high standards and what to do if things go wrong. Colleges are now preparing their own charters to reflect local circumstances.

Mr. Spring: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is vital that local colleges prepare their charters based on local needs and assessments of local conditions? Is my hon. Friend aware that that is precisely what West Suffolk college in my constituency has done, and that that college's approach is reflected in the excellent grades awarded to it by the Further Education Funding Council in its recent inspection?

Mr. Boswell: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his remarks. The charters are extremely important. They should be firmed up locally to meet local needs, just as colleges' delivery of education should be appropriate to local needs. I join him in paying tribute to the excellent work of the college, which in a recent inspection had grades 1 or 2 for all subject areas but three—a fact which reflects very well both on the college and the quality of the systems that we are putting in place.

Mr. Dafis: Does the Minister acknowledge that competition between colleges of further education and between those colleges and sixth forms can sometimes give rise to bad feeling and duplication of courses and provision? Will he advise such institutions to have a collaborative relationship, to minimise misuse of resources and encourage co-operation of the best kind?

Mr. Boswell: I am interested in the hon. Gentleman's comments. Essentially, I see no reason why collaboration cannot co-exist with a degree of competition in particular areas. In that spirit, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State brought forward proposals earlier this year for a framework for the assessment of new sixth-form provision, to be considered alongside the overall need for post-16 education.

School Repairs

11. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will allocate extra funds for the repair of schools.

Mr. Forth: Total central Government support for capital and repair work at schools in 1994-95 is more than £600 million. Local education authorities can and do add to that substantial sum. In 1992-93—the latest year for which figures are available—LEAs spent an additional £550 million on school repairs and maintenance and a further estimated £140 million on capital works. Subject to

the outcome of current public expenditure survey discussions, Government support is planned to rise in 1995-1996 and 1996-97.

Mr. Janner: Is the Minister aware that a great number of schools throughout the country are in a disgraceful state of disrepair, largely because local authorities do not have the money to add to central grants to put their schools in a fit state to receive our children? Will the Minister consider that matter and especially the cost of repairs caused by vandalism, which is causing chaos in Leicester schools? One school may have to close because the LEA cannot meet the cost of repairing it.

Mr. Forth: The last detailed study by the National Audit Office in 1991 described many schools as being in a better or acceptable state of decoration and repair and stated that schools were safe places in which to learn and work. I concede that many schools require repairs, which is why so much money is allocated by the Department to LEAs. They have the discretion that I mentioned in my original reply, and I expect them to be sensitive to the kind of problem that the hon. and learned Gentleman has raised with me on a number of occasions.

LEAs determine their own priorities, and even schools determine their priorities under local management of schools and budget allocations. They are often able to take their own steps. I hope that the hon. and learned Gentleman accepts that that is a better way of dealing with the issue than the Government's determining from the centre the priorities of 24,000 schools.

Mr. Forman: Will my hon. Friend consider including under the rubric of school repairs the equally important task of upgrading facilities that are much in demand? Will he consider with his officials the reasonable capital bid by Wallington county grammar school for boys for a new integrated science block, which would help that school maintain its high standard of science studies?

Mr. Forth: I should have been surprised if the question had not prompted just the sort of reasonable request that my hon. Friend made. I undertake closely to examine the case that he has raised. I am delighted that many schools that my colleagues and I visit have work in train and are doing precisely as my hon. Friend says—building new facilities and providing new equipment. I welcome that —as, I am sure, does my hon. Friend

Mr. Simpson: Does the Minister agree that, with so many pupils being educated in a substandard educational environment, and even if the Government come up with a decent capital programme, LEAs should be at liberty to borrow freely against their entire asset bases to guarantee a decent school environment for every child?

Mr. Forth: That is all very well, but the hon. Gentleman should consider the extent to which some authorities—I will not name them on this occasion—frittered away on other things money that was supposed to be spent on education. We need a lot more persuading that they can be trusted to do as the hon. Gentleman says before we go down that route.

School Performance Tables

12. **Mr. Jenkin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to publish additional material in this year's school performance tables.

Mr. Patten: This year's tables will include more information than ever before under the parents charter. There will be additional information on achievements in vocational qualifications, including successes in the new vocational A-level. We shall also provide for the first time information on levels of authorised as well as unauthorised absence, and on classroom teaching time, in every secondary school.

Mr. Jenkin: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the importance of league tables is that they do not simply measure outcomes, but measure what has been added? Does he share my expectation that schools in all areas, whatever the social background, should be able to achieve excellent results?

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. In the post-war years we have been totally taken up with the inputs into the education system. We should be much more concerned with the outputs. It is the value added by education in schools that should concern us. That is why I was so pleased to see the recent evidence laid before the Education Select Committee, in which learned witness after learned witness said that what was really important was a combination of higher expectations and a greater concentration on teaching and learning. It is odd that some of the learned professors have not been doing that for the past 25 years.

Mr. Madden: Will the Secretary of State publish figures showing the schools where teaching staff have been made redundant as a result of the loss of section 11 funding? In his last few days in office, will he do everything possible to ensure that section 11 funding is available to give children of ethnic minority origin the maximum support in understanding, speaking and writing English?

Mr. Patten: I know of the hon. Gentleman's long-standing interest in matters affecting people from ethnic minority backgrounds in his constituency in Bradford, and I appreciate his attention and care for them over the years. However, I am extremely concerned that some section 11 money may be used to carry on the teaching of second languages—the languages learnt at home—when really, if we want all our children to be good, high-performing British citizens, the most important thing is that they be taught the English language.

Nursery Education

13. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many children aged under five years are currently in (a) nursery education and (b) other forms of child care; what percentage of children under five years this represents; what is the cost; and what were the equivalent figures in 1986 and 1976.

Mr. Robin Squire: In January 1993, almost 340,000 under-fives were in nursery schools and classes—26 per cent. of the population. Equivalent figures were 272,500 —23 per cent.—in 1986, and 158,000—11 per cent.—in 1976. Separate expenditure information on nursery schools

and classes has not been collected since 1986-87. Responsibility for day nurseries and other forms of day care lies with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health.

Mr. Greenway: May I congratulate my hon. Friend on that considerable progress in the important area of nursery education? Is he aware that in the London borough of Ealing the previous Conservative council increased the number of places in nursery schools by 400 over four years, to almost 3,000, making Ealing council's provision the fourth best among the London boroughs, yet that the Labour council refuses to implement its promise to provide more nursery education? The Labour party promised to do that if it won the local election, which, unfortunately, it did. Does not my hon. Friend think it a disgrace that Labour councillors do not know about keeping their promises? Is not it the children who suffer?

Mr. Squire: I am sure that my hon. Friend has already found many people in Ealing who look back with fond memory on their recently removed Conservative council, not least because of its tremendous performance on nursery education. My hon. Friend does the House a good service in reminding us to treat with great care promises that emanate from the Opposition, not least on nursery education.

Mr. Hardy: If the Minister congratulates Conservative councils that provide care for young children, will he condemn the many Conservative councils that do not?

Mr. Squire: Local education authorities' responsibility is to provide for the range of needs of the under-fives. As the hon. Gentleman knows, the properly elected council in Ealing determined that it should make significant provision for nursery education. It is possible that other councils elsewhere will choose different priorities—but they must make provision for the under-fives to meet the demand in their localities. That is their responsibility.

Grant-maintained Schools

14. **Mr. Nigel Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many schools are grant maintained in the north-west.

Mr. Boswell: At present, there are 72 self-governing schools in the north-west region and a further 13 schools have been approved for grant-maintained status or have applications in the pipeline.

Mr. Evans: Will my hon. Friend send his congratulations to Salesbury primary school in my constituency which will become grant maintained in September, joining two other grant-maintained schools in my constituency, the very popular Clitheroe Royal grammar school and Archbishop Temple school? Does my hon. Friend agree that the best antidote to the scepticism of those who have not quite made up their minds about the success of grant-maintained schools, such as the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), is for them to come to the north-west and the Ribble valley to see how those successful schools are operating?

Mr. Boswell: I am delighted to send my congratulations to Salesbury primary school alongside those for Clitheroe Royal grammar and Archbishop Temple school, a school which I have visited and by which I was immensely impressed; it is a good example of the benefits of grant-maintained status.

Mr. Miller: The Minister is fond of blaming local education authorities, but, in the context of the north-west, will he acknowledge that there is no greater trend towards grant-maintained schools in Tory and Liberal-controlled Cheshire than there is around the rest of the north-west? Does not that mean that parents have made the right judgment and that the Tory party has got it wrong?

Mr. Boswell: There is a growing demand for grant-maintained schools. I have already referred to the 13 in the pipeline in the north-west and I have every confidence that that overall number will grow.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. MacShane:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 12 July.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning, I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. MacShane: Can the Prime Minister name one candidate for the presidency of the European Union who does not support the social charter aspects of the European Union?

The Prime Minister: Well, I do not know—no one yet knows—who all the candidates will be.

Q2. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 12 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Burns: Does my right hon. Friend agree that a key plank of Government policy is to widen choice and opportunity as much as possible to all? Does my right hon. Friend think that widening choice and opportunity would be enhanced by extending VAT to private health care and education and is he surprised that that suggestion is being mooted by the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair)?

Hon. Members: Where is he?

Madam Speaker: Order.

The Prime Minister: The whole purpose of the Government's education policy is to extend choice and opportunity as widely as possible. I cannot speak for the policies of the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) —and nor, it would appear, can he this afternoon. It is certainly the case that the Labour party is opposed to the assisted places scheme, city technology colleges, A-levels —and, I had thought until a few moments ago, grant-maintained schools, which I understand a number of prominent members of the Labour party now seem to favour for their own families.

Mrs. Beckett: Does the Prime Minister accept what every national newspaper is saying this morning about the effects on ordinary British families of water privatisation —that it is a swindle, licensed theft and legalised robbery?

The Prime Minister: Would the right hon. Lady renationalise?

Mrs. Beckett: I think that the Prime Minister has forgotten why we are here. These are questions asked of the Prime Minister, not by the Prime Minister.

Does not the Prime Minister realise that what makes British people even more angry is that the only thing that is rising faster than their water bills is the pay of water bosses? How can he defend the fact that that chairman of North West Water received £47,000 a year before privatisation and now receives £338,000 for doing exactly the same job? Is not that a disgrace at a time when water bills are rocketing?

The Prime Minister: I suppose that the assumption must be that the right hon. Lady does not know whether she would renationalise or not. On the substantive part of her question, as she knows, Parliament has provided for an independent regulator whose responsibility it is and who is statutorily required to protect customers' interests while ensuring that they can finance their obligations. She may care already to acknowledge the change in the quality of bathing water and other European Community standards that have been brought about since privatisation and that were not apparent under any Government prior to privatisation.

Mrs. Beckett: I notice that the Prime Minister did not take the opportunity to condemn that pay rise. I hope that he realises that it is those double standards that are bringing his Government into disrepute. Is not it now the case that when people turn on the tap, when they turn on the light —in fact, every time they turn around—under this rip-off Government they are hit with higher taxes and higher charges, and that people are paying more to get less?

The Prime Minister: Perhaps the right hon. Lady could explain why British Telecom's prices are down 30 per cent. since privatisation, why the prices of telephones are down 60 per cent., and why the price of gas is down 21 per cent. It is absolutely clear that the right hon. Lady will protect anything that is in public ownership and attack anything that is in private ownership.

On the pay of water company directors, I have made it clear in the past that they should follow the lead that the Government have set for pay in the public sector and elsewhere, and I hope that the right hon. Lady will make it clear whether she would renationalise those privatised industries and see the prices go back up again, as they used to under nationalisation.

Mr. David Shaw: Does my right hon. Friend recall that, in 1989, 11 bandsmen died in the IRA bombing at the Royal Marines establishment in Deal? Will he recall also that that established a very strong relationship with the people of the town of Deal, who appealed for the music school to be kept in Deal? It was such that 12,500 people signed a petition, which I handed in to the House last Thursday. Will my right hon. Friend take note, therefore, of the strength of feeling that exists between the townspeople of Deal, the Royal Marines school of music and those people who work in it, and will he also recognise that unemployment in Deal is higher than unemployment in the area surrounding Rosyth?

The Prime Minister: I recall, as I am sure many hon. Members will recall, that dreadful deed of many years ago, but I cannot anticipate the substance of statements not yet made.

Mr. Ashdown: Will the Prime Minister reassure us that he has no intention of doing a U-turn on his policy to favour the lifting of the arms embargo if the peace talks in Bosnia fail? Is not that the single act best calculated to ensure that the position of United Nations troops in Bosnia becomes untenable? Surely, that cannot be what the Government wish to see. Is not it illogical to say to the warring partners in Bosnia, "If you will not make peace, then we will help you to make a bigger and more bloody war?"

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman sets out a policy that is not ours. He knows the strong opposition that we have consistently had to the unilateral raising of the arms embargo. That remains.

Competitiveness

Q3. **Mr. Bates:** To ask the Prime Minister what initiatives he is taking to improve the competitiveness of British business.

The Prime Minister: The Government are determined to build on the world-class industries that the United Kingdom already has. The White Paper "Competitiveness: Helping Business to Win" sets out the most comprehensive agenda ever right across Government to improve the competitiveness of British business.

Mr. Bates: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for that answer, but does he accept that perhaps the greatest contribution to the increased competitiveness of our economy has come from the privatisation of loss-making nationalised industries such as British Steel? Does he accept that today British Steel is the world's most efficient producer of steel, and will he ensure that that hard-earned and strong reputation in the world will not be blunted by state-subsidised, inefficient European competitors?

The Prime Minister: We will certainly continue to do all that we can to bring pressure to bear on our European partners to ensure that British industry is not damaged by unfair competition.

Since British Steel moved from the public to the private sector, it has transformed itself into an efficient, integrated, profitable producer. Exports have doubled in recent years, and British Steel is now one of Britain's largest exporters.

Mr. Clelland: Does the Prime Minister recognise that the biggest danger to manufacturing industry in the northern region is the loss of previously privatised industries such as Swan Hunter? What will he do to protect that industry?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman would have noted from the White Paper on competitiveness, the only way in which to protect any industry in this country —or, indeed, any other—is to ensure that it can compete, and is producing something that people wish to buy at the time when they wish to buy it and at a price that they can afford. That is the Government's policy; I wish that it had the whole-hearted support of the Opposition.

Engagements

Q4. **Mr. David Atkinson:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 12 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Atkinson: Will my right hon. Friend accept the grateful thanks of my constituents and those of my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) for last week's recommendation by the Local Government Commission that the borough of Bournemouth should return to unitary status after 20 years of county council control? Is not that a clear demonstration of Conservative commitment to strong local government, in complete contrast to the unwanted policies of remote regional government favoured by Labour and the Liberal Democrats?

The Prime Minister: I am sure that my hon. Friend will make his views known to the commissioners. We certainly wish to put decision making at the lowest possible level, so that it is close to the people who vote and pay local taxes; unlike other parties in the House, we do not want an extra layer of expensive regional government.

Q5. **Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 12 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Jones: Is the Prime Minister aware that 2,000 Airbus workers in my constituency are desperate for his Government to place orders for the future large aircraft? Bearing in mind the magnificent achievement of the Airbus project, can he tell us when British Airways might buy aircraft of the Airbus marque? Does he agree that aerospace is now the greatest industry in Britain, and that it requires more support and encouragement from his Government?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving me an indication of the question that he was going to ask on this specific subject.

As for the future large aircraft, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence has received details from British Aerospace, which he is now taking into account in assessing the options for replacement or refurbishment of the present Hercules flight.

I wholly appreciate the hon. Gentleman's concern to protect jobs in his constituency. Commercial decisions must be a matter for British Airways rather than for my right hon. and learned Friend, but the hon. Gentleman will know that Airbus has competed very successfully. It has attracted customers from airlines around the world, most recently winning a very significant order from Singapore Airlines. I have no doubt that the quality of the product means that that success will continue.

Q6. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 12 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Evennett: I thank my right hon. Friend. During his busy schedule, will he find time to visit my constituency of Erith and Crayford and see at first hand the improving economic situation and, in particular, the improving job situation in Bexley? Furthermore, will he reaffirm his commitment to lower taxation when the time is right—[*Laughter.*] Opposition Members laugh because they do not like the truth. Will my right hon. Friend reaffirm his commitment to the fact that Conservative Members believe in lower taxation? Opposition Members want to spend more and tax more.

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is entirely right about the improving economic circumstances, and about the need to bring unemployment down further. I am delighted that it is falling, although it clearly has a long way further to fall.

As for taxation, of course Labour Members dislike the prospect of lower taxation: they would like to get their hands on people's money and spend it. As the former hon. Member for Dagenham said before defecting back to New Zealand,

"I think the Labour party ought to accept that . . . we"—

that is, the Labour party—

"will always be likely to have a higher tax burden than our opponents."

That is undoubtedly true, and there is no instance in recent years of Labour Members' voting for a tax reduction.

Q7. **Mr. Barnes:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 12 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Barnes: We have seen the plunder of the water industry and the electricity industry by chief executives and others, who often came from public services. The chairman of the Post Office is now pressing for the privatisation and plunder of his own service. What has happened to standards in public life and to the notion of public service?

The Prime Minister: The Post Office management has said that it believes that the best way to protect jobs, to continue to improve services and to compete is for the Post Office to have the freedoms of the private sector. I understand that the hon. Gentleman is concerned only with the qualities of envy which activate the Labour party, but the fact is that the private sector provides a better service than the public sector; it is more efficient than the public sector; and, over years, it is less costly than the public sector.

Privilege (Madam Speaker's Statement)

3.30 pm

Madam Speaker: I have a statement to make arising from a number of privilege complaints that I have received from Members based on an article which appeared in *The Sunday Times* newspaper of 10 July. My inquiries went wider than simply accepting the account of matters as given by the newspaper itself.

It is relevant to the issue that I should remind the House of a paragraph in the first report of the Select Committee on Members' Interests of the Session 1991-92, which reads as follows:

"There is a danger that some Members may make the mistake of believing that correct registration and declaration adequately discharge their public responsibilities in respect of their private interests. Such a mistake could have serious consequences both for the Member concerned and ultimately for the House. As the Speaker reminded the Committee, 'a Member must be vigilant that his actions do not tend to bring the House into disrepute' and, in particular, 'Members who hold consultancy and similar positions must ensure that they do not use their position as Members improperly'. A financial inducement to take a particular course of action in Parliament may constitute a bribe and thus be an offence against the law of Parliament".

It is because I consider that there is an urgent need to clarify the law of Parliament in that area that I am prepared to grant precedence to a motion on that complaint, and I do so without having the need to pass judgment on the particular actions of any of the several Members referred to in the newspaper article.

I now turn to the conduct of the newspaper itself. "Erskine May", at page 128, states:

"the offering to a Member of either House of a bribe to influence him in his conduct as a Member, or of any fee or reward in connection with the promotion of . . . any . . . matter or thing submitted or intended to be submitted to the House . . . has been treated as a breach of privilege."

This, too, is an aspect of the affair which I believe merits further examination, as well as the subsidiary matter of the clandestine recording of Members' conversations within the precincts.

If, as a result of a motion based on those issues, the matter is referred by the House to the Committee of Privileges, I should like to make it clear that the Committee will have power to inquire not only into the matter of the particular complaint, but into the facts surrounding and reasonably connected with it, and into the principles of the law and custom of privilege which are concerned. I hope that it will use that power for the assistance of the House in a difficult area.

The procedure now is for a motion to have precedence at the commencement of business at 3.30 tomorrow. As I said, I have received a number of complaints, including one from the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown). He will now be able to table a motion in the proper form for tomorrow's debate.

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I went before the Select Committee on Privileges in 1974 as the Member of Parliament who originally raised the question of "MPs for hire". I was severely censured for contempt of the House, although I was the whistleblower and not the man who was taking the money.

One of the grievances about this procedure, which I have borne for 20 years, is that there are no *Hansard* records of the Privileges Committee. The Committee can decide to meet in private—and it did. It can decide to ask the people who come before it whether they wish to write to the Committee, and then various communications channels advise the Member to write to the Committee, because, if hon. Members go before the Attorneys-General, they are likely to face severe questioning.

There is no guarantee that the report is ever brought back to the House to be debated. It certainly was not in my case, even though Reggie Maudling and the other two guys—

Madam Speaker: Order. Would the hon. Gentleman please come to his point of order?

Mr. Ashton: I am coming to my point of order. Is it possible for you, Madam Speaker, to make a ruling now, especially with regard to *The Sunday Times*, that the *Hansard* report must be printed in full and that the Committee must sit in public? If not, there will be a great deal of disagreement about the recommendations.

Madam Speaker: I think that the hon. Gentleman understands that Committees are in charge of their own proceedings. The hon. Gentleman's point is not a point of order, but it is very much a matter for debate tomorrow. I hope that he will catch my eye in tomorrow's debate. As he knows, the Committee itself must determine how it proceeds.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. May I draw your attention to paragraph 24 of the first report of the Select Committee on Members' Interests in 1991? It deals with occasions when an hon. Member should withdraw from Committee proceedings. In this context, I refer to the proposed Privileges Committee. The Select Committee on Members' Interests said in its report:

"We feel that it is right that when a member of a committee, particularly the Chairman, has a pecuniary interest which is directly affected by a particular inquiry or when he or she considers that a personal interest may reflect upon the work of the committee or its subsequent report, the Member should stand aside from the committee proceedings relating to it. This convention is so fundamental to the proper conduct of select committee business that we recommend that it should be reinforced by an appropriate resolution of the House."

In column 945—

Madam Speaker: Order. Is this a point of order for me?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Absolutely, Madam Speaker. It is a vital point.

In column 945 on 13 July 1992, that recommendation was enshrined as a rule of the House. It was ordered:

"That this House takes note of the First Report"

and in particular paragraph 24, dealing with

"withdrawal from Committee proceedings."—[*Official Report*, 13 July 1992; Vol. 211, c. 945.]

I put it to you, Madam Speaker, that the business of this Committee is consultancy. It is examining the future of consultancy. If the Privileges Committee is to comprise the great and the eminent in our ranks—that is, Privy Councillors who, in the main, have sat on all previous Privileges Committees in the House while I have been a Member—who are Members of Parliament who have directorships and consultancies in abundance, inbuilt in the Committee will be a conflict of interest which will prevent the Committee from properly deliberating on these matters. I believe—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: May I finish my point of order, Madam Speaker?

Hon. Members: No.

Madam Speaker: Order. I want to listen to what the hon. Gentleman has to say, as does the House. However, he is anticipating a Committee that has not yet been established. We have not even had the motion tabled on the Order Paper; we are not into debate. Although these are very valuable points, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will make them in the debate tomorrow. Would he come to the point that he is putting to me as a point of order?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I will come to the point, Madam Speaker.

I wonder whether you can give the House an assurance that the conflict of interest to which I referred, in so far as the Privileges Committee will be dealing with the issue of consultancy, will not be allowed to happen in this case, or its report will be discredited? The public outside expect an objective assessment about what is in the public interest and what is good for Parliament. We need that assurance, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Of course all the rules of the House will be respected. It is for the House to decide who will be members of that Committee.

Several hon. Members: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. I want no further points of order on this matter. I have made a very considered statement on this issue, and I hope that hon. Members will consider that it is a full statement. There is nothing further I can add. The points of order that hon. Members are now raising are matters of debate. They are for the debate tomorrow; they are not points of order for me.

Several hon. Members: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. I have just made my point about my considered statement. I cannot add further to it now. I ask those hon. Members who still persist in seeking to raise their points of order to reflect on the important statement that I have just made. They should not pursue those points of order now, but should seek to make them in the debate tomorrow.

Mr. David Jamieson (Plymouth, Devonport): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. During Education Question Time, I raised the matter of an OFSTED report on Finborough school in Suffolk. The Secretary of State claimed to have no knowledge of it, but earlier this year I wrote to him about it. On 17 February, the Under-Secretary of State for Schools replied to me; he named the school and noted my concerns. Can the Secretary of State be brought back to the House to correct his misleading statement?

Madam Speaker: Not while I am in the Chair, but I believe that the hon. Member may well find other parliamentary opportunities to make his point.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I am grateful to be called. During Education Question Time, the Secretary of State accused my hon. Friend the Member for Peckham (Ms Harman) of sending her children to a private school, but grant-maintained schools are state schools. What is more, that child is going to the school that his father attended—the local state school. Is it not scandalous that that sort of—

Madam Speaker: Order. It is totally outrageous that Members' children, on whichever side of the House their parents may sit, should be used in politics across the Floor of the House.

Sir John Gorst (Hendon, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: It does not relate to my statement, presumably, because I have made myself quite clear about it.

Sir John Gorst: The point of order that I wish to put to you, Madam Speaker, is about the question of sub judice with regard to the matter on which you made your statement. The suggestion has been made that a Select Committee which is considering the conduct of the press might examine this issue. Where the matter now stands, are the press precluded from any discussion on the basis that it is sub judice? That is the sole point I want to make.

Madam Speaker: That is a hypothetical question. If the hon. Gentleman would care to examine my statement in detail, he will see that it covers his points.

Mr. Bill Michie (Sheffield, Heeley): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I need some clarification of your statement, as a member of the hard-working Select Committee on Members' Interests. Do you think that that Committee has any interest in this case? As my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) has said, given that the Committee has dealt with lobbying before, I hope that it will not be ignored on this occasion.

Madam Speaker: I think that that question might be put in tomorrow's debate. It is not a point of order for me today.

BILL PRESENTED

Trade Boycotts

Mr. Spencer Batiste, supported by Sir Rhodes Boyson, Mr. David Sumberg, Mr. John Marshall, Mr. Edward Garnier, Mr. Andrew Rowe, Mr. Alan Duncan, Mr. Greville Janner, Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody, Mr. David Alton and Mr. Mike Gapes, presented a Bill to prohibit companies from giving information for the purposes of a trade boycott which has not been approved by United Nations or European Union agreement; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 15 July, and to be printed. [Bill 147.]

Unfitness to Drive on Medical Grounds

3.43 pm

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to require medical practitioners to inform the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency in cases where they consider that their patients are unfit to drive on medical grounds.

The Bill's purpose is direct and simple. It would place a statutory obligation on medical practitioners, whether hospital based or in general practice, to report to the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency any cases in which they consider a patient to be medically unfit to drive.

I took up this case because one of my young constituents, Paul Scarisbrick, was killed in an incident on the M62 in circumstances which, had the Bill been in force, would not have occurred. To put it bluntly, if the doctors involved in treating the man responsible for causing the incident had reported his condition to the DVLA, he would almost certainly not have been allowed to continue driving, and Paul Scarisbrick would still be alive today.

Let me explain the circumstances. Two years earlier, the elderly gentleman involved in the incident, whom I will not name here, had been advised by a consultant psychiatrist not to continue driving, as he was suffering from the progressive disorder commonly known as Alzheimer's disease. However, as there was no statutory requirement to take the matter further, neither the consultant nor the GP who was also aware of the situation saw fit to communicate that information to any third party. The man accordingly ignored the medical advice, and the result was that which I have already described.

Why did not the doctors involved take the matter further? They claim that the requirement for confidentiality between a doctor and a patient prevents them from passing on such information. Interestingly, in a letter to Mr. and Mrs. Scarisbrick's solicitor, the Liverpool district coroner, Mr. S.R. Barter MBE, said:

"I am in no doubt in my own mind that the existing law should be changed by statute. Once a doctor has made a clinical judgement, following full investigation, that a patient is suffering from a disease which makes him a danger to himself and the public if he continues to drive, then he should be under a statutory obligation to inform the DVLA of his opinion."

Coming from such an experienced and distinguished source, that is proof positive of the need for a change in the law along the lines that I am proposing.

I also have a letter from the director general of the Association of British Insurers, Mr. Mark Boléat, in which he says unequivocally:

"ABI agrees with the purpose of your Bill to require medical practitioners to report to the DVLA a case where they consider a patient unfit to drive, either for physical or mental health reasons."

Once again, that shows support from an important body.

The medical profession, through its professional body, the British Medical Association, is opposed to the Bill. It is jealous, perhaps understandably, of the doctor-patient relationship with regard to confidentiality. I shall make two points on that: first, to some extent, doctors already breach that particular requirement with, for example, the reporting of notifiable infectious diseases; and, secondly, such confidences should, in my opinion and that of many others, be subjected to a simple but overriding test—that the wider public interest should be taken into account.

A motor vehicle in the wrong hands is a potentially lethal weapon. It is much more lethal than a gun, for example, yet the rules governing the licensing of guns are rightly much more stringent, and require proper medical certification. Although I realise that I am not entirely comparing like with like, I feel that it is nevertheless a useful analogy to compare not a gun with a car but a potential gun user with a potential car user.

Finally, some people have objected to the Bill on the ground that it is the thin end of the wedge—a bridgehead towards the compulsory re-testing of elderly people. It is not. Different people respond in different ways to the aging process. I know many people well into their 70s and beyond who are fully capable of living a full life, including driving a car. As a forty-something myself, however, I sometimes feel that I have already started to disintegrate, so there is no clear comparison between people at different ages.

Far from being the thin end of the wedge, the Bill could halt the movement towards compulsory re-testing in its tracks, as it would deal with many of the problems by medical means, rather than by the remorseless march of the calender. I am convinced that public interest and public safety now require that we legislate to ensure as far as is reasonably possible that those whom we license to drive are medically fit to do so. It is a small measure, which could have a giant effect.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. George Howarth, Mr. Edward O'Hara, Ms Liz Lynne, Mr. Rupert Allason, Mr. Don Dixon, Mr. Stephen Day, Mr. Peter Kilfoyle and Mr. Joe Benton.

UNFITNESS TO DRIVE ON MEDICAL GROUNDS

Mr. George Howarth accordingly presented a Bill to require medical practitioners to inform the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency in cases where they consider that their patients are unfit to drive on medical grounds: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 21 October, and to be printed. [Bill 148.]

Opposition Day

[18TH ALLOTTED DAY]

Post Office

Madam Speaker: I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

3.50 pm

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): I beg to move,

That this House rejects the options in the Government's Green Paper 'The Future of Postal Services' for whole privatisation or part privatisation of Royal Mail and Parcelforce; records its concern that in order to achieve these options Her Majesty's Government proposes to break up the Post Office, putting at risk the close co-operation and mutual support of Royal Mail, Parcelforce and Post Office Counters; recognises the vital role of post office branches within their local communities and is concerned that the survival of branches in small communities with low turnover will be threatened by the break-up of the Post Office; believes that the best way to safeguard the continued provision of universal access and uniform affordable pricing by Royal Mail is to keep it in public ownership as a public service; congratulates the Post Office on its efficiency while a public corporation in providing the most reliable mail service in Europe at one of the cheapest prices without calling on any public subsidy; is of the view that the future of the Post Office and of its service to its customers can best be secured by providing it with commercial freedom as a single corporation within public ownership; and calls upon the Government to adopt that option.

The Opposition thought it would be desirable that the House should have an opportunity to debate the Government's Green Paper on the Post Office before the Government produce their response to the consultation on that paper. Had the Opposition not initiated this debate, the House would not have had an opportunity to debate the Green Paper before the President made up his mind on it.

As it is, we are holding a debate without the President. He is missing, just as he missed the last DTI questions —when I was informed, with remarkable appropriateness, that he was attending an invisible seminar. Today I am informed that he is in Cape Town, so instead we have with us the Minister of State.

The Government's reluctance to debate these proposals brings me to my first question for the Minister of State. As the Green Paper was not thought of sufficient constitutional importance to justify a statement to the House when it was published, and as the views of the House do not merit a debate in Government time, may we at least have an assurance that the outcome of the Green Paper will be first announced to Parliament?

I ask because I notice that the consultation period ends on 30 September. In view of the timing, may we have an assurance that the House will be the first to hear of the result, and that we will not first learn about it at the Tory party conference in October—not that we would want, or be allowed, to get in there, and I am sure that no Conservative Member with doubts will be called to air them there?

I repeat: can we have an assurance that the fate of the Post Office will first be announced in this Chamber and not in Bournemouth? I notice that the Minister is not leaping to his feet to provide us with that assurance. I appreciate that he does not have much discretion in the matter, but perhaps, before he comes to reply, he will set the telex wires between here and Cape Town humming so that, when he rises, he will be able to give us the assurance.

While the Minister is thinking about that, may I try another question on him? I notice that the Government amendment

"welcomes the opportunity of consultation on the range of options"

in the Green Paper. I must therefore ask the Minister the question that the Under-Secretary appeared to have so much difficulty with a fortnight ago. How real will the consultation be? Are the Government prepared to listen to the views expressed during it?

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): No.

Mr. Cook: My hon. Friend supplies us with a candid answer, of a kind with which we may not be favoured when the Minister replies; but she voices my own suspicions.

If the consultation shows that the great majority of the British public do not want their Post Office privatised, will the Government accept that verdict?

Mrs. Dunwoody: Give way to the Minister.

Mr. Cook: I thought for a moment that my hon. Friend was again going to anticipate the answer. If so, I suspect that she would again have been correct.

The Minister owes it to the House to answer the question, and he owes it to the public to listen to what they want done with their Post Office. I say that because the Government have no mandate to privatise it. There was not a word about privatisation of the Post Office in their manifesto. It included a passage about the Post Office, but it gave no hint of privatisation. One can try sprinkling water on it, but the wording still does not appear. I have found no word of privatisation in any election statement of the Government in the most recent general election campaign.

The only reference to the privatisation of the Post Office that I have been able to find in any general election campaign was the ruling out of privatisation of the Post Office by the noble Lady Baroness Thatcher, in the 1997 general election, the week before polling day. She said:

"I have indicated that the Royal Mail would not be privatised. People feel very strongly about it and so do I."

The Royal Mail, in her words,

"would remain inviolate."

I cheerfully concede to the Minister that that was 1987. It was an assurance that apparently joined the list of invisibles in 1992, but no one in 1992 told us that the Post Office was now ready to be privatised or violated.

I will happily give way to any Tory MP who can produce his election address from 1992 in which he told his electorate that he thought that privatisation of the Post Office would be a terrific idea. I shall not be surprised if there are none of them. It is very wise of them, too, because the most recent opinion poll, in June, showed that 71 per cent. of the public opposed privatisation. The numbers of people opposed to privatisation have actually increased since the word got out that the Government were thinking of privatising the Post Office.

Mr. Peter Ainsworth (Surrey, East): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cook: Yes, and I shall look forward to reading the hon. Gentleman's election address in the Library tomorrow.

Mr. Ainsworth: The hon. Gentleman may recall that the Conservative manifesto in 1992 included a commitment to maintain an affordable and uniform pricing structure, a commitment to a national delivery service and a commitment to maintain a large network of post offices. Did the Labour party's manifesto contain those commitments or not?

Mr. Cook: Of course, those issues become matters of question only when the Government proceed to privatise the Post Office. There is no suggestion in our minds that we would seek to privatise the Post Office or put at risk the uniform postage, the chain of local branches or the right of any customer of the Post Office to post a letter from any address in Britain to any other address in Britain at the same low price.

Those things are put at risk only because the Government are now seeking to privatise the Post Office. That is why they have to give the assurances—why give an assurance when those things are not at risk?

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr. Cook: I give way to seniority.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): The burden weighs heavily on me, but will the hon. Gentleman consider that the Select Committee and all the people involved in the Post Office have recognised that time has passed? It is not a question of what we promised years ago. The fact is that—

Mr. Cook *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Taylor: No. The fact is that there is a commercial threat to the viability of the service if the status quo is preserved. What is the proposal of the hon. Gentleman to ensure that we have a uniform national Post Office that is excellent in its delivery of service, and which gets access to capital—which it will not if it stays entirely in the public sector?

Mr. Cook: No one is defending the status quo; nor was the Select Committee. The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right in that: no one wants the status quo. Everyone wants to find a formula that would provide a stable consensus solution for the Post Office. As the hon. Gentleman asked, we produced 13 pages in our plans for a modern Post Office, in which we went for the option of commercial freedom in the public sector. Later, I shall spell out exactly what that means and how it can be delivered, and how even the current Government believe, in another context, that that can be delivered.

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest) *rose—*

Mr. Cook: No; I must carry on.

I invite the hon. Gentleman to consider this. Although I referred earlier to the opinion polls which showed that 71 per cent. of the general public opposed privatisation, I must warn the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues that 56 per cent. even of those people who last month owned up to voting Tory opposed privatisation of the Post Office. The people who voted Tory last month in the European elections are the bottom bedrock of the Tory vote. Not even a majority of the last 27 per cent. who turned out to vote Tory would vote for privatisation of the Post Office.

Mr. Michael Bates (Langbaurgh): Will the hon. Gentleman give way on that?

Mr. Cook: I shall give way in a second.

The reason why those people will not buy privatisation of the Post Office is straightforward: they have more common sense than the dogmatists and ideologues who now rule over them.

Mr. Bates: During that poll, were people asked whether they would be in favour of renationalising British Telecom? Is that still Opposition policy?

Mr. Cook: That has not been the policy of the Labour party since 1987, and there is no great secret about that. If the hon. Gentleman would read our manifesto with the same care that we read the Conservative manifesto, he would know that.

I should like to return to the question why the public have more sense than to swallow the proposal in the Green Paper. It is because they have more sense than to believe that the Post Office would work better if it was broken up, which is what the Green Paper proposes.

Mr. Anthony Coombs *rose—*

Mr. Cook: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will allow me to make my speech rather than carry on a dialogue. I am sure that I can find an opportunity later to let him intervene.

To privatise the Post Office, the Government first have to carve it up. Their only reason for proposing to separate Royal Mail from Post Office Counters and put them under separate ownership is so that they can privatise the Royal Mail, which is the profitable part. If privatisation was not on the agenda, no one in his right mind would propose to divide the Post Office and place the parts under separate ownership.

As the Minister knows, the Government held a two-year review, during which they invited views on the future of the Post Office. Not one of the published submissions suggested that it would be a good idea to break it into two separately owned companies.

Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Cirencester and Tewkesbury): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cook: Perhaps I may be allowed to finish this point. After that, I owe it to the hon. Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) to give way.

We are repeatedly told that it is important to privatise the Post Office and to move it with the times, so that it can meet the challenge of the international market and beat off the Dutch raiders. Not one post office in the world has split its counter service from its delivery service, and the Dutch post office, which is held up to us as the threat to our postal services, has not only kept them integrated but said last month that separating counters from delivery would hamper their management.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: The vast majority of people would agree that the dogmatism and lack of common sense are entirely on the hon. Gentleman's part. Is he not peddling the sort of scare stories that we heard in 1983 when British Telecom was being privatised? But since then the cost of telephone calls has fallen by 30 per cent., there is more investment and the privatised BT is providing a better service for the customer than ever before.

Mr. Cook: I am astonished that, in the week in which the National Consumer Council produced a blistering report on how water charges have increased by three quarters since privatisation, hon. Members have the nerve to claim that privatisation has been the source of lower

prices. The hon. Gentleman should try telling that to the consumers of South West Water, who have seen prices double.

If the hon. Gentleman wants to take his stand on prices, let us argue prices. During the period since British Telecom was privatised, postage prices have gone up by less than the rate of inflation. BT prices overall have dropped by over 12 per cent. compared with inflation, and the price of the postage stamp compared with inflation has gone down by 2 per cent. The percentages would have precisely matched those of BT if the Treasury had not perpetually insisted on increasing payments to the Treasury. That forced the last increase in the price of postage stamps.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): The hon. Gentleman spoke about the Dutch example. Does he agree that the competition about which the Government complain from the Dutch post office comes from an organisation that has exactly the degree of commercial freedom that the Government say is unacceptable here? It has enabled the Dutch to compete with our Post Office. Why cannot we have the same kind of operation here?

Mr. Cook: The hon. Gentleman anticipates a matter to which I shall turn. The exact model that we are invited to be threatened by, and because of which the Post Office should be privatised, is a model of commercial freedom in the commercial sector.

I was speaking about the division that is proposed in the Green Paper between the Royal Mail and Post Office Counters. That division will leave them no longer accountable to one board and under one owner. Accountability to one board has been important in the history of those two distinct businesses, because it makes sure that they pull together. The danger under separate owners who are no longer accountable to the same board is that they would pull against each other.

I shall give an example. The Royal Mail has now established callers' offices at more than 3,000 Royal Mail sorting offices to provide a limited service direct to business clients. The service is kept limited because, while there is common ownership with Post Office Counters, the Post Office board rightly recognises that that service would provide direct competition to Post Office Counters.

Once the Royal Mail is a separate company with private owners, there is nothing to hold it back from marketing those callers' offices, providing the full range of Royal Mail services. It will be under pressure from its private owners to do so, because the one advantage of breaking Royal Mail away from Post Office Counters is that it could open its own outlets and bypass post office branches.

Those callers' offices are all in delivery offices. By definition, they all have large car parking spaces. It would be easy to market them to businesses as the Royal Mail equivalent of the out-of-town Sainsburys. That would do to high street post offices what Sainsburys superstores have done to village shopping.

That brings me to the confidence trick at the heart of the Green Paper. It contains many assurances, and I am willing to accept one of them in full. I unreservedly accept the assurance on page 22 that children will still be free to write to Santa Claus after privatisation. It is good to know that the Government retain a human and delightful touch. It is also good to know that Santa Claus remains inviolate, at least until the next election.

However, we really have to believe in Santa Claus to believe the financial arithmetic of the other assurances. The big con trick practised in the Green Paper is that, by keeping Post Office Counters in the public sector, we will keep open the network of post office branches.

They will stay open only if the Royal Mail keeps up its payments. Currently, it pays £250 million a year for the handling of its services by Post Office Counters. That payment is related to the volume of its business so handled. Suppose the Royal Mail seizes its freedom to handle more of its own business in the way that I have described—how much will it be willing to pay Post Office Counters then? If its volume goes down, how much will its payment go down?

There is not much of a margin in the books for a reduction. Post Office Counters made a profit of only £25 million last year. It would take only a 10 per cent. drop in its business from Royal Mail for it to end up making a loss. What would happen then? It would have to make cuts. Where would those cuts fall? We can all predict that. The point that should worry Tory Back Benchers is the fact that it is the small village sub-post offices that get the vast cross-subsidy from the Crown post office.

Mr. Gyles Brandreth (City of Chester): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cook: As the hon. Gentleman is no doubt worried about his village post office, I shall give way to him.

Mr. Brandreth: Of course I am concerned about the future of my village post offices.

Is not the hon. Gentleman indulging in exactly the same scaremongering tactics that the Opposition indulged in a decade ago, when they told us that a privatised British Telecom would result in vastly increased charges and the ending of rural services and rural telephone provision? In fact, the number of telephones in the rural communities that work has increased. The hon. Gentleman is simply repeating scaremongering tactics. Why should we believe him now, when what his colleagues were saying 10 years ago has been shown to be untrue?

Mr. Cook: The hon. Gentleman should be quiet and listen, because he obviously needs to do so. If he and his hon. Friends have not grasped one fact, the future of rural post offices is in deep trouble.

That fact is that the difference between telecommunications and the postal services is that, with new technology, it is now a matter of indifference how far a telephone call is going, but with the postal service the cost of delivering a letter is directly proportionate to the distance that it travels. That is why privatisation of the Royal Mail raises the problem of protecting rural post offices and remote deliveries.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cook: I want to continue with the argument. If Conservative Members are really interested in village post offices, they had better listen to it.

If the payment to Post Office Counters goes down, and if the Crown post office is unable to maintain the cross-subsidy, how long will it be before we begin to see a retreat from the post office network?

How many post office branches would close if the cross-subsidy between Crown and village post offices were

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cut? I accept that rural areas which the hon. Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth) claims to represent are increasingly represented by Labour MEPs in Strasbourg, but they are still represented by Tory Members of Parliament, who may well go the way of their local Tory MEPs and disappear if privatisation results in the closure of their village shops.

Hon. Members should not think that the regulator will help if that problem arises. In the Green Paper, the regulator is the regulator of the Royal Mail, not Post Office Counters. In the Green Paper, the role of the regulator has been carefully structured so that, on the most contentious issue—the closure of a rural post office branch—the regulator will have no role.

In any case, the real job of the regulator—as with so many of the regulators appointed by the Government when they privatise utilities—has nothing do with protecting services and everything to do with promoting the interests of competitors and reducing the market share of the utility.

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): We have been hearing constant jeering about the Government's plans for the Royal Mail, but will the hon. Gentleman not tell us what his policies would be for the Royal Mail? Would he invest in it? If so, is this a spending pledge, and would he sustain it?

Mr. Cook: I do not know whether the hon. Lady was here when I answered precisely that question. I gather that she was not here, so I should stress that it is a waste of the House's time if hon. Members feel free to intervene without having listened to a speech.

The hon. Lady asked about investment. The Post Office would have no problem meeting its investment plans if the Treasury were not constantly increasing the amount of money that the Post Office has to hand over; it has trebled over the past three years.

There is a paradox before the House. We are invited by the Green Paper to believe that, in the public sector, the Post Office faces slow decline, but the public expenditure White Papers say that the Treasury expects rising profitability in the public sector. That is why the Post Office cannot invest.

The hon. Lady asked about the spending commitment. If the Treasury did not demand so much in profits from the Post Office, there would be no need for any spending commitment. *[Interruption.]* No, there would not. That money would provide the investment.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cook: No. I said on the last occasion that I would not give way again.

The Green Paper opens up the Post Office to competition; it opens up every part of the operation of the Royal Mail except the last bit, where the letters are pushed through the letter boxes. It is understandable that the Green Paper does not propose to open that up to competition. Door-to-door delivery is the labour-intensive part of the operation. It is high in costs, and it is impossible to find anybody who wants to take it over, but it is the only part of the monopoly that will be left.

Under the Green Paper, Royal Mail will be forced to accept competitors collecting bulk mail from big clients, sorting it out in their own mail rooms, transporting it to the city of destination and then dumping it at the Royal Mail delivery office for the postman to cart round the streets.

It will not save the Royal Mail much in costs. Even if the competition cuts out all the large clients who are easy to handle at a profit, the Royal Mail will still be obliged to collect from every collection box, run vans between every town and maintain all 80 mechanised sorting offices round Britain. The fixed costs of its network will not decrease in step with the volume that is passing through it, but the revenue will fall with that volume.

The problem for the public is that, as the competitors skim away the profitable parts of its operation, Royal Mail will not have the same profits to cross-subsidise the domestic customer who wants to post a single letter—particularly the expensive domestic customer who wants to send it a long way.

I refer to it as a problem. I am not sure that everyone sees it as a problem. In the early 1980s, one Tory MP advocated that we should have a Royal Mail in which people paid for the distance they wanted their letters to go. As he rather cheerfully argued,

"There does not seem to be a case for massive subsidisation of all those living in the outer Hebrides who also choose to have all their friends in London. The introduction of distance pricing for the mail service could be crude but still effective."

Just how crude can be seen from the estimated cost of sending a letter from the Hebrides to London, which would produce a distance pricing of £10. Certainly crude, and only effective in relieving the Post Office of any need to provide the service.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): Scaremongering.

Mr. Cook: The hon. Gentleman accuses me of scaremongering, but the Member of Parliament that I quoted was no ordinary Tory. He is now a Cabinet Minister—the Secretary of State for Wales. The hon. Gentleman can shake his head as much as he likes, but that was said by the Secretary of State for Wales. My Welsh colleagues may also shake their heads in disbelief, but he is unfortunately still the Secretary of State for Wales. He may not have stayed overnight in Wales, but every week he sits in the Cabinet that will decide the response to the Green Paper and that invites us to believe their assurances that a uniform, affordable tariff will remain.

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): I am worried by my hon. Friend's remarks about possible charging. What would happen at Christmas? Would the poor and pensioners no longer be able to send Christmas cards?

Mr. Cook: I will answer my hon. Friend by considering the one example in the world of a country that has opened up its postal services to outside competition in the way that the Green Paper envisages for the Royal Mail after privatisation. Since New Zealand liberalised its postal services, the average postal charge has increased 50 per cent. to compensate for the loss of profitable business. Tory Members might like to note that rural residents in New Zealand pay an annual fee of 80 dollars if they want their mail delivered to their door.

One hundred and fifty years of public ownership has given Britain one of the best postal services in the world. It has more deliveries than, for example, the Dutch postal service can manage. There is no second delivery or

Saturday delivery in Holland. London enjoys 11 deliveries a week, but Amsterdam has only five. Anyone who reads the Green Paper's tepid paragraph on second delivery will know that there is no assurance that delivery will join Santa Claus in surviving privatisation.

The UK postal service is also cheaper. Since the mid-1980s, its charges have fallen against inflation, and they are now one fifth lower than those of the Dutch postal service. The Post Office has also made bigger productivity gains. Since the mid-1980s, it has achieved higher productivity while in public ownership than gas or electricity under privatisation.

I grant that the Post Office is not top of the table. If one considers all the energy and utility industries, whether public or private, top of the table for productivity is British Coal—not that it receives any reward from the Government. The Post Office comes in higher than many industries that the Government have already privatised.

Mrs. Dunwoody: What is happening already in rural areas is bad enough. Not only are small country towns losing Crown post offices, but many rural post offices are under such pressure that they too will soon lose their trade.

Mr. Cook: My hon. Friend emphasises that many Members of Parliament on this side of the House represent rural areas, and understand perfectly well the anxieties felt by people living in them. They know precisely why strong public opinion is registered against privatisation.

Ours is also the only postal organisation in the world that makes a profit on its mail services.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: I have listened carefully to the hon. Gentleman's arguments against privatisation, and I am particularly concerned, as is the hon. Gentleman, about rural offices. Does he realise that 19,000 out of 20,000 offices are currently in private ownership? As he is so keen to reverse privatisation of the Post Office, will he pledge here and now that his Government will find the funds to renationalise the Post Office if we privatise it?

Mr. Cook: I have already answered that question. If the Government are daft enough to proceed with privatising the Royal Mail, we will look at ways of restoring it to where we believe it belongs—in public control, where the bulk of its customers want it kept.

As for the 19,000 sub-post offices in private ownership, it is perfectly correct that they have private sub-postmasters. Those people are working to a contract with Post Office Counters, and the money they receive under the contract depends critically upon the money that Post Office Counters receives from Royal Mail.

If the hon. Gentleman is really concerned about the future of his village post office, he should ask himself whether it makes sense to do as the Government propose and to break Post Office Counters, a company making a £25 million profit, away from Royal Mail, a company making a £280 million profit. If I, as a constituency Member for that village, were interested in the hon. Gentleman's village post office, I should seriously doubt the wisdom of that separation of Post Office Counters from its major source of revenue.

As I was saying, we have the only Post Office in the world that makes a profit. It gets not one penny in subsidy. On the contrary, it subsidises the Treasury with the profits that it hands over—and those demands have trebled over the past three years. This year, the Post Office will pay the Treasury £230 million—almost as much as Post Office Counters receives from Royal Mail for handling charges and for keeping open the entire post office network throughout Britain.

Of course, the reason why that sum is demanded from the Post Office has nothing to do with an estimate of its profitability and everything to do with the Treasury's calculation of what it desperately needs. That is the real reason why the "For Sale" sign is going up outside the Post Office: the Treasury needs the money. After 150 years of public stewardship of the Royal Mail, the threat is that it will be brought to an end to pay for 15 years of economic incompetence by the Government.

The Post Office need not be privatised. There is an alternative. Let me answer the hon. Members who have asked about it. There is an alternative that would provide the commercial freedom that the Post Office needs to meet the new competition while keeping it together and keeping it in the public sector. The Post Office would have the commercial freedom to allow it to expand its commercial activities, to form joint ventures with private sector companies, to raise capital for investment from private sources, and to compete in the new global communications markets.

It is true that commercial freedom in the public sector is included as an option in the Green Paper—I hope to hear something from the Minister about that. However, I have never read any Green Paper with so little faith in one of the options that it lays before us. Indeed, even before the rest of us can express a view, the Green Paper tells us that the Government have concluded that that option will not work.

It is not entirely clear why Ministers have come to that conclusion. I was perplexed by the reasoning used by the Under-Secretary of State for Technology on the "Today" programme last week, when he said that the Post Office could not have commercial freedom in the public sector because there is

"always the knowledge that so long as it remains in the public sector then it can't go bankrupt".

That seems to me a good reason for keeping it in the public sector. The idea of the freedom to go bankrupt seems an excellent argument against privatisation.

The Green Paper that the Minister was discussing says that public ownership would condemn the Post Office to "slow decline". That is an appalling admission. Ministers are effectively saying that, if they remain responsible for the Post Office, the best they can offer it is slow decline. If that is true, it is an argument not for taking the Post Office out of the public sector, but for putting that lot out of government, so that they are no longer responsible for the public sector.

The Minister is now in a difficult position, because last week his argument that there cannot be commercial freedom in the public sector was demolished from the Government Dispatch Box, when the White Paper on the BBC was introduced. That offered the BBC commercial freedom within the public sector—the freedom to expand its commercial activities, to form joint ventures, to raise capital for investment from private finance and to compete in the new global communications network. The BBC will be able to do all that, and still stay in the public sector.

Why is that possible for the BBC, yet we are told that it is not possible for the Post Office as a public corporation? When the Minister comes to speak, he cannot

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pretend that that option is now not available to the Post Office, unless he intends to vote against the Government's White Paper on the BBC.

But there is another reason why the Government should embrace the option of commercial freedom within the public sector. If they are to be responsible about the future of a major public corporation, they should build that future on consensus. Every party on the Opposition Benches would support the option of commercial freedom in the public sector; that would make it a firm and stable option, which would take the Post Office into the next century. That does not need legislation. It does not even need consultation. It is an option on which we could go snap this afternoon.

But of course, I know that the Minister will not do that. I know that the Government will not do it. They will not do it, because they have been in power for so long that they have forgotten that they are there only as the trustees of public corporations, not the owners of those corporations, to sell them off whatever the rest of us think.

This Government are at the fag end of their days, marking their time until the day that they return to their community. Yet this Administration, on borrowed time, claim the right to end the public status of the Post Office, which goes back 150 years and is supported in public opinion polls by three times the number of members of the public that were prepared to support the Government.

Moreover, the Government claim the right to sell the Post Office without any mandate from any election. If they proceed on that basis, they will make a mockery of parliamentary democracy. They have three months in which to reconsider—the three months that they have given themselves for consultation on the Green Paper.

I asked at the start of my speech whether the Government would listen to the overwhelming majority of the customers in that consultation who will not want the Royal Mail privatised. It was no trick question. It is the real test of whether they will govern according to the wishes of the people or rule by imposing their own political prejudices on the nation.

We will ensure that, during the next three months, the public are given every chance to express their views on the Post Office loud and clear. *[Interruption.]* The public will notice that, when we refer to that, Tory Members of Parliament already laugh at the idea of listening to the views of the public. I warn them that, if they choose to laugh rather than listen to those views, we shall make their contempt for the views of the public one of the main issues of the next parliamentary year, and we will fight to keep the Post Office where it belongs—in the public sector providing a public service.

4.27 pm

The Minister for Industry (Mr. Tim Sainsbury): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'agrees with the Select Committee on Trade and Industry that the Post Office cannot be retained in its present form; therefore welcomes the publication of the Government's Green Paper on the future of postal services which acknowledges the need for greater commercial freedom for the Post Office and provides increased opportunities for sub-post offices; recognising the importance to communities of Post Office Counters and the Royal Mail, supports the Government's commitment to the universal service at a uniform and affordable tariff, with a nationwide network of post offices; condemns the approach that the only possible solution is 100 per cent. public ownership; and welcomes the opportunity of consultation on the range of options.'.

Before I respond to points on the Green Paper, I remind the House that I have a declared interest as a shareholder in J. Sainsbury plc. Recently, the Post Office has transferred a number of its Crown offices to agency or franchise status. Those franchise arrangements are made with a number of stores, including those of the Co-operative movement, and I understand that five of them have been established in Sainsbury stores.

I should make it clear to the House that the choice of private sector franchisees in individual cases is wholly an operational matter for Post Office Counters. Ministers and officials of the Department of Trade and Industry are neither involved in nor informed about such decisions.

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): That was the best part of the Minister's speech.

Mr. Sainsbury: I can tell the hon. Gentleman that I now come to the most important part of my speech.

We welcome the Opposition's choice of the Green Paper on the Post Office as the subject for today's debate because it gives us an opportunity to publicise the options in it and the guarantees that it repeats. It also enables us to expose once again what I could almost call the Opposition's North Korean approach, exemplified so splendidly by the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook). The motion is based on the Opposition's simple proposition which the Government totally reject: public sector good, private sector bad.

The speech of the hon. Member for Livingston exposed his failure to recognise the opportunities that technological change is bringing to the Post Office and, indeed, could bring to Post Office customers if we were to respond positively. It was fairly predictable. We know the style —a nice snappy start and some good knockabout stuff. It reminded me of an England batting performance these days. The start was followed, I am afraid, by a middle order collapse. There were some wild, ill-judged strokes—exemplified by the hon. Gentleman's usual scare stories —an absence of runs scored and an absence of content. There was a little flourish by the tail, but the end verdict has to be that it was another very unsatisfactory performance.

Most of all, the hon. Gentleman's speech was a missed opportunity to be positive and to put clause 4 out of his mind for a change, although that may be too much for the hon. Gentleman. It is no wonder that, like the England cricket team, he has such a consistent record of losing.

Hon. Members have been reminded that on 30 June we published a consultative document entitled "The Future of Postal Services". Let me stress straightaway the word "consultative". The Green Paper sets out the issues surrounding the future of postal services and discusses a number of options for the future of the Post Office. It invites comments by 30 September and all members of the public and organisations with an interest are invited to comment on the proposals. The Government will form a view in the light of all the comments received.

Mr. Michael Clapham (Barnsley, West and Penistone): My hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) referred to the MORI poll. The Minister should be aware that 70 per cent. of the people who took part in the poll were against the privatisation of the Post Office

and that 57 per cent. of the people who took part were Conservative voters and were against privatisation of the Post Office. Furthermore, 70 per cent. of the people who took part came from the constituencies of Tory Members. Does not the Minister agree that the poll shows that there is enormous public pressure for keeping the Post Office public rather than privatising it? Should not he be acting on that consultation process?

Mr. Sainsbury: The hon. Gentleman has a touching faith in the accuracy of opinion polls, which he might have found disappointing in the last two elections.

As I said, the point of the Green Paper is to have an informed consultation period, which, I regret, will not be helped by the hon. Member for Livingston giving publicity again to his usual scaremongering stories.

Mrs. Dunwoody: The Post Office put out for consultation over a three-month period the proposal to close the main post office in Nantwich, which has had a post office almost since the 1700s. It received a large volume of letters, postcards and petitions, all of which opposed the closure of the post office. The Post Office, however, has carried out a decision that it took three months earlier and our post office will now be located in a store somewhere else, which is deeply resented by many people and is certainly not the result of proper consultation.

Mr. Sainsbury: The hon. Lady refers to the Crown conversion programme and, interestingly, to what is clearly a commercial decision of the Post Office. One of the many points left unresolved by the hon. Member for Livingston is the extent to which he would seek to interfere with the existing freedoms of the Post Office.

The Government are not consulting on certain aspects of the Green Paper. Those involve the Government's absolute commitment to a number of basic postal services, which we have described as the non-negotiables. The three important commitments are: a universal letter and parcel service; a uniform and affordable tariff structure; and a nationwide network of post offices.

Lady Olga Maitland: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the scaremongering stories whipped up by Labour have only served to worry and frighten elderly people all over the country? Will he confirm that the services provided by Post Office Counters will continue? In particular, how does he propose not only to maintain a uniform stamp price—regardless of where the letters are being sent—but to ensure that that price remains affordable?

Mr. Sainsbury: I shall come to the last point in a moment. I certainly agree with my hon. Friend about the scaremongering: it has a long and well-established history, which is presumably approved of at the very top—or, at any rate, what we expect to be the very top soon. I note that, in December 1988, the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) said:

"... the idea that we will have an influx of power stations, all competing on the grid, is nonsense."—[*Official Report*, 12 December 1988; Vol. 143, c. 683.]

I wonder what the hon. Gentleman thinks about that particular scare story now.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Sainsbury: I think that I ought to make a little progress. I have given way three times. I may give way to the hon. Gentleman later.

The commitments of which I have just reminded the House were first made in the citizens charter, were repeated in the Conservative party manifesto and the announcement of the Post Office review, and have been reiterated many times in the House. The hon. Member for Livingston, however, has never been one to let the facts get in the way of a good story.

Mr. Grocott: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Sainsbury: The hon. Gentleman is very persistent. All right, I will give way.

Mr. Grocott: I am grateful to the Minister. Will he answer a simple question? Should the British public give more or less credence to the "absolute assurances" that he has just given about the universal provision of the Post Office than to the "absolute assurances" that he and his colleagues gave before the last election that they would not raise taxes?

Mr. Sainsbury: The hon. Gentleman's fairly predictable question has been covered in the House so many times that I think we would do better to get on with the matter in hand. Undertakings on taxation are a familiar topic, but not one that need concern the Post Office.

Let me deal with the substance of the Green Paper. One fact about which the hon. Member for Livingston and I may agree is that the Post Office is a very successful business, providing a daily letter service throughout the nation at a uniform tariff and with ever-improving standards. It supports 20,000 post offices, providing pensions and similar public services from city centres to the remotest parts of the country. It has just announced its 18th year of subsidy-free profit. It is thus no surprise that the Post Office is highly popular with the public, bracketed with Marks and Spencer—or, perhaps, other private-sector suppliers of life's essentials such as food and clothing.

Despite that success, however, the Post Office faces new challenges. Its markets are changing, and changing fast. The hon. Member for Livingston seems not to recognise that both Post Office Counters and Royal Mail, the main constituent businesses of the Post Office, are faced with increasing competition. For example, virtually no services are now available only at post offices. Stamps are sold in all sorts of places; pensions can be paid directly into bank accounts or building societies—40 per cent. of new pensioners are choosing that option—and television licences can be, and often are, paid for by direct debit.

Royal Mail is under similar pressure. It faces increasing competition from the fax machine, electronic mail and, of course, its traditional rival, the telephone call. The real cost of telecommunications is falling fast, making those rivals ever more competitive. Royal Mail has been developing the direct mail market, but faces strong competition from other forms of advertising. Mail services are becoming more and more internationally—rather than nationally—based.

I am not suggesting that the business is about to collapse, but the fact that the volume of mail posted in pillar boxes fell last year for the first time in more than 10 years is a disturbing sign. Conservative Members believe

[Mr. Sainsbury]

that diversity of choice for the consumer is to be welcomed, not feared; we neither could nor wish to resist the developments that I have mentioned.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: What assurances can the Minister give that Sunday collections will continue after privatisation? Sunday collections were introduced only after an extensive campaign in the House. I doubt very much that they are profitable, but they are very much appreciated, especially by people in rural areas who write to their families and friends. It is not the commercial mail that the Post Office is seeking, but the public service which many of us are seeking to protect.

Mr. Sainsbury: I suspect that the hon. Gentleman knows that Sunday collections are by no means universal; they are at the discretion of the Post Office. It is a matter for its commercial judgment and it assesses them on an efficiency basis. It is interesting to note—I suspect that I am wrong—that the Liberal Democrats would, like the Labour party, seek always to interfere. That is one of the reasons why the Post Office wants freedom. Public ownership does not come without constant interference or the pressure for interference.

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath) *rose—*

Mr. Sainsbury: I must make some progress. I have been generous in giving way.

Common ground is shared on many of the background facts. I hope that it is also common ground to think that change is necessary to ensure that the Post Office can respond to the challenges and the opportunities that it faces. In particular, it is increasingly clear that the conventional public sector or nationalised industry approach to the management of the business is insufficiently flexible to allow the management to respond properly to the competitive pressures to which I have referred. The report earlier in the year by the all-party Trade and Industry Select Committee concluded that the various public sector constraints on the Post Office's activities were

"having a detrimental impact on the Post Office's ability to act as a commercial organisation, to deliver an ever higher quality of service to its customers and to meet the challenges and opportunities of international competition."

The Government, therefore, make no apologies for having launched the Post Office review and concluding that the status quo is not an option. Indeed, the Select Committee itself, chaired by that noted privatiser the hon. Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn), agreed that

"the Post Office cannot be retained in its present form".

Let me now turn to the individual post office businesses, beginning with Post Office Counters. Counters provides the co-ordinating and managerial support services for the network of 20,000 post offices. That network has effectively been run as a separate business within the Post Office since 1986. It has important trading relationships with Royal Mail and Parcelforce, but I should stress that those trading relationships are on an arm's length basis. The most striking feature of the business is that it is based on a combination of public and private sector investment. Approximately 19,000 of just under 20,000 outlets are run as private businesses by sub-postmasters and sub-postmistresses, whose own investment has been estimated to be in excess of £1 billion—well in excess of the public sector investment in the business.

The Government have, of course, considered whether there is a case for changing that structure. They have concluded, however, that no change is necessary. As the National Federation of Sub-Postmasters has made clear, the key issue for the future of the post office network is not its ownership, which is already predominantly private sector, but the need to generate higher turnover for the network and to offer a more efficient and automated service to its clients. The Government accept that view. We have, therefore, concluded that the co-ordinating business of Post Office Counters should remain in the public sector, but that it should be given greater freedom to take on board new clients for the network, thus enabling it to spread its costs over a wider range of activity. The Green Paper contains guidelines setting out those new arrangements, with the necessary safeguards to ensure fair competition.

In addition, the Green Paper confirms the intention to invest at least £130 million in the automation of the benefit-payment system at post offices, enabling Post Office Counters to provide a more efficient and secure service, initially for its major client, the Benefits Agency, and thereafter for other clients.

The House may wish to know that the general secretary of the National Federation of Sub-Postmasters, Colin Baker, has written in the federation's newspaper, saying that

"the Green Paper should be welcomed by members of the federation . . . It proves that the Government has listened to our advice".

Before moving on to the subject of Royal Mail, perhaps I may deal with one little scare story that has already been raised—the hon. Member for Livingston has referred to it again today—that Post Office Counters could not possibly survive under separate ownership from the rest of the Post Office. It is baloney. There is no cross-subsidy between Royal Mail and Post Office Counters. While there are important trading links, they are based on commercial terms, negotiated on an arm's length basis. The Green Paper makes clear that the Government will continue to require Royal Mail and Parcelforce to offer the full range of public letter and parcel services at post offices.

Dr. Hampson: Is it not ironical that Opposition Members are keen to praise the private-public relationship on the counter side, where there are 19,000 or 20,000 privately owned businesses, yet they are denying the opportunity of the same participation for Royal Mail? Our proposals enable the work force to have a shareholding in the Royal Mail for the first time. That seems bold and imaginative, but Opposition Members have not mentioned it once.

Mr. Sainsbury: My hon. Friend is being rather uncharacteristically kind to the Opposition in saying that it is ironical. I just think that it is contradictory and typical. In no way is Post Office Counters a weak and feeble creature dependent on the charity of big brother Royal Mail. That would be an insult to a successful retail business and I would never insult successful retail businesses. It certainly does a disservice to 19,000 sub-postmasters.

I shall now turn to Royal Mail. The Green Paper sets out three options for the business, which are all designed to give it the commercial freedom that it is universally agreed

is necessary. First, the Green Paper discusses the option of giving the Royal Mail the freedom it needs within the public sector. It identifies a number of difficulties, however, in reconciling the scale and scope of the commercial freedoms that the company needs, with the appropriate and responsible control of public sector organisations, relating to public-sector finances and fair competition with the private sector.

Secondly, the Green Paper sets out the case for a conventional 100 per cent. privatisation of the Royal Mail backed by independent regulation. Clearly, that would deliver the Royal Mail the commercial freedoms that it needs. But the Government recognise that many people would prefer to see a closer link with the Government than full privatisation would provide. The Government have, therefore, proposed a third option—at this stage it is their preferred way forward—under which shares in Royal Mail would be sold to the public and to its employees and sub-postmasters, but under which the Government would retain a significant shareholding of 49 per cent. of the shares. Parliamentary approval would then be needed before any sale of those shares.

The Opposition have responded with their traditional, predictable knee-jerk reaction to those three options. First, they have argued that all the necessary commercial freedoms can be given in the public sector, so that there is no need to consider private-sector options. We heard that again today from the hon. Member for Livingston. Secondly, they have suggested that any sale of shares in the company would immediately lead to one of their most distasteful categories of people: rampaging capitalists, inevitably, as they see it, slashing services and destroying communities. Their reaction is entirely predictable: public sector good, private sector bad. Kim Il Sung come back, all is forgiven. Their reactions are entirely predictable, entirely irresponsible and entirely wrong.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): I hesitated to intervene because I wanted to hear the Government's case. Would my right hon. Friend give me an assurance that if, after what I hope will be meaningful consultation, there is a substantial view in favour of option one—that the Post Office should have commercial freedom—which can be given without too many difficulties, he would support that option? Does he accept that there are a number of Members on the Government Benches who do not wish to see the Post Office put into the private sector because we know the problems that the fragmentation of it would create? Will he give me an assurance that, if there is the widespread support from individuals, in the House and outside—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. The hon. Gentleman is making a very long intervention. I think that he has made his point. I call the Minister.

Mr. Sainsbury: I am happy to reassure, if necessary, my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) that, of course, we shall listen extremely carefully to the response to our consultation paper. I hope that he will listen with equal care to what I am about to say about the difficulties associated with the public sector option.

I deal first with the argument that the necessary freedoms can be given in the public sector—the crux of the argument of the hon. Member for Livingston. To listen to some of the statements by the Labour party, we could almost believe that controls on the expenditure of nationalised industries were an invention of this Government. The hon. Member for Livingston must have a short memory. He was in the House, supporting the then Labour Government in 1976, when the investment programmes—much needed investment programmes—of the nationalised industries were slashed by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, his noble Friend Lord Barnett. It is worth remembering that the hospital building programme was cut by a third. In the Post Office itself, investment nearly halved between 1976 and 1978. As a result, Post Office investment in 1978 was, in real terms, only about a quarter of what it is today. That is why we are not disposed to take lessons from the Labour party on running public industries.

We realise that a business in the public sector has the taxpayer standing behind it. As long as the state owns a majority of the shares in Royal Mail—I say to my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield that it does not matter whether that stake is 51 per cent., 70 per cent. or 100 per cent.—it is in the public sector and falls within the public sector borrowing requirement. We recognise the vital importance of controlling the PSBR. We will not sacrifice our belief in the sound management of public finances on the altar of political expediency.

Mr. Robin Cook: I am sure that the Minister would not wish to describe the Government's White Paper on the BBC as political expediency. Can he now explain to the House why all the difficulties that he adumbrated in relation to the Post Office staying in the public sector and commercial freedom apparently do not apply to the BBC and why his Department cannot get the same deal out of the Treasury as the Department of National Heritage can?

Mr. Sainsbury: I suggest that the hon. Gentleman reads carefully the Green Paper on the Post Office and that he reads the document on the BBC equally carefully. Having read those documents, he will, I hope, immediately recognise that whereas the Royal Mail wants to enter joint ventures where it is the controlling shareholder and the controlling operator, the BBC is seeking not to do that, but to enter joint ventures where it is the minority partner—a very different circumstance. There is, of course, a wide range of other difficulties which are obvious to most of us.

Mr. Cook: The Minister has mentioned one difficulty. Let us, for the purposes of hypothesis, agree on the following. Let us suppose that the Post Office said that it was willing to be a minority shareholder in joint ventures. Would that remove the Minister's objection? What is his next objection?

Mr. Sainsbury: I do not want to be driven entirely into discussing the BBC. I merely say to the hon. Gentleman that the BBC's commercial freedom, as set out in the White Paper, is entirely consistent with the general rules on public sector freedoms, which we have set out in the Green Paper. The Government are encouraging the BBC to develop its commercial activities with private sector partners and finance under the private finance initiative.

The Green Paper makes it absolutely clear that the Post Office, too, could benefit from that initiative. The question is whether that would meet the commercial needs and opportunities facing the business. In the case of the BBC, as I have said, it does because it enables it to operate through the joint venture companies I have described.

[Mr. Sainsbury]

What the Royal Mail needs is something different. It wants to be able to compete with other Post Offices and to put more business through its own network. It is not looking for partners who will control any joint venture with majority stakes; it is looking for full commercial freedoms. I say again to the hon. Gentleman that the two cases are entirely different.

However, I recognise that there are some freedoms that are compatible with pubic sector status. We are giving greater freedoms, for example, to Post Office Counters to take on new clients. However, the differences between the Royal Mail and Post Office Counters are considerable. Counters has a unique combination, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) referred, of public and private sector investment.

The freedoms which the Royal Mail is seeking, however, go much further. It wishes to borrow, possibly extensively, on private capital markets. It wishes to offer new services to the private sector, based on its existing skills, but developing new skills and services. It wishes to operate in the international as well as the domestic market, striking new partnerships with the private sector, but also competing head on with it. It needs to compete to forge its own role in a rapidly changing and developing communications market against major international competition. It needs real management control over these activities.

The Government wish to see the Royal Mail go down that route. It does not follow that such a route is compatible with the public sector. The public ownership option, clearly dear to the Labour party, leaves three unanswered questions. First, how can competition with the private sector be fair? Secondly, will there be any Government interference in commercial matters? The signs from today's debate are that there would be. If there was no interference, what would be the purpose of public sector status? Thirdly and most importantly, with Treasury controls and the straitjacket of the annual expenditure round, how could the Royal Mail fund its long-term investment requirements?

Mr. Ken Purchase (Wolverhampton, North-East): More Government investment.

Mr. Sainsbury: The hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mr. Purchase) seems to overlook—he was not here at the time—what happened between 1976 and 1978, under the then Labour Government, to investment in the Post Office; it was halved. I suggest to the House that we should think long and hard before we leave the Royal Mail subject to the restraints that go with the public sector.

Mr. Purchase: The Minister is right to say that I was not in this place then. However, I recall those events. Why does the Minister now talk about the management of this enterprise as though, at present, there is no proper management control? Yet from what we have heard, the Post Office is an immensely successful enterprise.

Mr. Sainsbury: The management are asking for commercial freedom. If we are serious about commercial freedom—I make this point to my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield as well, if he will kindly listen—we must realise that it is clear that only in the private sector can that freedom be found. For the Post Office to be in the private sector, the Government must reduce their stake in Royal Mail below 50 per cent. The Government believe that doing that will provide the best prospects for the future of Royal Mail. We believe that, without commercial freedom, there is a risk of long-term decline.

The Green Paper makes it absolutely clear that the legislation authorising any sale of shares in the Royal Mail would also establish a postal regulator and regulatory system which would be expressly designed to ensure the maintenance of the key public service elements. There would be, for example, an absolute requirement on the new company to deliver mail to every household in the country, six days a week, and to maintain a uniform tariff structure —my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield asked about this earlier—so that a letter sent from Westminster to Victoria would cost the public the same as one sent from Cornwall to the outer Hebrides. There will also be tariff control, with the Government confident that tariffs will continue to be reduced in real terms.

The Green Paper also makes it clear there will be additional obligations on the company to continue to provide free services for the blind, to provide redirection services and to offer recorded delivery, registered post and a full international service. If the consultation exercise persuades us that we should lengthen this list, we shall do so. In all these areas, the regulator will be empowered to ensure that the Royal Mail meets all its obligations to an ever higher standard.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: My right hon. Friend has outlined many social obligations which will be imposed on the Post Office and, no doubt, enforced through a regulator. Is not that Government interference? How does that lie with the strictly commercial criteria that the Government are outlining to the House? To my mind, the public sector, with commercial freedom, is where the Post Office should lie because of its substantial social obligation and responsibility.

Mr. Sainsbury: I make the same recommendation to my hon. Friend as I made to the hon. Member for Livingston—that he carefully reads the Green Paper and then considers the position of British Telecom. I hope that he supports its being in the private sector. The social obligations we are talking about in the Green Paper are those that are imposed on British Telecom.

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Sainsbury: I must make progress. I have been over-generous and I know that many hon. Members wish to speak.

I should also briefly mention Parcelforce. The Government have decided that, if they are to sell shares in the Royal Mail, it would be a rather pointless step to insist on separating out the parcels business while giving Royal Mail greater commercial freedom. The Royal Mail management has made it clear that its customers would wish it to offer a parcel service to complement its letter services. With appropriate safeguards to ensure fair competition, the Government are content for the two businesses to remain together.

The Green Paper also makes it clear that the Government continue to be committed to the development of greater competition in postal services. In particular, any

legislation following the Green Paper will allow the Government to fulfil their commitment to reduce the level of the monopoly closer to the price of a first class stamp.

The Green Paper also sets out a number of other areas in which the Government see scope for greater competition. The guiding principle will, however, continue to be that the Royal Mail must continue to be able to provide a universal service at a uniform tariff. Some degree of monopoly will therefore be necessary to ensure that. The Green Paper also covers a number of other issues of importance to the users of the Royal Mail. It makes clear, for example, that the traditional royal associations will remain and that VAT will not be charged on stamps in the future.

I congratulate the Opposition on choosing the Post Office for today's debate—despite, incidentally, their claim that no debate is needed because everyone agrees with them. The debate is well timed because it is absolutely essential that the way forward we finally choose for the Post Office commands public confidence. May I emphasise again that the Green Paper is a consultative document? We hope, therefore, that today's debate will help to focus on the rational arguments, the real points, that are discussed in the Green Paper and not on the absurd allegations that are propagated by the Opposition.

If the Opposition parties wish to put forward constructive comments—an unlikely contingency perhaps —on any of the options or have concerns about the safeguards we propose, let those points be made. Let us accept, however, that change is necessary. The debate is about how that can be best brought about.

I believe that the combination of our proposals for Post Office Counters and our preferred option for Royal Mail would provide an appropriate and exciting way forward for the future. It would give the Post Office's businesses the real commercial freedom that they need. It would provide opportunities for those directly involved with the future of Royal Mail to take a direct stake in the company—in many cases on special terms. It also would protect the public through a strong and independent regulatory structure, while offering scope for greater consumer choice both in post offices and in the letters market.

We believe that the customer has everything to gain from our policies and much to lose from the Opposition's policies. I commend the amendment to the House.

5.1 pm

Ms Kate Hoey (Vauxhall): I am pleased to have the opportunity to participate in this extremely important debate on an issue that concerns millions of people.

It is rather sad that the President of the Board of Trade is not here, particularly as it is quite clear that Post Office privatisation is on the right hon. Gentleman's personal agenda. I am sorry that he did not have the opportunity to hear the excellent speech made by my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), who put the argument against privatisation clearly and incisively and explained why Opposition Members and, given what the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) said, perhaps many Conservative Members want to keep the Post Office together in the public sector and stop its being privatised.

It is clear that the Government have no mandate to conduct even a debate on the proposed privatisation of the Post Office—there was no mention of such privatisation in their election manifesto. As my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston said, privatisation of the Post Office was a privatisation too far for the leader of privatisation, Mrs. Thatcher. It is strange that the President of the Board of Trade is pushing for a privatisation that, even at the height of privatisation, the then leader of the Conservative Government, Mrs. Thatcher, was not prepared to make.

The Minister has said that the Green Paper will be treated as a consultation document, but we already know what people think about the proposal. In March 1994, the first MORI poll found that 68 per cent. of people opposed privatisation and, as has already been noted, 53 per cent. of those polled were Conservative voters. The same poll discovered not just that people are opposed to privatisation, but that 81 per cent. of the public want the Post Office to be offered more commercial freedom while remaining in the public sector. The Opposition and 81 per cent. of the public are therefore in favour of the commercial freedom option offered in the Green Paper.

The consultation exercise will last just three months and during most of that time the House of Commons will not be sitting. I have not the slightest doubt, however, that the vast majority of responses received by the Minister will be opposed to privatisation. Will the Minister tell us what criteria the Government will use when making judgments during the consultation exercise? If between 90 and 99 per cent. of the public responses oppose privatisation and support giving the Post Office more commercial freedom, will the Minister give a commitment that that will be the end of the matter? As my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston has said, if we want commercial freedom, we can have it today. The two Front Bench teams could get together and, in agreement with the Liberal Democrats and all other parties, work out the rules to give that freedom to the Post Office.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: We must also consider what will happen to the Post Office during the privatisation process. It is asking for commercial freedom now and everyone except the Government, who insist on delaying matters for another 18 months to get unnecessary legislation through the House, agrees that it could be given commercial freedom. Does the hon. Lady agree that the Minister should consider the effects of the Government's policy?

Ms Hoey: I agree absolutely. The Government are holding back the country because they are holding the Post Office back from being able to compete internationally and on the European market. It is ludicrous that we have been waiting two years for the Green Paper, especially as it includes an option that all the Opposition parties can support. If today's debate does anything, I hope that it will show that there is cross-party support for keeping the Post Office in the public domain while offering it greater commercial freedom.

Why are the public so opposed to privatisation? It is not as though there has been a huge Labour party campaign to try to get people to oppose privatisation. We will launch such a campaign, but we already know that there is great support for retaining the Post Office in the public sector because the vast majority of people are quite happy with it. They know that it gives them a good service. They know that it is making a profit—little in this country makes a profit today—and that a large proportion of that profit is given back to the Government to be used for other

[Ms Hoey]

purposes. There is no widespread dissatisfaction with the service offered, which was not always the case in previous privatisations.

We all rely on an efficient, trustworthy Post Office. It is worth remembering that about 25 million households are visited by a postman or postwoman each day. That represents terrific contact between postal workers and the public. People care about the service. Such strength of feeling does not exist only in inner-city areas. It is particularly strong in rural areas, where for many people the arrival of the postman or postwoman on a bike or in a van is a real link with civilisation. I come from a rural area in Northern Ireland that is just the same today as it was in my youth. One of the key events of the day was the arrival of the postman—in those days there were no postwomen—because he did not bring just the hoped-for letters from relatives abroad and all sorts of other people, but the local paper. If the postman did not arrive, we did not get the local paper. The postman also brought messages and all manner of other things, which was probably not in his job specification but it was part of the social service that he provided. That still goes on to a greater or lesser extent in parts of the country and it would be a tragedy if it disappeared.

None of us has confidence in the Government's commitment to a nationwide letter and parcel service with daily delivery to every address in the country. The problem is that the people simply do not believe them, just as they did not believe what the Government said or the commitments that they gave previously.

There is no commitment not to transfer to an Americanised system in which people must go to the bottom of their high-rise block of flats or to the end of their lane to collect the mail. There is no reason for such a reduction in service, but that is what would happen if the Post Office were privatised.

The Government have made no commitment to a second delivery which, as it does not make a profit, is a service. It continues because it is a public service. It is one of the social commitments and extras that the Post Office has been able to provide. Only public ownership has prevented the Post Office from abolishing the second delivery.

Dr. Liam Fox (Woodspring): During Report stage of the Telecommunications Bill, the Opposition spokesman said that, after privatisation, people in rural areas would never be connected to the telephone system. Labour was wrong then—why should the hon. Lady be right now?

Ms Hoey: If the hon. Gentleman reads in *Hansard* tomorrow what my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston said, he will see that my hon. Friend answered that specific point, so I shall not go over it again.

A cross-subsidy amounting to about £30 million a year is provided to keep less viable post offices running. I shall not go into too much detail about other services such as the 180 post buses, which provide the only form of transport in some rural areas, as I am sure that others will want to mention them.

Mrs. Angela Browning (Tiverton): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms Hoey: No. Eighty per cent. of those post buses are already subsidised. If we lose that opportunity—

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Technology (Mr. Patrick McLoughlin) *rose—*

Ms Hoey: I suppose I had better give way. Are you in charge now?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am in charge.

Mr. McLoughlin: And the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Ms Hoey) should always remember that. Can the hon. Lady tell me a little more about the subsidy for rural services that she is talking about? For example, where does it come from?

Ms Hoey: On the whole, it comes from local authorities, but if there were no cross-subsidy there would be no opportunity to transfer extra money from one part of the Post Office to another.

Another matter that must be mentioned again is the revenue provided by the Post Office to provide the articles-for-the-blind service. I do not believe the commitment that has been given with regard to that service either. I do not believe that, once the Post Office is placed beyond democratic accountability to Parliament, such a service will be allowed to continue. The profit margin of the Post Office is usually about 5 per cent. of the gross turnover. If there is any change which results in the Post Office being taken out of the public service, what are considered as necessities for some people will be seen as extras by a private company and they will be dropped.

I know that this is an important day for some hon. Members from Northern Ireland and that, therefore, the attendance of hon. Members from Northern Ireland is not very high. Northern Ireland has a particular difficulty with its postal service because of the peculiar nature of the political situation there. I pay tribute to the dedication of the postal workers in Northern Ireland, who have continued to provide a service throughout the great difficulties of the security situation across the sectarian divide. They are a special part of the public service in Northern Ireland.

In terms of unemployment and the economic situation in Northern Ireland, any reduction in postal jobs would be absolutely terrible for the economic interests of that community. Belfast has the return letter section of the Post Office. At present, some 300 jobs are provided in that section. If the Post Office is put in the private sector, one of the first things that will happen is that the return letter section will get the chop. If it does not get the chop, people will certainly have to pay a large amount of money to get their letters back. That is another area that must be examined.

I mentioned earlier the way in which communities are linked to the postal service. When I first came to England as a student, my mother, at 4 o'clock on a Sunday afternoon—there were Sunday collections in those days; they then stopped but, fortunately, they have resumed—would post whatever they had for lunch that day, either a piece of chicken or perhaps some bacon, in a letter sealed in whatever way she thought best. It was delivered to me at 7 o'clock on Monday morning, not quite still warm but certainly fit to be eaten. I have had an affection for the Post Office ever since. The miracle of someone being able to put something in the post at 4 o'clock on Sunday afternoon that could be eaten in north London at 7 o'clock the next

morning is something of which we should be proud—*[Laughter.]* Hon. Members may laugh, but that is precisely the emotional attachment which people have for the Post Office and postal workers—*[Interruption.]* Some may say that it is irrational.

Tory Members are silly if they underestimate the feeling—it is almost love—that people have for the Post Office. There are many reasons why the Government will lose the next election, but if they go ahead with privatising the Post Office, that will certainly be one of them. They should not underestimate the power of the people on this issue. Thousands of people will be writing letters. The consultation exercise will give the Government one result. Today, I want to hear the Minister pledge that he will fulfil whatever the people decide on the issue.

5.17 pm

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): The problem with the speech of the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Ms Hoey) is that it conveyed, above everything else, total and utter complacency. The hon. Lady started by saying that people are happy with the Post Office. That is currently true. But the President of the Board of Trade is trying to secure change, reform and, in particular, new private investment to ensure that we have a better tomorrow—that we improve the situation, rather than let it deteriorate. If people realised what we identified in the Select Committee report, they would also realise that there are many serious threats to the happiness that they currently experience with the Post Office.

For the first time, there is a potential decline in the standard of service. One of the reasons for that is the level of investment on the one hand and competition on the other. To meet the increasing competition that the Post Office faces, not only from private sector companies in this country but from postal services in other countries, there must be more investment.

I do not think that a single person in this country or a single hon. Member believes that a Labour Government would be more generous in terms of public sector investment than anything that we have seen so far. Would a Labour Government seriously stop the external financing limit? Is Labour saying that if the Post Office is profitable, will not take money back into the Treasury? Labour never did that with any nationalised industry. Would it seriously do it now?

Of course, if Labour does do that it will face exactly the same problems as those faced by the management of the Post Office this very year. Managers cannot invest in post buses on the scale that they would like; they have had to cut their investment in postal vans and other equipment because the Treasury has taken more and more of the Post Office's profits. No matter what Government are in power, that is what the Treasury will always do. Perhaps the Labour Front-Bench spokesman would like to announce that the Opposition will scrap the external financing limit system and the Treasury will no longer take the money—

Mr. Jim Cousins (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): I am grateful for the opportunity that the hon. Gentleman has afforded me. On page 17, paragraph 93, of the Select Committee's evidence he speaks about a halfway house and urges his right hon. Friend the President to adopt it. Does the hon. Gentleman stand by his commitment to a halfway house, or has he abandoned it?

Dr. Hampson: Nothing on the record states that I backed a halfway house. If the hon. Gentleman reads the whole transcript, which he clearly has not done, he will see that I put to the President of the Board of Trade examples from across the world—from New Zealand to Sweden, from Canada to Holland and Germany. In all those countries the post offices are being steadily commercialised to the point of public limited company status, and then on to privatisation. I kept asking the President why our system cannot do likewise. I kept being told that it was because the Treasury would not allow it.

The Select Committee decided that if we do not go ahead and privatise the whole service, we should at least free it up—and that is one of the options in the Green Paper. Certainly a certain amount can be done to provide greater flexibility and to allow the service to retain a higher proportion of its profits. That, too, is in the Green Paper. Conceivably we could change some of the regimes that control joint ventures, but only up to a point.

In the end there are two strict disciplines. The first is that, even under Labour, no Government could allow a public corporation to go on borrowing money in the private markets regardless, because that will only add to the public sector borrowing requirement. So although we may allow the corporation more freedom in commercial decision taking, that fundamental discipline will remain. All the Treasury mandarins will insist that the Post Office cannot indiscriminately add to the PSBR.

Equally, the Post Office will never be given enough freedom in that way. Post Office managers have pointed out that they do not want a halfway house. They want to be certain, when they draw up their plans for investment and for raising the money for that investment, that they can take the decisions themselves. They do not want to have to return to the Treasury for its authorisation.

Of course the process can be improved. We referred to this in the Select Committee as the fishing licence syndrome. It took the best part of a year of argument between two Cabinet Ministers to ensure the freedom of the Post Office to sell fishing licences. I am delighted that the President of the Board of Trade won the battle with the Treasury, although I doubt whether that triumph will go into his obituary. But why on earth were Ministers arguing about it at all? There may be some liberalisation, but the Post Office would still have to get approval for certain projects. That takes time, and it is not the sort of commercial freedom that the management wants. Nor is it what is happening elsewhere in the world.

Clearly, the system has to change. I believe that hon. Members on both sides of the House agree—they certainly agreed in the Select Committee—that the nationalised framework cannot be maintained. Given the competition and the opportunities, it is just not viable.

Mr. Cousins *rose—*

Dr. Hampson: I have already given way to the hon. Gentleman, who I suspect will make a speech of his own.

A Labour Government in charge of a public corporation controlled by the Treasury might like it to have certain privileges that gave it an advantage over the private sector. That gives rise to another of my criticisms. The private sector will not be happy with the sort of deals in which a public corporation would want to get involved. The Post Office was prevented from buying an airline. It might be extremely sensible for it to acquire its own airline, but that

[Dr. Hampson]

would enable it to compete with other airlines for all sorts of business. The private sector companies would have something to say about a corporation, backed by taxpayers' money and Government guarantees, behaving in that way.

The Post Office rightly wants to go into bulk-mail deals with printing companies—it might even want to buy one, with considerable knock-on effects.

In theory, such deals are excellent, but they could go wrong, and they would give the Post Office a privileged position vis-à-vis its competitors. They could also go seriously wrong, and if the state picked up the financial pieces, that would only underline a measure of protection that the private sector does not enjoy. For all those reasons a halfway house is not acceptable.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: Is the hon. Gentleman seriously suggesting that if a privatised Post Office got into financial difficulties a Government could walk away from it and not pick up the pieces? Does he accept that private companies might regard it as unfair that a privatised corporation continued to have the protection of a publicly guaranteed monopoly? Is there not some unfairness in both solutions?

Dr. Hampson: The truth is that this House must produce the legislation, which must contain certain fundamental reassurances for the British public. We all accept that the Post Office must have social responsibilities. In the case of British Telecom, the privatisation Bill included certain terms and conditions—BT has to maintain rural services and loss-making rural phone boxes. Similarly, in this case we shall require a universal service to all parts of the country, however remote, and at a standard price.

Secondly, there will have to be a regulator. We are learning as we go on about the regulatory process, and the Post Office regulator will have to be effective and tough.

Thirdly, whatever Opposition Members may say, the Government are not privatising the Post Office: this is a half-privatisation. There will still be the old links, and all the concerns about the connections between the Royal Mail, the Post Office network and the post offices in our high streets are misguided. They will be preserved. Moreover, for the first time the work force will have a say. I should like at least 10 per cent. of the business to go to them, thus involving them in the business and providing yet another safeguard for the social responsibilities of the service.

To answer the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) further, I am optimistic about the growth of this enormous £4 billion enterprise. It has the capacity to raise huge sums on the financial markets. I see no reason why a privatised Post Office should be any less of a success story than BT or British Airways. Why do people spend all their time dreaming up scare stories? All the worst imaginable options are being put to the British people in order to frighten them. The trouble is that the Labour party has such a narrow vision, its policies are so much determined by its wish to stay in the past, and it is so influenced by the unions' support that it will not look beyond the way in which things have always worked.

There is a new world of opportunity out there, ready to be seized. Why cannot the corporation be successful worldwide? We have a chance now to increase its international presence and to make a great success of it. We have an opportunity to improve the quality of the service that we give to our domestic customers as a result of the growth and success that that private operation will enjoy, especially on the international scene, and we shall have bold and imaginative developments, such as share ownership for the work force. There will be improvement internationally, and improved customer provision and service throughout the country—in rural districts as well as towns.

We can make that positive achievement if we pursue the option in the Green Paper—a balanced partnership between the public in the form of the Government, the public and the work force as shareholders and the management of the corporation. I believe that the management want to press ahead with that option, but people do not trust the Government and the Treasury—and for heaven's sake, given what Opposition Members say, day in and day out, why should they?

For heaven's sake, let us seize the opportunities. This will be a great success story for the Post Office, for the Royal Mail and for its work force.

5.30 pm

Ms Judith Church (Dagenham): I thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for allowing me to make my maiden speech in this important debate, when so many hon. Members wish to speak.

First, I pay tribute to my predecessor, Bryan Gould, who served the people of Dagenham—and, before that, the people of Southampton, Test—loyally and energetically. Bryan had a distinguished political career, spanning two decades, during which he worked on trade and industry, economic and environmental matters. I know that he will be missed by many people in the House and in Dagenham, and I am sure that the House will join me in wishing him well in his future career.

My other predecessor, John Parker, was Dagenham's first Member of Parliament, a Member for 48 years and Father of the House. Some Members here today will remember him for his work as chair of the British-Yugoslavian Parliamentary Group. I can imagine his sadness, had he been alive today, at the tragedy that has unfolded in that country.

I am proud to be the third Member of Parliament to represent Dagenham. Built in the 1920s and 1930s, it has a long-established and close community, with strong traditions of public service. Many of its local councillors have served for 30 or 40 years. It is an area of great opportunity, which is crying out for investment, and rejuvenation of its housing and regeneration of its industry.

Dagenham has the largest manufacturing work force in London, with successful companies at the leading edge of technology, such as the Ford Motor Company, GPT Telephone Cables and Rhone Poulenc Rorer. Those companies have not succeeded through paying low wages and having poor working conditions and low health and safety standards. I know that because, before coming to the House, I worked in industry, including seven years as one of Her Majesty's inspectors of factories.

There I worked with both sides of industry to improve workplace standards. That experience proved to me that only those companies, large and small, that invest in people by providing high-quality training and good working conditions can compete and win in today's global markets.

I believe that national economic success goes hand in hand with the provision of high-quality local services. Strong economies invest in modern, vibrant services—schools, housing, transport systems—that enrich and improve the lives of their citizens.

The people of Dagenham rely on their local postal service, run in the public interest for the benefit of all. Now the Government want to go ahead with the maddest, saddest privatisation of all, that of the Post Office—mad because our Post Office is one of the most successful postal businesses in the world, sad because the existence of an efficient national postal service is the hallmark of a modern economy.

However, the Government cannot find any new test of efficiency. They cannot identify any fundamental failings. The Post Office is not a creaking system in need of overhaul; far from it. The Post Office is efficient and competitive, a tribute to public enterprise. The Government cannot bear that enterprise and innovation to be in the public sector.

Let me pause for moment, and examine what the President of the Board of Trade has to say in his Green Paper on the future of postal services:

"The Post Office has for centuries made a vital contribution to our national life."

Who could argue with that?

"The Post Office is one of the nation's unifying forces".

Who could argue with that?

"The Government is committed to the maintenance of these services."

That is where the argument breaks down.

The Government will not do that by modernising the Post Office. They will do it by destroying it, by pushing yet another of our country's great national assets away from our people and towards pin-striped predators—or at least, they will try.

People know what privatisation means—a two-tier postal service where the standard provision becomes so poor that it is laughable.

The President of the Board of Trade could have pledged today, had he been here, to back the Post Office in its drive to compete and sell in Europe, but he will not unless it is removed from the public sector. He could have pledged to protect the consumer from dramatic price increases, but he will not, and, as in the case of water prices after privatisation, which have increased by 67 per cent., the cost of the first class post will increase in leaps and bounds. People are already asking, "Which will come first, the 50p first class stamp or a general election that will save us from that fate?"

The Government will try privatising the Post Office, which is so unpopular among their supporters, let alone people throughout the country, but trying is all that the President of the Board of Trade will be able to do. It is all that he has done since he first set up the review of the Post Office's future two years ago this month. It is not the 30-page Green Paper that has taken the time; it has been the politics of it.

The President of the Board of Trade knew that he could not even begin to get privatisation through without a great deal of persuasion, not of the Opposition, not even of the country, but of his own colleagues. So, aided and abetted by senior Post Office managers, who, like the rest of the privatised sector, can smell the money they can make through that privatisation, the President thinks that it has got to the point where it might—it just might—get through its stages in the House and elsewhere.

It is not a genuinely consultative Green Paper, putting forward arguments objectively. The best option for the Post Office, and for Britain, as we have heard today from my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook)—greater commercial freedom while keeping the Post Office owned by and for the whole country—is simply dismissed out of hand. The Treasury "will not wear it".

Full privatisation is no good either, because the Government

"recognise"

that

"many people would prefer a closer link between the Government and Royal Mail than that option would provide."

In plain English, the Government recognise that many people want to keep the Post Office just as it is, operating for everyone in the country, on behalf of everyone in the country.

We are therefore left with a fudged and bungled operation—partial privatisation, with the Government keeping 49 per cent. of the equity. Why? Because that is another way of trying to smuggle this astoundingly ill-judged privatisation past the people.

The Government will not succeed, because, when people start to realise just what the Government are planning to do to their Post Office, there will be a large increase in the Post Office's business. That has already happened, as constituents in their thousands, not only in rural areas but in inner cities and suburbs, write to tell Members of Parliament that they do not want their post office, a vital part of the daily life of most people in the country, to be privatised. That is when Conservative Members will suddenly realise that the Green Paper on the future of postal services is something else—a Green Paper on the future of their jobs.

Labour's policy on the future of the Post Office is right, because it is the policy of the people who use the Post Office. They want a good service, and they are getting that now. They want a nationwide price, a national network of post offices and nationwide delivery to every address in the country, not just to those from which the private sector can make the most money.

There is a case for positive change in the Post Office. The Post Office must constantly change to remain the world's best. It must be given the commercial freedom that its management seeks, with the full support of its work force, sub-postmasters and sub-postmistresses and its customers. People now know what privatisation means—big salaries for a few at the top and big prices for the customers. That is what happened with electricity, gas and water. We will not let it happen to our Post Office.

5.40 pm

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): It is a great pleasure to follow the usual courtesies and congratulate the hon. Member for Dagenham (Ms Church) on her speech. I thank her on behalf of the whole House for her kind words about her predecessor Bryan Gould, who was and is held in enormous respect in the House, not just because he was a rebel—there is no harm in being a rebel occasionally—but because he was a thinking and a principled one. We wish him every success and enjoyment in New Zealand.

[Mr. Edward Leigh]

I also congratulate the hon. Lady on the competence with which she delivered her speech, which was a classic of its kind. She spoke with great knowledge and movingly about her constituency and addressed the arguments extremely well, although we did not agree with all of them. We wish her well. She said that her predecessor but one became Father of the House. I am sure that we will continue to listen to her speeches until perhaps she becomes Mother of the House some time in the next century.

There are two debates about the Post Office—the real debate and the political debate. The real debate about the nature of the ownership of Royal Mail and the degree of commercial freedom that it should have has already been determined not by politicians, not by the House, but by domestic market pressures, and especially by increasingly cut-throat international competition.

The political debate has yet to be determined, and either side could win it in the coming year, although I suspect that the row over any privatisation will soon settle down. The dust will soon settle as it has settled over every privatisation. I want to deal with the political debate because that is where the opportunities and discretions still lie for the Government. I should like to make a few suggestions to ease their path. Perhaps I should first address the real debate.

I was given responsibility for the Post Office as long ago as the spring of 1991. I immediately began a series of discussions with the Post Office and with Sir Bryan Nicholson, the then chairman of the Post Office board. I know that I shall be accused of this, so I freely admit to starting with the view—or, from the point of view of some people, a prejudice—that, in a commercial situation, private companies are better equipped to create commercial opportunities. I accept that I suffer from that view or prejudice, but any objective observer would conclude—certainly all those who advised me soon came to the view—that politics alone has denied the Royal Mail a role in the private sector to which it is well suited.

When I took responsibility for the organisation, I felt that we had dilly-dallied for too long, and that we should grasp the nettle that politics had prevented us from grasping for about 13 years. I set the ball rolling, and it has been rolling for a long time. But the end is in sight, and the Government have said that their preferred option is privatisation. That is in respect of the Royal Mail, but the situation with Post Office Counters is a little different. Just as the overall debate is confused between politics and the real world, so this debate is also confused between Royal Mail and Post Office Counters, which, in effect, are completely different businesses.

Royal Mail is now essentially a pure business operation overwhelmingly concerned with carrying letters from business to business and from business to people. The business of carrying letters from people to people is a small part of the total turnover. Royal Mail is increasingly subject to international competition. The vision of Rowland Hill, an adviser to a former postmaster general, of a uniform tariff and service worked well in a primitive age of bad roads. In strictly commercial terms, it probably does not make much sense, but I quickly add that we do not live in a strictly commercial age, thank God.

In this strictly commercial set-up, there is an enormous social dimension, represented by the daily walk of the postman up the garden path. That is the last daily delivery left. In many ways, the postman seems the last relic of a bygone age. I do not see anything wrong with relics or tradition. It would be an act of consummate vandalism and political madness by the Government to tamper with that tradition of the daily walk up the garden path. Let us keep our uniformed postman. Let him roll on undisturbed into the next millennium, but in the process please let us preserve some semblance of reality.

For years, Post Office management have waged with the Government a forlorn battle to deliver mail "once over the ground". Whoever owns the Post Office, that has to happen. It is important that it happens once a day, and that could and should be guaranteed.

The public view the Post Office largely through the wrong end of a telescope, at the postman delivering his letters. The commercial reality is of increasingly cut-throat international business in which other post offices, particularly those of Denmark, Holland—about which we have heard—and Germany, freed of Government ties, would increasingly cream-skim profitable bulk business from our Post Office.

The counters business is even more of an irony. It is largely a shop window for Government services, mainly social security, but 19,000 of those 20,000 shop windows are privately run, albeit under ludicrously severe Government control and restriction on what they can and cannot sell. In short, things are in a mess, contrary to the rosy view that is often painted of the Post Office. The public view of a successful, friendly organisation is in reality under increasing commercial threat to its viability, internationally to Royal Mail and domestically—a point that has not so far been stressed in the debate—to Post Office Counters.

If nothing is done, if we take the easy way out politically—I fully accept that it would be the easy way politically: it is the route for which Labour has opted—the Post Office is doomed to gradual decline. If we are to save the Post Office, we must have the intellectual honesty and vigour to propose solutions that will work. For instance, we must not say that somehow the public can own an organisation but not control it and be responsible for its borrowing.

The case against so-called commercial freedom in the public sector was made brilliantly by my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) and by the Minister of State. It is set out strongly in chapter 5, paragraph 5, of the Green Paper. Labour speakers have signally failed to answer the points set out there.

The Green Paper states that the controls that the Government levy on the Post Office

"reflect the fact that the risks assumed by nationalised industries are ultimately underwritten by the taxpayer. In particular, Government controls over borrowing by public corporations (all of which, by definition, fall within the public sector borrowing requirement (PSBR)) provide a discipline over all funds which are raised with the backing of the taxpayer and for which the Government is ultimately accountable. Without such controls, nationalised industries would have a clear advantage over commercial rivals".

Labour Members have not answered, and cannot answer, the overwhelming case against so-called commercial freedom in the public sector. It is a red herring and a canard, and simply does not work. In the real world,

one must make a choice between a nationalised industry that one owns and ultimately controls, and a privatised industry.

Mr. Cousins *rose—*

Mr. Leigh: The Opposition spokesman is pregnant with a question, so I give way to him with some pleasure. I hope that he will answer that point.

Mr. Cousins: Does the hon. Gentleman think that the markets will believe that a company in which the Government will have a 49 per cent. shareholding could ever go bankrupt?

Mr. Leigh: The hon. Gentleman fails to understand the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson). Had he listened, he would have heard my hon. Friend talk about all the joint ventures that the Post Office wishes to undertake—for example, buying a printing business.

Is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that joint ventures, purchases and risks will ultimately be underwritten by the Government? That is what would happen if we retained public sector control of a business but allowed complete commercial freedom.

Mr. Cousins: The most significant example offered by the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) was that of the airline venture. I remind the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh), who was the Minister who stopped it, that the venture involved the Post Office taking a 49 per cent. share. Is he really saying today that, as a Minister, he vetoed a 49 per cent. share because the business was still in the public sector, but that the whole case of the Green Paper, which depends on a 49 per cent. share, is something quite different?

Mr. Leigh: If I did not allow something that the Post Office wanted to do, it must have been under Treasury instructions.

I commend the Government's balanced package in the Green Paper, which deals with the two fundamental problems facing the Post Office. By selling 51 per cent. of Royal Mail, the new company will become a huge asset to Great Britain plc. It will be able to defend itself against international predators, just as British Telecom and British Gas have done. They have become powerful players in the new global marketplace.

I have always argued that the public must notice no difference. With the help of the regulator, I hope that they will not. Incidentally, what happened to my idea of calling the regulator the "Postmaster-General"? It has obviously sunk without trace since I left the Department. We should resurrect some of the great old titles. Why call the regulating body something as dreary and boring as Ofpost, or whatever?

As a sort of outrider for the Government, I believe that a 100 per cent. sale would make more commercial sense. Why retain 49 per cent. if, as is said in the Green Paper, the Government will not intervene in the company? What is the logic in that, apart from politics? *[Interruption.]* I accept that politics is important.

The Green Paper states in chapter 5, paragraph 21, that the Government

"would not expect to vote its shareholdings on resolutions moved at General Meetings of the company although it would retain the power to do so."

When I was responsible for British Telecom, in which the Government were a major shareholder, I was under strict instructions from my civil servants not to try to have any direct influence in the company. What is the point of retaining 49 per cent. if we do not make use of it? I apologise for this slightly naughty interlude, but I am sure that my hon. Friends on the Treasury Bench will forgive me.

The public are not really interested in whether the Government own 49 or 51 per cent.; they are interested in the future of the postman, and in service delivery. Why should not the postman become, in time, a real community deliverer, especially in rural areas? In particular, elderly people would welcome someone calling at their doors every day. There is a vast network of people—the postmen—ready and able to visit every door every day. Why are we just using them mainly to post one lonely item of junk mail through a letter box? Why are we not fully using the service that could be provided by the daily deliverer?

Too many people in society are lonely and remote. The postman's job is often low-paid, mechanical and boring. Would he not welcome an upgrading of his role to something more personal and responsible? There is no limit to the services that he could provide—such as milk, newspapers, groceries and personal contact. There is no limit to what elderly or rural people might conveniently receive from a daily community deliverer. We should not allow one of the last of the personal daily services to wither on the vine like so many others. We should use the new commercial opportunity to provide a greater public service.

It has been a titanic struggle to persuade the Treasury to allow sub-post offices to sell a wider range of commercial services. I congratulate the Minister on winning that struggle. However, I suspect that it has happened only because the Treasury reached the sensible view that Royal Mail privatisation would not otherwise be deliverable. It is sensible to keep the headquarters operation in the public sector to reassure the public. However, it actually means very little, as increasingly it would become a clearing house for Government business.

My right hon. Friend has won his battle to allow post offices to pay pensions over the counter. As we know, not to do so would be political madness. I welcome the £130 million-worth of automation announced in the Green Paper. That will help to reduce fraud, and to make the operation more efficient. However, I suspect that, with encouragement and an ever wider use of bank accounts, more and more pensioners will choose not to draw their pensions at local sub-post offices. Therefore, diversifying the business is not only good sense from the Government's point of view: it is essential for survival.

I am disappointed with what the Government say in chapter 4 about the commercial activities in which sub-post offices will be allowed to engage. It is full of mealy-mouthed phrases and I detect the dead hand of the Treasury. It says, for example:

"Any displacement of private sector activity would in these circumstances be voluntary . . . the proposed activity would help create a new market for services which had previously not been available to the public . . . the entry of Post Office Counters is likely to lead to significant growth of existing markets . . . Post Office Counters is unlikely to have a significant impact on existing private sector companies".

What do those phrases mean? Do we detect the hand of the Treasury in seeking to tie down sub-post offices in what they can or cannot do? I note that my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary is now on the Front Bench. I assure Opposition Members that sub-post offices are threatened

[Mr. Leigh]

not by the privatisation of Royal Mail, but by the diminution in their services as more and more people take their benefits through the post. The only way to save them is to give them greater and greater commercial freedom. The mealy-mouthed phrases that I have quoted will not help. Sub-post offices must be given full commercial freedom to deliver services if the essential network throughout the countryside is to be retained.

Overall, the Government have produced a package that is probably the only conceivable one. It could have been identified within months—certainly I and those working with me did so. However, the very length of time that the Government have taken has been a shrewd political move. I am sure that my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade, whom I admire immensely, decided to play it long and allow public and political opinion to mature.

Above all, he has given the senior Post Office management the confidence, which they understandably lacked at first, to insist both explicitly on full commercial freedom and implicitly on privatisation. Even the very Post Office brief provided for our debate mentions the fact that the Germans and the Dutch are moving towards privatisation. That is the real debate among socialist and Christian Democrat Governments around the world. They know that there is no choice. Only the British Labour party has a black hole in which all creative ideas are sunk, never to return until they have been proven by us.

The Opposition are wedded to a concept which, in their heart of hearts, they know simply will not and cannot work. We need only consider the unlikely event of a Labour Government owning the Post Office, yet tamely accepting a massive increase in Post Office borrowing to innovate, or a Post Office determined to implement unpopular decisions such as "once over the ground".

What is Labour's policy on "once over the ground"? Would it tamely allow a Post Office that it controlled, albeit with so-called commercial freedom, to implement a policy that was fundamentally unpopular with its constituents? Of course not.

One has to reach the conclusion that this so-called commercial freedom in the public sector is a political gimmick—no more, no less. I understand, however, that, if elected, a Labour Government would buy back control of Royal Mail. That leads me from the real debate to the political debate. We must ensure that the public appreciate what a disaster that would be. The key lies in the effectiveness of the regulator or the postmaster-general in ensuring a peaceful transition to private ownership, but it depends equally on the nature of the sale.

I am delighted that Post Office workers are to receive 10 per cent. of the 49 per cent. sold. It should give them a stake in the business. I should like that stake to be bigger, but I understand that stock exchange rules forbid the work force from receiving more than 10 per cent. of the shares.

I understand from the Library that rule 4.8 of "The Admission of Securities to Listing", usually known as the Yellow Book of the stock exchange, states:

"preferential allocation is allowed in respect of the securities not placed firm, normally only to existing shareholders, directors, employees and past employees of the issuer of its subsidiary undertakings, up to a maximum of 10 per cent. in aggregate of the value at the offer price of the securities not placed firm."

That makes no sense, but it is a stock exchange rule. The only point we need to understand is that we can sell off only 10 per cent.

I have been doing some research, and I understand that, after incorporation but before flotation, stock exchange rules do not apply. I hope that the Economic Secretary or the Under-Secretary of State will clarify that. There are separate rules of public sector issuers set out in chapter 22 of the Yellow Book, which state that such issues "need not comply" with the provisions of chapter 4.

The Library contacted the stock exchange and informed me:

"The Exchange, however, was at pains to stress that were the Post Office to be privatised it would obviously be a very special issue and special conditions would probably apply.".

My contention is that it would be possible to sell a greater share of the 49 per cent. to Post Office workers. The possibility of selling a large part of the business to the work force is an attractive one. The greater their stake, the less enthusiastic the workers will be about a Labour Government getting their sticky and impecunious fingers on the business in which they themselves have a large stake.

What the Labour party will assume to be a popular policy of buying back a business could well rebound on them, even if Post Office workers have only 10 per cent. of the business. If I am right, it might be possible to sell them more than 10 per cent. of the business.

We could go still further. We should commit ourselves in our manifesto to introducing legislation to sell a further tranche of shares to Post Office workers so that Post Office workers will know that, if a Conservative Government are elected, they will have the opportunity of buying more shares at a preferential rate, but that if a Labour Government are elected, they will lose that right altogether.

Of course, we could sell the shares—I am doing further research on it—on the basis that they are paid dividends like anybody else, but the shares can be sold only into the work force pool, ensuring that the work force always retain a powerful and profitable input into the business. All that would be on top of what would be a popular sale to the public, extending opportunity and ownership in the way that we know so well.

In conclusion, we can produce a popular package not only doing what is right for the business, but convincing the work force and the public alike that we can create a dynamic business for the future in which sub-post offices, particularly in rural areas, sustaining village shops and providing an essential community service, will be given a new lease of life, in which postmen can acquire a profitable stake in their own business and be given opportunities for extra and rewarding work and in which the public will have confidence that a great British company is fighting for Britain abroad and at home, delivering the traditional service that we all value.

6.3 pm

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): I join the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) in congratulating the hon. Member for Dagenham (Ms Church) on her excellent maiden speech. It demonstrated her confidence as a new Member and her knowledge of her own constituency and its industries. I am sure that we shall hear a great deal more about that in her time here.

We all appreciated the hon. Lady's remarks about Bryan Gould, who had friends across the House, was well liked

by us all and will be missed. I hope that the hon. Lady will not take it personally if I say that the only reason why I wish he were here today instead of her is that he might have been able to tell us exactly what happened to the Post Office in New Zealand as a result of the ideas that the Government are bringing into play. I am sure that we shall hear a great deal more from the hon. Lady and we look forward to that.

This is not an early debate—it is extremely late. It is more than two years since the Post Office started its campaign of pressure for greater commercial freedom. As the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Ms Hoey) said, the Government have been holding the Post Office back. It is extraordinary to hear passionate speeches from Government Back Benchers about the enormous need to enable the Post Office to respond to competition when it could have been doing so a long time ago were it not for incompetent and dithering Ministers who even now have not been able to produce a clear-cut, comprehensive or intellectually coherent set of proposals.

The Green Paper is confused and contradictory. All sides accept that the status quo is not an option and nobody wishes to defend it, but how do we deliver greater commercial freedom and maintain a high standard of public service? In reality, there is no disagreement about that either: the argument is about how to get there. It is absurd for Conservative Members to argue the difficulty and then to suggest that the only possible solution is the one produced by the Government. On 1 February the President of the Board of Trade told the Select Committee that this was an extremely complex and difficult issue; it has not suddenly become easy and it would be foolish for Conservative Back Benchers to pretend that it has.

The constraints currently operating in the Post Office have been and are Government imposed; they do not come from anywhere else. The Government appear to be saying, "Because we have imposed a set of unacceptable, inflexible restraints on the Post Office, we must privatise it because we lack the imagination to change the rules to meet the needs of the Post Office."

The Government use the Dutch post office, or at least the competition from Holland, as a prime source of authority for their argument. We are told that the Post Office must be freed to respond to competition, especially from the Dutch. And so it must, but the competition is coming from a Dutch post office which is currently operating—and has been for 25 years—with exactly the kind of commercial freedom that is proposed and rejected in option one of the Government's Green Paper. It is true that the Dutch Government are planning to sell shares in their post office—but only 30 to 40 per cent. of them. The Dutch have no difficulty in grasping the distinction between 49 per cent. and 51 per cent. Clearly, a Dutch coalition Government—that is what they usually have in Holland—do not have the ideological hang-ups of an intellectually split British Conservative Government.

The issue appears to have become a football for leadership contenders who need to express their right-wing credentials in public, in a sense flirtatiously. They need to act like political tarts to see how much support they can get to secure their political future at the expense of the real needs of the Post Office, which requires a more disciplined and intellectual approach. The Government are saying, "We have tied our own hands and now we cannot do anything because our hands are tied." They have adopted an absurd position. In the meantime, during the past two years they have been messing about with the Post Office in an unhelpful and fruitless way.

Two years ago, the President of the Board of Trade came to the Dispatch Box to tell us how essential it was to sell off Parcelforce as a separate entity. I have opposed that throughout. I believe that it has been an absolute disaster for the consumer and has achieved nothing in improved delivery of service. However, I welcome the fact that the Government have acknowledged the error of their ways and accepted the case for bringing letters and parcels back together. The argument also reinforces the fact that parcels and counters are not separate and distinct, as Conservative Back Benchers are arguing.

I will illustrate that with an anecdotal experience of my own. I complained to my local postie that, not being home much of the time, I was fed up with being told that my bound copies of *Hansard* were available for collection at a parcels office six miles away. He told me that he was not allowed to leave parcels if I was not home. I do not want to get that postie into trouble, but I have come to an arrangement with him. He said that he could leave parcels for me at the local post office 200 yards up the road. I was expecting a parcel of books—not *Hansard*—that I wanted to read as a matter of urgency, so I told the postie that I would appreciate it if he would do that. In fact, however, I did not collect the books for some days after they were delivered and when I asked at the post office for the parcel the lady behind the counter turned to her colleague and said, "Gladys, what do we charge for storage?" I hasten to stress that it was a joke, but the serious point behind it is that Post Office Counters was essentially saying, "The parcels service is nothing to do with us; we do not see parcels business as part of our job, because we are not paid for it." My concern about the separation of Post Office companies into different ownership is that traditional co-operation will disappear.

The assertion that there is no case for keeping counter business and the Royal Mail together should not readily be accepted, and it is not convincingly argued in the Green Paper. It was included as a political expedient, in the hope of buying off threatened Conservative Back-Bench rebels. I say to them—I am sorry that the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) is not in his place—that they had better consult. They may return from the summer recess with a rather less sanguine view of the Government's case.

As to the Royal Mail proposals, the President of the Board of Trade has argued—and specifically did so to me in his evidence to the Select Committee—that giving the Post Office commercial freedom is unfair to private sector companies. I have consistently argued that, by the same token, giving a private company the protection of a monopoly will also be unfair and companies will complain about it. There is no simple solution to that dilemma, as the Government suggest. I can imagine people saying, "We want the Post Office monopoly removed to give us a level playing field." We all know that the consequence of removing the Post Office monopoly will be that a universal service to every household, every day, will collapse. That is a dangerous precedent.

The Government say that Post Office borrowing must be considered part of the public sector borrowing requirement. That is not the case with the Dutch or French Governments, so there is no reason why it should be with the British Government. It was never the case in all the

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decades when the Government were a major shareholder in British Petroleum. The Government may argue that BP was different because it was an international company dealing in commodities.

Mr. Cousins: There was British Nuclear Fuels Ltd.

Mr. Bruce: There are many examples—the BBC was also mentioned. The Government are able to make a distinction when it suits them.

The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) informally told me that the PSBR and Treasury rules are not a science but an art meant to serve the needs of the Government and the public. The Government are using them as an ideological blunt instrument, which is not relevant to current needs.

Comparisons were made with BT, but its privatisation came at a time of dramatic technological change, which allowed BT to provide cross-subsidy services and to generate enormous profits. That gave the impression of a windfall benefit which would have occurred in any case. I am not saying that BT's privatisation did not bring benefits, but it is not a valid comparison.

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: Supposing that the hon. Gentleman's recommendations were accepted, the Post Office taken out of the PSBR and the external financing limit reformed in the way that he suggests, what would be the effect on the gilts market and the Government's ability to raise capital there?

Mr. Bruce: The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that it would not be much different from the Government having 49 per cent. of the Post Office—as a previous exchange demonstrated. It is not possible for the Government to walk away from the Post Office in any case. They can say that the Post Office is entitled to raise private money but that the Government will not underwrite risk capital. It mystifies me that right-wing Members who claim to be radical have so little imagination. It is possible to find different options and solutions to meet different needs. Difficulties are being manufactured to support an ideological case rather than because there exist cast-iron, rigid, inoperable or unchangeable rules.

I said that the separation of the Royal Mail and Post Office Counters would be artificial. In the long run, it is likely to prove unsustainable. It was suggested to me by someone inside the Post Office that separation is a car park solution—a buy-off while things are sorted out, but not a permanent solution. Everybody acknowledges that POC needs investment as well as freedom to develop additional services. The Green Paper does not make clear where that money is to come from, but only states that the Government recognise the need for urgent modernisation and investment in computer equipment. It identifies a cost of £140 million, which it is hoped will come from the private sector.

If that money is to come from the private sector, is that not privatisation by the back door? It appears that services are being kept in the public sector, but so much of the money would be raised from the private sector that the operation would effectively be privatised. In response to the intervention of the hon. Member for Surrey, East (Mr. Ainsworth), if it is all right for Post Office Counters to raise £140 million on the private market, what is the difference between that and the Royal Mail? The Government contradict themselves at every twist and turn.

Mr. Cousins: The Post Office has accumulated £1 billion of public sector funds as a result of its commercial successes over the past 10 or 12 years. If it were privatised, there would be nothing to stop it switching out of those public sector funds into other kinds of investment. That would also affect Government finances.

Mr. Bruce: There would be an immediate loss of access to revenue, plus a continuing loss of some of the dividend that might otherwise be paid—although the Government are shrewd enough to realise the need to maintain access to the dividend.

I want to press the Government harder on what is meant by retaining the right to determine for Post Office Counters what is fair competition. The hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) was right to make reference to a lot of mealy-mouthed words that need explaining. There is a danger that the counters operation is being given the illusion of freedom but that that will turn to disappointment because the Government have decided that they will not allow the counters to develop certain operations. I am a little more cynical than the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle. Given the experience of recent years, it may be that a rich backer of the Conservative party will say, "I don't like those services being developed by Post Office Counters—and if you will not use your powers to block them, I will cease making donations to the Conservative party."

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Anthony Nelson) *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Bruce: The Economic Secretary snorts. He knows perfectly well that is the way that political favours have been bought in recent years. The idea that the Government back free enterprise, competition and markets is not one that has ever impressed me. I believe that they are buyable by the highest bidder. Some successes were at the expense of other companies. Reference was made to British Airways. It may be a successful and competitive airline, but it has achieved that by destroying every British-based competitor along the way, using all sorts of dubious methods. The Government regard that as free and fair competition, but I do not.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Bruce: Not on that point. [Hon. Members: "Oh."] I have raised it many times before in the House and my views are well known. Lord King and Colin Marshall are tired of hearing them.

How will the Post Office network develop in future? What will be the future role of Crown offices? They currently number 750, but that figure is rapidly reducing. I represent the largest constituency in Scotland and the fastest-growing constituency in Britain; yet it has no Crown offices. When I protested about the closure of Crown offices, the Post Office said, "We will improve the service by offering them to private operators." That happened in the short run, but I know from hon. Members representing other constituencies that that is not always the case.

I have then asked the Post Office what the role of Crown offices is. If there is no difference, or the service is even better, why is it keeping any of them? I have never had a clear answer to that question. We are entitled to know. I suspect that the reason is that the Post Office needs enough of those branches in its network to know how they operate, to be able to train and to provide the management back-up. So I worry what will happen when those offices change hands in future, and do not go to people who have been trained within the Post Office system and have the knowledge and understanding of how they work. What will the Post Office do then?

In my constituency I have been supporting a campaign to open a new post office, at Burghmuir drive in Inverurie.

Mr. Cousins: What is your majority?

Mr. Bruce: My majority is nearly as large as the number of consumers who would use that post office.

I wish to make a serious point. In that instance a private individual, a Mr. Alex Black, is saying, "I wish to open a post office and a pharmacy in a shop unit and in both cases I have to go to some other organisation to get a licence, which is currently being denied." Mr. Black has enormous support from all the residents in the area, and there are plans for building hundreds more houses nearby.

Interestingly, the Crown office that was privatised two years ago is the principal objector to Mr. Black's giving that extra service, which the community wants, and the Post Office is backing the previous Crown office against the new operator. If the network is to be protected, we ought to see new post offices being opened and not just existing offices being closed, especially where there is population growth. Although I represent the fastest growing constituency in the country I have seen only one new post office open in 11 years, but I have seen several closed and many more cut from being full offices to operating community hours. We want to achieve a balance, and we need answers both from Post Office management and from Ministers on how the position is likely to develop.

The Green Paper refers to VAT, but no one has mentioned it in the debate so far. I am not at all happy with what the Government say about VAT in the Green Paper, which is:

"the Government is satisfied that none of the options it is considering for Royal Mail and Parcelforce would mean imposition of VAT".

Mr. Cousins: On letters.

Mr. Bruce: Yes, on letters.

I am not satisfied just because the Government are satisfied. After all, the Government were satisfied that they were in the right on the transfer of undertakings directive, and after 11 years they turned out to be substantially in the wrong. That is costing the taxpayer a great deal of money even now. I ask the Minister to undertake to obtain during the consultation exercise a clear opinion from the European Commission on what the position will be—not what the Government think, but what the Commission thinks. That is a major factor, and if the Government have got it wrong that could push up the price of a first-class letter to nearly 30p. We are entitled to an answer to that question.

I asked the Minister of State earlier about Sunday collections, but I did not receive a reassuring response. The Minister looked surprised that anyone should mention Sunday collections, and implied that no guarantee was required. As a member of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry, I remind the Under-Secretary of State that we campaigned ceaselessly on that matter for several years. As hon. Members might expect, I pay tribute to Sir Robin Maxwell-Hyslop, who always proved himself a terrier in his dealings with the Post Office, and who succeeded in persuading it to reintroduce Sunday collections. Those have now proved extremely popular, and are much appreciated.

That is exactly the kind of business that Conservative Members have told us represents the declining unprofitable end of the mail business. It is all about letters and cards from grannies to granddaughters, and so forth. That is most important in terms of the Post Office's social obligation, but it is not profitable.

Mr. Paul Tyler (North Cornwall): Is that not an example of precisely the kind of service about which all kinds of assurances about the quality of service after privatisation have been made to peripheral areas of the United Kingdom, such as the areas that my hon. Friend and I represent? Yet whether it concerns water, gas or electricity, as soon as privatisation is bedded down the operators say that it is too expensive to provide that service to the more peripheral and scattered areas and there is a reduction in quality of service. We pay more for less.

Mr. Bruce: I agree with my hon. Friend.

I am coming to the end of my speech, but I still have some important points to make. The Government say that there will be a licence, a regulator and guarantees of certain services, which they have identified as the most important guarantees—although I have mentioned some that they appear to have forgotten, and that I hope they will consider.

I do not suggest that the Government are insincere in saying that. I believe that they recognise the importance of those services and want to guarantee them. However, the problem is that once the Post Office has been put into the private sector and given its freedom—that is what the Government wish to do—the pressure of competition will inevitably mean that the management will say, "We are sorry, but to respond to competition we have to get rid of the loss-making services, which means closing some of the network, reducing daily deliveries and cutting out second deliveries"—those are important to business, but not necessarily profitable—"and we have to consider surcharging the outlying areas: we cannot guarantee next day delivery to the outer Hebrides unless people are prepared to pay a surcharge, or whatever."

That is how things developed in New Zealand. I do not suggest that what happened there has to happen here, but there is a real danger. Even with good will and serious intent, the Government could find that they have created something over which they have lost control, and brought about the commercial pressure that threatens the public service.

That brings me to my conclusion of principle. My party and I did not oppose in principle previous privatisations, such as those of gas and electricity. But we objected to the way in which the Government proposed to carry them out, and especially to their failure to introduce effective competition at the time of privatisation. In those cases we have been proved right. The gas industry has now had to introduce competition in a much more painful and unstructured way, and that will have to happen with the electricity companies, too. In the meantime, consumers

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have lost out. The fact that electricity prices have fallen is not the point. Management have managed to divert a lot of funds to maintain high dividends. That has been good for investors, but according to the watchdog consumer protection body, consumers have lost out and electricity prices are at least 5 per cent. higher than they should be.

I shall not even mention water, which is already a big political embarrassment to the Government. We opposed gas and electricity privatisation not on principle but because of the competition aspect. However, we all agree that with the Post Office, competition is not the answer in relation to the core service: nobody is arguing for competition there. Everybody recognises that there must be a guaranteed monopoly—and there is a point of principle there. If there has to be a publicly guaranteed monopoly, that monopoly must be accountable to the public sector.

That is a fundamental principle, and one that even Conservative Members should accept. Why should the House vote money, provide support or give a licence to a body, yet not be able to provide proper accountability to the people who are elected to this place to control such matters, and to the people who sent us here? I do not want detailed intervention in the day-to-day management of the Post Office—I recognise its need for commercial freedom —but it is providing a public service and we are entitled to demand minimum standards. I believe that the Government accept that, but they do not seem to accept the fundamental principle on which it should be based.

We do not favour over-tight regulation of the public sector, but we recognise that the public service must be accountable within the public sector. As the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle said, there is no difficulty in introducing commercial realism and allowing competition to develop in areas in which it can and should do so while at the same time maintaining proper public accountability.

Outright privatisation would not achieve that. Commercial freedom would. Selling some of the shares —especially to members of the work force, and perhaps more widely—may be a good option, and would provide a commercial test of the way in which the Post Office was operating. We as a party are prepared to consider that, but selling the majority of the shares removes the public accountability test, and on that count the Government's proposals fail.

6.28 pm

Mr. Douglas French (Gloucester): I am interested in the long-term safety and security of Post Office jobs. I have a large regional sorting office in Gloucester, as well as many small post offices. Hundreds of my constituents depend on the Post Office for their livelihood, and I want to make sure that the jobs on which they depend are safe not only now but for the future.

I start my contribution with Eastern Avenue, Gloucester, where the major regional sorting office is located. When one visits that sorting office, as I have on a number of occasions, the most striking things that one observes are, first, the employees' tremendous pride in the service that they are providing—it is an excellent work force which wishes to provide a first-class service and succeeds in doing so—and, secondly, the considerable investment that is taking place there.

Particularly striking is the way in which new machinery, introduced for the better handling of letters, has, within two or three years, become out of date as a result of technological development. More mail is therefore being handled faster, and will continue to be handled faster, with a smaller work force as the technology of sorting equipment improves. The inevitable conclusion is that the improving technology of letter handling is likely, in the foreseeable future, substantially to reduce the job opportunities for sorters of mail and other manual operatives in sorting offices.

The first question that strikes me as being important, looking at the matter from the standpoint of local jobs, is whether anything can be done to prevent those otherwise certain job losses. Obviously, it is not possible to stop introducing new technological machinery. One cannot pretend that it has not been developed. However, it is possible to take steps to ensure that the volume of mail and the profit that it generates increases rather than falls.

Unfortunately, as several hon. Members have already said, the profitable part of Royal Mail is threatened in a number of respects. Several hon. Members have mentioned the Dutch post office. I am sorry that the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) has left the Chamber—*[Interruption.]* I am pleased to see that the hon. Gentleman has come back at the right moment. I hope that he will forgive me if I update him on the position regarding the Dutch post office.

The Dutch post office, under the umbrella of KPN and embracing PTT Post and PTT Telecom, was partially privatised on 13 June. The hon. Gentleman may wish to know that that partial flotation proved extremely popular. It was three times oversubscribed with a strong demand from not only domestic but foreign investors. The KPN shares set a bourse record for volume with 35 million shares changing hands, more than half of which were sold to foreign institutions. About 20 per cent. were sold to buyers in Britain and 18 per cent. to buyers in the United States. That has left KPN in Holland embracing PTT Post as the third-largest quoted company on the Amsterdam bourse, preceded only by the Royal Dutch Shell group and Unilever. Not surprisingly, PTT issued a stamp to commemorate that important stage in its development.

I mention that because it demonstrates the tremendous confidence of not only the management of PTT but the public in Holland in the capacity of their post office to perform and serve not only the domestic market, but, most particularly, the international market in a way which makes it possible for it to lead the world in post office services.

Much reference has been made today to the sort of competition that Royal Mail potentially and actually faces from the Dutch post office. I shall give a few examples, because although it is all very well to talk of competition, we must understand what form that competition takes.

One of the most profitable sectors of Royal Mail business is bulk commercial business-to-business deliveries. The Dutch post office, with tremendous success, is bidding for bulk United Kingdom direct mail for destinations outside Holland and the United Kingdom. If it creams off business that would otherwise have gone through Royal Mail, Royal Mail and everyone who works for it is the loser because that business is lost to an alternative enterprise.

Secondly, the Dutch post office is bidding for bulk mail for destinations within the United Kingdom. There, it is important to appreciate the effect of the accounting conventions of the Universal Postal Union which militate

against the Post Office that is doing the delivery. The revenue that is collected for a postal item, or in this case millions of postal items, is split, four fifths going to the country of origin—not the poster but the post office handling it—and one fifth going to the country that effects the delivery. When that business is lost, Royal Mail is saddled with the bulk of the work, because there is far more work to be done in delivering to individual destinations than in collecting, for only a fifth of the revenue.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: The hon. Gentleman has just made a useful contribution to the debate. For those who have not been party to it, it explains what the competition is and the urgency for a response. The House should be grateful to the hon. Gentleman for that. I have no doubt that if the Post Office is privatised the share offer will be popular and I agree that it needs to be able to respond to the competition. However, that does not remove the fundamental point of principle as to whether that can be done within the public sector. It is important to underline that, although the Dutch post office has been partially privatised, it still is in the public sector and the Government have majority ownership. That is what we are advocating.

Mr. French: I shall come later to whether one can have commercial freedom in the public sector. But if one speaks to senior managers of PTT they will say that they have taken only the first step in the direction of selling the majority of shares. At the moment only a minority of shares has been sold, but eventually it is expected that the majority of shares will be in public ownership.

Mr. McLoughlin: My hon. Friend is on to an important point. The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) referred to the privatisation of the Post Office, but my hon. Friend has usefully put it on the record that we are talking not just about the Dutch post office but its telecoms operation. That 30 per cent. flotation was a large one for that country.

Mr. French: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend.

Why is it that the Dutch post office can organise itself to win the sort of business that I have described? First, it can quote commercial tariffs in a way that our Post Office cannot. All the special deals that come from Royal Mail are according to a pre-determined formula, as with Mailsort, where the price to be quoted is already fixed and the nature of the deal or the customer placing the business is not taken into account.

In contrast, the Dutch post office can come forward with specific tariffs for specific customers if it knows that it is in a competitive position and wants to win a particular piece of business. It can enter commercial alliances, as my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) mentioned. It can also embark on the provision of a combination of services, a point that my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West made clearly.

A typical example is the fulfilment of a total postal requirement: that is, the design and printing of a piece of direct mail; the enclosing of that item in an envelope or wrapper; the generation of the addresses to which it will go; and the sharply negotiated transportation from A to B by the best means possible and therefore at the most competitive price. We must take notice of the fact that the Dutch post office can enter into joint ventures and alliances to achieve such services. It can compete on all those fronts, but the Royal Mail is left to compete only on sorting and delivery services. One can easily see that it will not be long before it is wiped off the postal market place for that type of business.

If there were a few more Opposition Members present, I would no doubt hear them argue that there is not much to worry about—foreign post offices do not have the right to deliver to United Kingdom addresses, which accounts for the bulk of Royal Mail business, because the Royal Mail retains its letter monopoly. That view, however, is misconceived. It presupposes that the sending of a letter or circular through the post is an irreplaceable and indispensable service and that it will always be needed. The same view was taken by stagecoach operators, who eventually found, to their cost, that they were wrong.

As a medium of communication of information, the written or printed piece of paper that is delivered from door to door faces strong challenges. Other hon. Members have referred to fact that the fax is creaming off some of the business, as is the telephone. British Telecom's recent advertisement campaign highlighted the amount of telephone time that one can buy for the price of a postage stamp. Such competition—one medium competing with another—will increase and the Royal Mail must be able to respond to it.

It does not stop with the fax or telephone. More sophisticated forms of communication such as electronic mail, airwaves, telematics, satellite communications and other forms of data transmission are potential competitors for the humble letter going through the post.

Mr. Cousins: I am following the hon. Gentleman's argument closely and I agree with it. The Post Office says that 13 per cent. of that vital commercial market is under its control. If the competition is that severe, what is the economic and commercial basis of the guarantees that the Post Office, if it becomes a fully private company, will have a uniform price and universal delivery?

Mr. French: Uniform price and universal delivery will be much more within the grasp of Royal Mail if the rest of its business is profitable. It will be more capable of delivering universality if it has commercial opportunities. The reality is the opposite of the arguments advanced by Labour Members today.

The trend is away from what many see as an archaic mode of communicating information whereby messages are transported from one side of the country to other, and from one side of the globe to the other, on pieces of paper. The Royal Mail's business is rooted in that function. Any long-term examination of its business position is bound to raise alarm bells as to where it will be, not in two years', but in 20 years' time, if action is not taken now.

The Post Office's only answer to those developments should be to achieve a position, first, whereby it can compete vigorously and effectively for its share of the postal market, whatever the size of that market will be; and, secondly, whereby it can stake its claim for a proper share of those businesses that will inexorably nibble away at its current core activity. It must stake its claim to alternative means of communication.

That means that a measure of commercial freedom is vital. I have listened to the speeches of Opposition Members and I waited patiently to hear which Opposition Member would spell out what he meant by commercial freedom in the public sector. The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) did not say how that could be

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achieved. He made only an assertion that it would be possible and that it could be done, but he did not tell us the means. The hon. Member for Vauxhall (Ms Hoey) said that the Post Office should be given more commercial freedom, but she did not explain how she proposed to do it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) said that commercial freedom could be given without too many difficulties. Again, he did not tell us how he would achieve it. It was the same with the Liberal party spokesman, the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce). He paid lip service to the desirability and possibility of commercial freedom without explaining how it could be achieved.

Commercial freedom in the public sector is, for all practical purposes, a contradiction in terms. It cannot be achieved in the public sector. To achieve proper commercial freedom, the Post Office must have the opportunity to take proper risks. If it is still tied in some way to the public sector, it will not be able to take those commercial risks without, at some stage, the taxpayer having to underwrite the risk. I defy any Opposition Member to explain how it would be possible for the buck, ultimately, not to stop with the taxpayer and with the Treasury.

Commercialisation in the public sector would not work. My hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) was emphatic that it would be irresponsible for the Treasury, if the Post Office were still in the public sector, not to maintain the system of the external financing limit and to take the cream off the profit, which it has done for so many years, in the interests of the taxpayer. It would also be irresponsible for the Department of Trade and Industry not to take an interest in the investment decisions in which the Post Office engaged. The DTI, the Treasury and the Government have an interest in preserving the best interests of the taxpayer and they could not do so in those circumstances.

Mr. Cousins: In many ways, I consider the issue to be the heart of the argument. How does the hon. Gentleman respond to the example of British Nuclear Fuels plc, which operates as a wholly publicly owned company? How does he respond to the example of what are regarded as trading activities, which are regarded as contingent liabilities only for the public sector borrowing requirement and the public expenditure statements?

Mr. French: I accept that those examples are departures from the broad principle, but they are not departures of the same type. We are dealing with a commercial enterprise of massive proportions. They are far greater than those in the examples that the hon. Member gave. We are dealing with commercial risks of enormous size. If they were not well judged, they could incur enormous losses for the taxpayer. The principles of public financial management and the responsibility of the Treasury to ensure that undue risks are not taken by commercial enterprises where the taxpayer has to pick up the bill must be adhered to and they should be adhered to in this case.

Mr. Oliver Heald (Hertfordshire, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that, in terms of the scale of the business, British Gas offers a far better analogy? It has been able to decrease its prices, to enter new world markets and, at the same time, to protect the taxpayer and customer through an extremely efficient regulator.

Mr. French: I entirely accept that; I shall deal with the question of the regulator in a moment.

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. French: No; other hon. Members wish to speak.

If the Government retained a majority shareholding, they would still ultimately be in control. Royal Mail borrowings would still be part of the public sector borrowing requirement. Even more important, the Government would have not only a right but a duty to interfere in any investment decisions that Royal Mail and the Post Office chose to make. That is a recipe for not giving the Post Office the commercial freedom that it needs.

The Post Office must be allowed to set its own financial targets, to make its own investment decisions and to raise capital in the market place when it considers it necessary for the development of its business. It is absurd that at present—even in the case of fairly trivial investment decisions—the Post Office must approach a Government Department and, understandably, wait for some time to secure a decision that may not always be the one that it wanted.

The Post Office should also be freed from the straitjacket of the external financing limit, and transferred to a normal corporation-tax system that will allow it to make a reasonable contribution to the Exchequer. It should not be hemmed in as it is now.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: Does my hon. Friend agree that an EFL of £230 million—nearly four times the size of the 1992 limit—is draining a successful Post Office of resources that it badly needs for reinvestment purposes? Is not the desirability of access to the capital markets one of the main arguments for disposing of a large shareholding?

Mr. French: I entirely agree. The EFL is far too high, and access to the capital markets will provide the Post Office with precisely the alternative facility that it needs.

The anxieties expressed by Opposition Members are reflected in the printed postcards that many hon. Members will have received from both Post Office employees and users of local post offices. Most of those anxieties could be fully dealt with by a regulator. Such a regulator could set the ground rules for a competitive framework, protect the social needs that have been correctly emphasised, protect user interests, enforce universality and the uniform tariff and deal with the scare identified by the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Ms Hoey)—the possible ending of the returned-letter service.

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: Would not consumers' interests be better looked after under a regulator than they are now?

Mr. French: Yes, they would. The Post Office Users National Council currently does a very good job, but, although it tries to look after the consumer, its powers are ultimately limited. A regulator could ensure that the well-intentioned policies of such organisations were implemented: the legislation would give him teeth.

The Opposition have whipped up a good deal of anxiety. It is important for the future of the Post Office that they understand the arguments, which they have not done

so far. As long as the current circumstances prevail, Royal Mail in particular is destined to lose business, and also to lose the opportunity to play its part in what could be an exciting expansion of the global market place.

The more far-sighted postal authorities see their opportunities to claim a slice of the new, larger cake. They perceive not only the possibilities for the domestic markets, but the possibility of co-operation between Post Offices in different countries to develop their businesses jointly. The chief executive of our Post Office has a very enlightened approach, but so have others.

Theo Jongsma, managing director of PTT Post International, said in London on 21 June:

"I support the privatisation of postal companies worldwide."

He did not just want privatisation for Holland; he saw its merits generally. He continued:

"The Dutch experience has been and will continue to be a success. I sincerely hope that other governments will give their postal companies the opportunity to develop as normal businesses, in a competitive environment."

The Dutch post office, however, is not alone. Also on 21 June and also in London, Dr. Klaus Zumwinkel, chief executive officer of PostDienst in Germany, said:

"There is a clear international trend towards liberalisation, deregulation and privatisation. No country can avoid this trend. The plan to convert the 3 Deutsche Bundespost companies into stock corporations is the only correct and viable approach to take."

The same philosophy is embraced in Sweden. Since 1985, Sweden Post has been able to make free use of its profits and has had full power over its investment decisions. It is not yet a private company, but the pronouncements of its chief executive make it clear that it is destined to be one in the not too distant future.

I believe that the future of our postal services will involve the emergence of a few global postal operators with a command of both national and international opportunities, and a command of written and electronic information and goods such as we have not seen before. There will be vigorous competition, but the strong operators will do extremely well: it is therefore vital for Royal Mail to be there, among the leaders.

Let me return to the point at which I began. I have no doubt that the jobs of my local postal workers in the sorting office in Eastern avenue in Gloucester—and those in other sorting offices throughout the country, as well as in sub-post offices—will be safest if the opportunity for change is embraced, and Royal Mail becomes the world player that it should be. Jobs will be more secure, and employees will share in the growth of the business.

6.58 pm

Ms Ann Coffey (Stockport): Although it identifies three possible options for the future of Royal Mail and Parcelforce, the Green Paper on the future of postal services effectively dismisses two of them out of hand. The Government are clearly batting for only one, and will spend the next three months trying to sell it to the public —for they are well aware that the public do not favour any kind of privatisation of the Post Office, and are very concerned about the current proposals.

One of the options dismissed by the Government was 100 per cent. privatisation, although they were enthusiastic about it. Having heard a couple of Conservative speeches today, I can see that there is a good deal of support for it within the party; the Green Paper, however, commented: "many people prefer a closer link between Government and Royal Mail than this would provide".

In other words, the Government have recognised that the public will not tolerate 100 per cent. privatisation. Perhaps that is because the public are not so impressed with its consequences. The comments of my constituents about the privatisation of our existing public utilities are mainly about the size of the chairmen's salaries and the problems of job losses among ordinary employees.

The Government also dismiss out of hand the retention of the Post Office in the public sector, while giving it greater commercial freedom. In case somebody stands up to ask what I mean by that, I refer them to the Government's option, which makes several suggestions about how that may happen.

The Government have three principal arguments against that option: first, that, as a publicly owned company, the Post Office would be protected from failure. Most people in the country do not want to see the Post Office fail and that option would be positive rather than negative. Secondly, they say that it would be underwritten by taxpayers, but the Post Office has made a considerable profit for a number of years, which has been very beneficial to taxpayers in the country by helping to finance other public services such as health and education.

Thirdly, the Government say that, as a public company competing in the market, it would distort the market and would become a soft option for private finance. Surely the water, gas and electricity companies and British Telecom are effectively private monopolies. That is why they attract such a good level of investment, because large investors see them as low risk.

The option that the Government are trying to sell is that of retaining 49 per cent. of the shares in the Post Office, so that they would be a passive partner, while selling off 51 per cent. of the shares. I am sure that, if they did that, like the gas, electricity and water companies, it would also be seen as attractive to private finance.

Whether it would meet the Government's criteria for attracting private finance that it should be seen as a high-risk business is very doubtful, because I am sure that all private investors would be attracted if 49 per cent. of the Post Office is publicly underwritten by the Government. Therefore, as one of my hon. Friends said earlier, the notion that on the one hand there are privatised companies and on the other publicly owned companies, and that the finance attracted to each of them is different, is absolute nonsense.

One of the biggest selling points of the option that the Government have put forward is that the employees will have 10 per cent. of the shares. In fact, that is the only mention of the future of the employees in the whole Green Paper. The reality is that, in this country, private shareholders have diminished in the past 15 years of our share-owning democracy, and shares held by institutional investors, whose power is enormous, have increased as a percentage.

Companies' accountability to their individual shareholders is very small. If privatisation takes the proposed form, the accountability to those shareholders who are employees of the Post Office will be exactly the same as it is in other companies—a lot of shouting about it, but very little accountability. I cannot imagine the chairman of a future privatised Post Office ringing up to consult the local postman, who has a few hundred shares, about the commercial decisions about to be made, although I can imagine the chairman telephoning a large investor for consultation.

[Ms Ann Coffey]

That is a very poor way in which to maintain the accountability of the Post Office to its employees. The Government may feel that that is a good selling point, but it is a sham, and it means very little. I am sure that many of the employees who will be offered 10 per cent. of the shares would willingly part with their shares to ensure that the Post Office remained in public ownership, because they feel that that would be the best way in which to ensure the protection of their jobs.

Privatisation will not protect employees from losing their jobs, nor will it increase their pay in real terms. We are talking about many employees—165,000 people are employed by the Post Office. One of the most powerful arguments for keeping the Post Office in public ownership is that, in the aftermath of privatisation, thousands of employees will lose their jobs—it may not happen the month after privatisation, or the month after that, but it will happen. Commercial pressure cannot consider job loss. The driving force is the demand of the market for short-term dividends, and that will be no different for a privatised post office.

The country cannot afford any more unemployment. We must consider ways in which to keep people employed, of employing more people and of not making people unemployed. If we do not, we will not have many customers or consumers left—people need money to consume—nor will we have money going into pension funds, or money to invest in industry; nor will we achieve the social order or the stability that we need.

The Government need to accept their wider responsibility to ensure that everyone has access to the wealth of the country through employment. To do that, they need to look at their role as a purchaser and their role as an owner of public companies and their role in every single Department.

The Government also need to consider the job implications of their policies, as well as the commercial interests about which we have heard a lot tonight. The question should always be how we can consider employment, how can we create employment, how we can keep people in employment, as well as how we can make a business more efficient and more competitive, and how we can give value for money to customers. All those questions should be asked before any policy change, and they need to be asked when considering the future of the postal service.

There is only one answer to the present proposals: to retain the Post Office in the public sector, give it more commercial freedom and ensure that it continues to be a successful public enterprise, employing 165,000 people and much valued by the British public. That is what the public want, and I am sure that they will express it locally over the next three months. The big question, is will the Government listen?

7.6 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Cirencester and Tewkesbury): A lot has been said in the debate, but may I first make it clear that, when my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade made his announcement on 19 May, he said that three inviable functions would be kept in the Post Office organisation which would be laid down by statute? They are, first, maintenance of a nationwide letter and parcel service with a daily delivery to every address in the UK; secondly, a uniform and affordable structure of prices; and, thirdly, perhaps most importantly, a nationwide network of post offices.

As I have already made clear in an intervention, 19,000 out of the network of 20,000 sub-post offices are owned by private individuals, involving their own capital. I pay tribute to them and assure them that I do not believe that any of the proposals which I have seen mentioned in the Green Paper would in any way threaten the viability of their sub-post offices. There are other factors at work which may well threaten that viability and I shall address those in a moment.

I also pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Gloucester (Mr. French). In particular, he mentioned his sorting office in the city of Gloucester. I very much hope that the viability of that sorting office will be maintained exactly as it is at present, because it is from there that the majority of my constituents' letters come.

Over past years, I have visited sorting offices in my constituency in Cirencester and Tewkesbury early in the morning and I have seen the valuable work done by the Post Office delivery men in those sorting offices. They then go out in all the worst weather. I pay tribute to them for that work and also for their valuable services in often providing companionship, advice, messages and so on when visiting the doorstep.

Mr. Hain: If the hon. Gentleman is paying such a generous tribute to his postmen and women, why does not he listen to them? None of them wants the privatisation which the Government are thrusting down their throats.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: As I shall make clear to the hon. Gentleman in a minute, the best way to secure the maximum employment in the Post Office is to ensure that it is profitable. As I shall make clear, it is only by some radical alteration to the existing structure that it will remain profitable and, above all, retain its market share. It is losing market share at the moment and we must do something about that, whatever solution we come up with.

Ms Estelle Morris (Birmingham, Yardley): If the hon. Gentleman is so concerned about the loss of market share and about the need for the Post Office to be allowed to be more competitive, does he think that the Government have assisted that process by dilly-dallying for two years on the result of their review of the Post Office? How did that delay help the Post Office to prepare for increased competition?

Mr. Clifton-Brown: This is probably the most fundamental reorganisation of the Post Office for the past 150 years—since Rowland Hill invented the penny black. In such a fundamental reorganisation, we want to ensure that we get it absolutely right. That is why we are having this debate today and that is why my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade and my other right hon. Friends are considering carefully what is the best course for the employees of the Post Office, above all, and for the maintenance of the profitability of that business.

One has only to look at the Opposition motion to see precisely what the hon. Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Ms Morris) is alluding to. The Labour party is not prepared to consider the future. We must consider the future, otherwise we shall find that the Post Office's business slowly gets smaller and smaller. We should

contrast the motion with my right hon. Friends' amendment, which is positive; it suggests positive solutions and that is what I wish to address today.

We must recognise the changed environment in which we live. Customers no longer automatically go to the village shop. They may prefer to go instead to the large out-of-town superstore. When my constituents write to me saying that they are worried about the future of their rural sub-post office, my reply to them is, "If you are worried about its future viability, use it." It is up to the sub-post office in turn to provide the range of services that the customers want. I am delighted by some of my right hon. and hon. Friends' recent announcements about allowing a wider range of services to be sold in sub-post offices. I am particularly delighted by the announcement that a number of sub-post offices will be able to sell lottery tickets. That will considerably enhance their viability and profitability.

One must consider changing employment patterns. People now have less time to shop, so they increasingly look towards convenience shopping—towards electronic shopping—and that trend will continue. As consumers rapidly adopt the new technology, they will, if the sub-post offices do not provide that range of services, use them less. Apart from adapting to changing consumer patterns, the Post Office will need to adapt to changing trading conditions in three main ways. First, new forms of communication, such as fax and electronic mail, are increasingly emerging. The electronic data exchange market is growing by 20 per cent. annually. Television licences, for example, may now be paid for by direct debit. The fax market is growing by 30 per cent. The scope for expansion in that sector is huge and could wipe out much of the current letter business within a comparatively short time.

Secondly, competition from overseas post offices as the point of posting for bulk mail is increasing. As my hon. Friend the Member for Gloucester made clear, I have a company in my constituency with a large mail delivery which made a contract with the Dutch post office. It sent all its magazines to the Dutch post offices, which in turn contracted the magazines back to our own Post Office. The organisation making the profit was the Dutch post office and our own Royal Mail was left with the fag-end of the business. It had to make the daily deliveries and the charge for that was little above the cost price. We must respond to competition from overseas.

Thirdly, increasingly there is a trend towards contracting out and franchising ancillary services that the Royal Mail would be well placed to provide. Let us consider the competition. Let us consider the express deliveries around the country for bulk mail and parcels which are springing up all over the place. How can the Royal Mail respond to the challenges when it has to go to the Treasury every five minutes to ask for permission to invest in more facilities? In those circumstances, how could any commercial business succeed in the modern world?

As my hon. Friend the Member for Gloucester said, when the Dutch telecommunications business was privatised, one of the first things that it did was to make a joint venture deal with the huge American corporation AT and T to enable it to have access to the huge capital investment and the huge technology that would be required in that fast-changing business. As we shall see, the electronic mail business will change just as fast.

Mr. Gordon Prentice (Pendle): Will the hon. Gentleman tell the House precisely when the Dutch post office was privatised?

Mr. Clifton-Brown: The first tranche of the Dutch post office privatisation took place in May.

Hon. Members: No.

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: It was 13 June this year.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: I have a little bit of extra knowledge from behind me. I am told that the exact answer is 13 June this year.

Mr. Prentice: Is it not the case that the Dutch Government kept 51 per cent. of the shares? Is that not, therefore, a perverse definition of privatisation? The Government hold the majority shareholding.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: I was coming to that very point. I will deal with it; it is important and I should like to illustrate it a little later.

One option is to give the Post Office much greater freedom to trade commercially while still remaining in the public sector. Many hon. Members, including the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), have said that the Post Office would not succeed in the commercial world. Three options are proposed in the Green Paper. The first is some form of greater freedom in the public sector, whatever that means. No one has yet been able to tell us whether that would mean that the Post Office would not have to apply to the Treasury every five minutes and that it would be given increasing freedom to run its business. What about the external finance limit of £230 million? It has gone up four times since 1992. How would we deal with the increasing difficulty of the Post Office being in the public sector? I do not think that that is a realistic option.

The second option in the Green Paper is much more realistic. It is that 51 per cent. of the Post Office should be privatised. That would create a partnership between the private sector, the employees, above all, and the public sector. That seems a sensible way to go forward. In the other privatisations, City investors have been a little slow to realise the fundamental change in businesses that have been in the public sector for so long. It seems eminently sensible to let part of the business be sold off to the private sector and to prove that it can be run successfully in the private sector.

In response to the hon. Member for Pendle (Mr. Prentice), I say that I see no reason why, as in the case of British Telecom, we should not sell further tranches. As he knows, each time we had a privatisation of British Telecom —BT one, BT two and BT three—the share price increased because potential investors could see that the business had a tremendous future in the private sector and that it was becoming more successful.

The Government are eminently sensible not to go for the third option of a 100 per cent. sell-off in one go, although I must say that my personal preference would be to sell off the Post Office in one go and to let the Post Office management have complete commercial freedom. Why on earth should they not have that freedom, as has been mentioned by other speakers? As the Green Paper makes perfectly clear, the regulator's functions will be enshrined in statute. We are discovering in other previously privatised industries—water and electricity—how the regulator should function.

[Mr. Clifton-Brown]

Opposition Members have spoken of the excess profits, as they put it, made by the water industry. If the industry did not make profits, it would not have the money for the £27 billion of investment over the next 10 years. Opposition Members do not seem to want an improved water system. My constituents want ever better water quality and they want money to be put into better water services. If those companies do not make a profit, where would the money come from? That is part of the problem about the Opposition's policy—*[Interruption.]* The answer is always the taxpayer.

What has happened to those businesses in the past? As we have heard, between 1976 and 1978, investment in the Post Office fell by a half and the same thing happened in the water industry and in the telecommunications industry. Why was it that up to the privatisation virtually every telephone box one went to was out of order and yet today 80 per cent. of them are in good working order and are clean? It is because British Telecom is making profits and investing them to provide an ever better service. There is no reason why the Post Office, minus the counter services, should not do exactly the same.

That is the way forward. We must also make sure that the regulator has all the statutory teeth that he needs. No doubt, night after night in Committee we will debate that very point. I want the regulator to have statutory teeth so that my constituents and those of Opposition Members, who have protested so much tonight, can enjoy the benefits to be gained from the Post Office providing a proper service, at a realistic price, across the country. That is best delivered by transferring the Post Office to the private sector, where it will make a profitable return. *[Interruption.]* The Opposition are obviously trying to make sure that I am truly put off my stride. They obviously do not like what I am saying.

Mr. Purchase: Is the hon. Gentleman in his stride?

Mr. Clifton-Brown: I will happily give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Purchase: We need some explanation of one small point that you made earlier. You said that the Government were sensible not to sell off the entire shooting match in one go, but, seconds later, you declared that that would be the best idea.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. I am afraid that the Chair is unable to explain anything to the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mr. Purchase). He should refer to the hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown), not to the Chair. He should not use the word "you".

Mr. Clifton-Brown: I am grateful for your little bit of protection, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I was about to deal with the hon. Gentleman. He obviously was not listening to what I had to say, because, although my personal preference is for a 100 per cent. sell-off, I see the merits of a partial sell-off of between 49 and 51 per cent of the business. That would make a lot of sense from the taxpayer's point of view.

As I said earlier, the Government had considerable success in selling off tranches of BT and I am sure that the same thing will happen with the Post Office. From the point of view of business development, however, the commercial freedom that an immediate 100 per cent. sell-off would give to the Post Office would be of considerable benefit to it. I hope that I have managed to explain that difference to the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East. It takes a little understanding and I appreciate that he is a little bit slow to appreciate such matters.

The chief executive of the Post Office, Bill Cockburn, summed up the entire debate by saying:

> "I have had to say quite bluntly recently that, without commercial freedom, we face an increasingly bleak future. Loss of business to the competition, from overseas postal administrations and the use of new technology, could mean both significant job losses and post office closures."

That just about sums it up.

The Labour party's motion advocates doing nothing in the hope that everything will be all right. That simply is not an option. The Opposition are burying their heads in the sand, but the Conservative Government have proposed realistic options in the Green Paper. The options will be thoroughly discussed and considered by my right hon. Friend the Minister. I look forward to coming back to the House in the autumn to debate this matter and to progress to selling off 49 per cent. of the Post Office's business. I look forward to that business going from strength to strength in the private sector.

7.23 pm

Ms Estelle Morris (Birmingham, Yardley): Whatever our views about the future of the Post Office, hon. Members have a common starting point: there is universal agreement that the Post Office is a success story. Whether one considers the profits that it has made, its efficiency, its popularity or its social worth, the Post Office comes out with credit. No one has sought to advance any other view of the Post Office. We need to remember that all that has been achieved with a Post Office firmly rooted in the public sector.

The Post Office has already faced change. Anyone who goes around a sorting office will appreciate what it has had to do to mechanise. In recent years it has also restructured its work force. It has already adjusted to changing patterns of communications not only in this country but throughout Europe and the rest of the world.

At the very same time as the Post Office has coped with adjusting to meet all those changes, it has increased its profits, kept its prices down and helped, in no small measure, to pay off the Government debt. From all the evidence of what has happened in the Post Office so far, there must be a predisposition in favour of our leaving it in the public sector.

We are now told, however, that the Post Office faces a new threat of increased competition. Because of that, we are told that, for the first time in 150 years, the Post Office will no longer be able to cope with that competition unless it moves into the private sector. Despite all the adjustments that it has made, the mechanisation that it has introduced and the fact that the work force have adapted to new work practices, we are told that, because of that threat of competition, the Post Office can no longer cope in the public sector. Frankly, I do not believe that. I do not believe that that obstacle can be overcome only by a private company and I do not believe that giving the Post Office commercial freedom is the reason behind the privatisation proposal in the Green Paper.

Let us look at the Government's record in supporting the Post Office in the two years since the general election. If Ministers are so concerned that the Post Office should be able to meet new challenges, why have they done so little to help? Why have the Government left Parcelforce dangling, uncertain of its future, for two years? Why have they taken just under two years to publish the results of the Post Office review? If the threat of competition was so great, why did the Government cut investment in the Post Office in last year's public sector round? Why did they double the external financing limit in a year and treble it in three years?

The Government have cut investment while arbitrarily increasing their take of the Post Office's profits. They also shelved a review because of political shenanigans in the Conservative party. Those are more the actions of a Government concerned with securing their own future than the actions of a Government concerned with securing the future of the Post Office. Given what the Government have done for the Post Office in the past two years, one must conclude that their motives on the future ownership of the Post Office cannot be trusted. They are based on a different agenda.

I do not believe that privatisation is necessary to give the Post Office the freedom which it wants and which the Opposition acknowledge that it needs. I acknowledge that privatisation could give it the freedom that it needs, but the Opposition believe that the cost entailed is not worth paying.

The Green Paper acknowledges that, for centuries, the Post Office has

"made a vital contribution to our national life."

It also talks about the Post Office being a

"unifying force of the nation."

That is what is at risk, unless the Post Office stays in the public sector. Can we really see the private sector companies, shareholders or boards agreeing to keep open 5,000 small sub-post offices that represent only 1 per cent. of the company's business? Can we imagine a resolution at the annual meeting of Royal Mail plc agreeing to keep prices 13 per cent. below the rate of inflation for a decade? That will not happen. That is not what motivates a private company. Such agreements will not be reached if the Post Office is removed from the public sector.

What we have in the Post Office is not repeated anywhere else in British industry: it is a special mix of public service ethos with a commercially successful track record. That combination must be addressed successfully in any review of the Post Office.

In the private sector, the pressure to increase dividends and top managers' salaries, as well as to cut out economically unviable parts of the business, will dominate. That is, by nature, the way in which shareholders and private sector companies work. Hon. Members have already mentioned what has happened in the water companies and the electricity boards. Tory Members may talk about guidelines which mean that the Post Office should not do that, but the Government cannot give a guarantee that goes beyond so many years, and they will be under pressure for the regulatory body to limit its restrictions on Post Office activities. The definition of a company operating in the private sector is that it has the freedom to cut out parts which are not economically viable. I do not believe that any statutory measures will stop the privatised Post Office doing that.

The Green Paper acknowledges that people are the Post Office's most important asset. Yet one of the main areas of anxiety and concern among Post Office staff—that of Post Office pensions—is dismissed in only three lines at the bottom of page 26 of the Green Paper. In those three lines, Post Office staff are assured that the Government will safeguard pension rights. That assurance might be welcome—indeed, I welcome it—but it does not go far enough and it is not sufficient to allay the justifiable fears of Post Office workers.

Post Office staff want to know what effect the envisaged changes in the Post Office structure will have on the now closed Post Office superannuation scheme and the Post Office pension scheme. Given assets of £10 billion and £435 million respectively and surpluses in both the closed and open schemes, Post Office employees want to know what access the board of a privatised Royal Mail will have to those funds. With Post Office employees paying 6 per cent. of their salaries in pension contributions, that is a question to which they are entitled to know the answer. Again, we wish to know how Postel, which has proved to be an effective investment arm for both the pension schemes, is likely to be affected by any changed structure in the Post Office.

There are 140,000 retired pensioners in the Post Office superannuation scheme and 120,000 still contributing to that scheme. Who will administer that closed pension fund in future if privatisation goes ahead? One of the major anxieties for everyone in the Post Office is whether the Government will give a pledge that the pensions for both current and new employees will continue to be index-linked under a privatised Royal Mail. The Government have not announced how the assets and surpluses of the Post Office superannuation scheme and the Post Office pension scheme will be divided between a privatised Royal Mail, Parcelforce and Post Office Counters.

Post Office workers have worked in an atmosphere of uncertainty for the past two years, and that is long enough. I invite the Government to give firm assurances on the specific questions that I have raised about the future of the Post Office pension schemes. I look forward to the Minister's response in that direction.

The Government will find themselves in a small minority when the results of the consultation exercise are made known at the end of September. The people have a stake in their Post Office. They have a right to be heard; more than that, they have a right to see their views reflected in any legislation that follows the consultation process. I believe that they, like us, will say that the future of their Post Office, which has served them well for more than 150 years, should be in the public sector, marrying the two ingredients of a successful and efficient public service and a profitable and popular commercial enterprise.

7.33 pm

Mr. Peter Ainsworth (Surrey, East): This is an important debate because we are discussing not only an aspect of national life with which all of us are familiar —I know that my constituents in East Surrey are familiar with the Post Office because they use it regularly to communicate with their Member of Parliament—but two important and successful British businesses: a communications business and a retail business. We are talking about how we in Parliament can best help them to succeed.

[Mr. Peter Ainsworth]

I agree with the hon. Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Ms Morris) that we start with much common ground. No one would deny that the Post Office has been successful in the past; it incorporates not only one of our greatest distribution businesses but one of the greatest distribution businesses in the world. It has not only consistently improved its service delivery over the years; it has managed to reduce prices in real terms and deliver a substantial stream of money—about £1 billion in real terms over the past 10 years—to the Treasury.

Equally, few people would deny that there are mounting and real pressures on the Post Office's ability to continue to succeed in the way that it has. For Royal Mail, the challenge comes principally, as we have heard, from the growth in telecommunications, faxes—which are growing at some 30 per cent. a year—and electronic data exchange. They all threaten the Royal Mail's largest and most profitable markets. My hon. Friend the Member for Gloucester (Mr. French) mentioned the current British Telecom advertising campaign. On my way here today, I drove past a poster which said:

"Enjoy a 1st class conversation for less than a 2nd class stamp".

No further indication of competition is needed; that advertisement sums it up squarely. We are talking about a global communication market; we are not simply talking about the Post Office and Postman Pat, however important he may be.

If the Royal Mail is to maintain and improve its position within the communications industry, and if it is to participate in the activities that my hon. Friends have talked about, such as the international data highways of the future, it will require a substantial level of capital investment.

The Royal Mail has great advantages, as well as threats,, to face. It has a superb national delivery network; it has a reputation for excellence in service delivery; and it has a name that is recognised throughout the world.

For Post Office Counters, the challenge comes principally from a decline in its traditional markets, which has come about as a result of changing patterns of behaviour and the exercise of consumer choice. Ninety per cent. of Post Office Counters business is from as few as eight clients—and most significant among them is the Benefits Agency. We must consider the future of Post Office Counters in the light of the fact that, for example, 40 per cent. of new pensioners already have their benefit sent direct to their bank. We must also consider it in the light of the developing interest in direct debit and the fact—*[Interruption.]* There is that fly again. I do not know what the *Official Report* will make of that. Stamps are now widely available from outlets other than post offices. I think that the fly is trying to deliver a message to the Chamber.

The Post Office Counters market is undoubtedly facing a threat as well. But like Royal Mail, it, too, has advantages. For example, it has 20,000 outlets. I think that that makes it the largest retail network in Europe. It has unparalleled penetration not only in cities but in town centres and rural areas. It is our job to help to build on those strengths to make it a truly successful business for the long term.

I freely admit that these are not particularly original observations. The same observations have been made by the Post Office, my right hon. Friend the Minister, my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade, the Post Office National Users Council, the Mail Users Association, the Select Committee, the National Federation of Sub Postmasters and even the Opposition parties. All have observed the same trends, the same threats, the same challenges and the same opportunities, and all have been led to the same question: given that the status quo is not an option, how do we best enable the Post Office to build on its advantages and meet the challenges? Of course, this is where the differences begin in the Chamber.

The Government have clearly considered the matter with great care. They have listened to representations before publishing the Green Paper. They have listened to the Post Office management, who have stressed that in their view the Post Office needs the freedom to raise capital, to invest with confidence, to engage in joint ventures, to participate in international markets and to develop new markets and technologies.

Now the Government have produced their Green Paper, and with it a recommendation which—not just in my view but, far more important, the view of the Post Office—represents the best possible way forward. I believe that the Government's preferred choice will satisfy the Royal Mail's objectives, which I have outlined; in addition, it will have the benefit of enabling the work force and sub-postmasters to participate in the ownership of the company. Our preferred choice will build in greater consumer safeguards by way of regulation. It recognises the great public interest in the network of post offices, and it guarantees core functions in the service—daily delivery to all parts of the country and universal pricing.

The Green Paper is a consultative document; it invites an informed debate. Yet what is the response from Opposition Members? I fear that, taking their cue from the Union of Communication Workers and rooting their position in a blind attachment to state control, they merely offer a diatribe of scaremongering and a rather facile political polemic. They talk about job losses, post office closures and rising prices. They talk about failure—all this despite the evidence that they were wrong about BT, wrong about British Airways, wrong about gas and wrong about steel. Despite all that privatisation has achieved for taxpayers, businesses and consumers in the past decade, Opposition Members remain implacably ideologically opposed to it.

While the Union of Communication Workers rushes off to print two million leaflets and God knows how many stickers, the Labour party offers, in time honoured cliché, to

"turn the summer heat on to the Government by taking our campaign into the rural shires who have most to lose from the privatisation of the Post Office".

I wish the Opposition much joy on their rural ride. They tend to get a little lost in the shires.

It is an inescapable fact that, just as enabling post offices to increase substantially the range of goods and services that they can offer is the most certain way to ensure their success, so privatisation offers the best way forward for protecting jobs in, and enabling the future success of, the Royal Mail.

Opposition Members need to understand, when launching the campaign to which the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Ms Hoey) referred, that it will be a campaign against the Post Office, against its workers and against its future prosperity. When they return from the rural shires,

accompanied by Sancho Panza in the shape of the Liberal Democrats, I have no doubt that they will continue to peddle the option about which we have heard so much today and which Opposition Members claim will achieve all that the Royal Mail wants and needs. In truth it will do nothing of the kind.

At least this time the Opposition parties have been able to face up to the problem, but unfortunately ideology has forced them to shy away from the solution. Curiously, there is one aspect of Opposition policy about which they have been rather reticent. We have not heard what that policy would be in the event of privatisation taking place. I invite the Opposition spokesman to confirm now that such is their commitment to the ideology of state control, so deeply embedded in the Opposition motion tonight, that they would not hesitate to renationalise the Post Office in the unlikely event of a Labour Government.

Mr. Cousins: The hon. Gentleman was presumably here at the beginning of the debate to hear my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) make it clear that it would be our intention if we returned to power, and if by some mischance the option that the Government appeared to support had been implemented, to restore public ownership.

Mr. Ainsworth: I am grateful for that interesting reply. It differs markedly from my recollection of what the hon. Member for Livingston said. The Labour party appears to be divided, but it is encouraging to see that the clause 4 adherents in the Labour party are alive and well and sitting on the Front Bench. I have no doubt that the hon. Gentleman's answer will be noted with considerable interest outside the Chamber.

The nub of this debate concerns whether the Royal Mail can meet the challenges ahead while still in the public sector. The Opposition parties maintain that it can, but there are three obstacles to that. We have heard about them before, and I have yet to hear any convincing arguments that would remove those obstacles.

Mr. Clapham: Has the hon. Gentleman had a look at the Trade and Industry Select Committee report on the future of the Post Office, published in March of this year? If he has read through the notes of evidence, he will have seen that the management of the Post Office stated that they would be well suited with the option allowing commercialisation of the Post Office, so that they would be freed from the external financing limits and able to compete on a level playing ground with the post offices of Sweden, France and Germany, which are also state plcs.

Mr. Ainsworth: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has referred to that report, which I read with considerable interest. He will have noticed, of course, that since publication of the Green Paper the Post Office management have made it abundantly clear that they do not favour remaining within state control, for the good reasons stated in the Green Paper itself.

As my hon. Friends the Members for Gloucester and for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) said, the Royal Mail's ability to invest in new technology and in the development of new markets has been and is being hindered by Treasury restraint. As long as the Royal Mail remains in the public sector it will effectively be forced to compete in the general public expenditure survey, a fact clearly reflected in the rising EFL at a time of public expenditure restraint and of the application of the Treasury's blue pencil to the spending plans submitted by the management of the Post Office.

The Minister of State gave several examples of the sort of problems that arose for publicly controlled companies under the Labour Government, and my hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown) dwelt on the same subject. It is essentially a simple idea: as long as the Royal Mail is owned by the state, the state will have other spending priorities and the Royal Mail will suffer as a result.

I should like to quote from the Select Committee report, which states

"the chief executive of the Post Office said that above all what was needed was that the Post Office should be free to raise money without it being in the PSBR and free to make investments without having to consult the Treasury every five minutes. We support those sentiments."

The hon. Member for Yardley may disagree, but it is frankly naive to think that those objectives can be met while the Royal Mail remains under state control.

Secondly, as we have discussed, competition with the private sector must operate fairly. I know that that is a difficult issue—the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) has said that it is by no means simple—but how can it possibly be fair to have a system whereby a publicly owned Post Office, backed by the taxpayer, competes with private companies for markets and capital? That simply is not fair.

The third problem with the Opposition's contention today is that although, as I think most people will agree, the future of Royal Mail lies in exciting new markets, if the company is to become a significant player in new markets for electronic information transfer, substantial capital investment will be required, and one is entitled to ask why the taxpayer should take risks on that capital investment which are rightly the business of shareholders and financial professionals.

The Green Paper says that, if the Post Office remains in the public sector, it may well be subject to slow decline, and we simply cannot afford to waste the opportunities that now exist. The Green Paper's preferred option makes clear a commitment to universal pricing and delivery; it reinforces the position of Post Office Counters; it enables the business to expand and develop new markets; it recognises the social dimension of the Post Office and its services. It commits the Government to substantial continued investment in two businesses, which would be newly freed to succeed.

The competitiveness White Paper published by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade a few weeks ago discusses how the Government can best help British businesses:

"Often the Government can help most by getting out of the way."

That is the case here.

Opposition Members claim to speak for the Post Office. They do not. They speak for the old socialist belief in state control. We have heard that from the Opposition Front Bench this afternoon. They have learnt nothing; they would do it all again.

The Post Office, in any case, can speak for itself. It did so when the Green Paper was published. The headlines of the Post Office press release will suffice:

"Partnership Option Best—'A Real Winner for Britain' Post Office Urges Public Support".

It is a matter for great sadness that the Post Office will

[Mr. Ainsworth]

receive no support from the Opposition parties who cynically exploit the anxieties of the vulnerable for political gain at the expense of British business.

7.52 pm

Mr. Ken Purchase (Wolverhampton, North-East): I have heard today a great deal of justified congratulation of the Post Office on the excellent way in which it runs its business and services—the public services that it has provided for 150 years.

I add to those congratulations by saying—no doubt hon. Members will want to join me in saying it—that during the summer we shall expect our huge bundles of mail to be delivered to our offices and homes, with ever heavier sacks of mail arriving on the shoulder of, in my case, the postwoman, and I greatly value the service that she provides. Hon. Members will receive the same quality of service, whether they represent a constituency in the far north of Scotland or the far south-west of England. That service is guaranteed: it will happen—we need not worry about it. *[Interruption.]* I am being prompted from the wings to say that that guaranteed service will also be provided in Wales; I am happy to add the Welsh contingent to my thanks and congratulations.

Some years ago, my wife was a postmistress. We ran a small post office in an inner-city area with predominantly 19th century housing built by brewers and other organisations. The population were elderly and relied on the post office for the services that they needed in terms of pensions and other bits and pieces. They valued the commercial side, which my wife ran: envelopes, writing pads, sweets and all the things that we generally now take for granted in a sub-post office, all of which help to make the whole business a viable proposition for someone to run.

Earlier, there was discussion about whether there was any cross-subsidy between one part of the Post Office and another. An accountant could probably demonstrate either case. However, it is obvious to me that the salary of a postmaster or postmistress in a sub-post office in a declining area—an office that is visited by fewer and fewer people, who nevertheless rely on it—could not be met from the volume of business that is transacted. None the less, at present that sub-post office is kept alive because the entire business is able to sustain it from its overall profitability. That is an important point which ought not to slip off the agenda too quickly.

Although there is a right and proper emphasis and a campaign about the problems of losing rural Post Office services, the needs of the inner cities are no less acute. I could go further and say that, due to the nature of inner-city communities, the density of the sub-post office network is vital to give people the peace of mind and confidence to know that they can walk relatively short distances, without needing to rely on any other form of transport, to obtain their pensions, their child allowances and everything else that is available at the Post Office.

Earlier we heard it said that if, as a result of competition, our sub-post offices were to lose 10 per cent. of their business, many of the sub-post offices would quickly slip into a loss-making position. If their profitability were the sole criterion for whether they should continue, many sub-post offices would be closed in the areas that I have described and I am sure that the same would be true in the rural areas.

Where could that competition come from? Frankly, if we leave this successful organisation as it is, but accept the changing technology, changing needs and new developments, and allow the Post Office the freedom to deal with those in a proper way, with sound management and good financial policies, there is no problem with competition —not domestically, at least. A strong domestic position will better equip our Post Office to deal with the increasingly international side of its business. It is true today, as it always was, that a strong home market is vital to enable any industry or service to develop worldwide competitive strengths. One needs that base in one's own domain.

We are in danger of offering, to anyone who cares to come along, a proposition that they can set up a postal service. I know that it will be said that we shall have a minimum postal charge and therefore the opportunities will not arise, but they will. It will not be long before little local services develop, taking letters and delivering them. Very soon, it will become almost the norm to do it from one end of the place to the other, and soon the Government will be asking, "Is there much point in maintaining the artificial level that we have imposed? We might as well let it go."

Some of us have not forgotten the lesson of Sunday trading. It took the large national companies to break the law, disregard the law, pay no attention to the law, and be rewarded by the Government for having so done. I obviously excuse the Minister for Industry, who was in a different camp on that occasion. There is a possibility that this will develop in the same way because of the idea that it is impossible to control the popular demand that would arise for such a service. We should keep that in mind, especially in the light of our recent debate on Sunday trading and what happens to law breakers in that regard.

I do not necessarily say that it is impossible for private enterprise to run a network of sub-post offices and post offices—clearly, it is possible with full and proper regulation—but the Government's record is to reduce rather than introduce control of these matters. I am sure that they would let it slip as soon as pressure was brought to bear on them. If that is the case, why should we change a winning team? As I have said, the Post Office needs to take on board developments in this country and worldwide.

With regard to inner-city sub-post offices, the Green Paper refers to the new challenges mentioned by a number of hon. Members, but there are also some old needs in inner cities. On a downward slope when demand is decreasing, profit can still be made from providing a good service. Decreased demand does not mean that the service cannot be organised properly and profitably and make a contribution. To do that, one simply gathers up the available business and provides it at a proper price. That would protect the network of inner-city post offices.

There are old-fashioned needs, and old-fashioned common sense ought to dictate that great care needs to be exercised before accepting the Government's view of privatisation by selling 51 per cent. One Conservative Member said that his preference would be to get rid of the lot as quickly as possible, but he failed to explain the sense of the Government's desire to slice it up bit by bit. No doubt he was thinking of the next election and wondering how the Government might best sell off the Post Office, get

in some money and give it away as another tax handout. That is exactly what they are thinking, and much of what drives the White Paper could be understood by looking at it in that way. In the end, we come down to ideology.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: I am listening carefully to the hon. Gentleman. Is he suggesting that we have privatised about 27 businesses since 1979 merely to win four elections which we won so successfully? Those businesses now have a change of culture and operate successfully in the private sector.

Mr. Purchase: They have certainly had a change of culture. Of that there is no doubt: indeed, additional evidence arrived this very day on the front page of the *Financial Times* for all who cared to read it. The hon. Gentleman looks away because he cannot bear to hear the truth. The *Financial Times* states that the electricity companies, or rather their chief executives and main directors, have had a massive bonanza. It is simply a case of changing the culture so that public money can be used to line private pockets. That is the nature of the change of culture in what were public services.

Let us reflect on this great change in, for instance, British Telecom. I agree that, comparatively speaking, the telephone service is now cheaper, but by golly why should not it be? There have been worldwide advances in technology. Is the hon. Gentleman or any of his colleagues saying that those changes would not have happened—

Mr. Sainsbury: Yes.

Mr. Purchase: That is nonsensical. The fact that BT was owned by the state would not have prevented worldwide technological advance from being taken on by any sensible company or any commercial undertaking. Our model of commercialisation fits well with the ability to take on new technology and for services to develop and improve and reach more people.

The Minister turned the truth on its head when he said that Labour believed that everything private is bad and everything public is good. Almost the whole of the Labour party has spent most of its working life in private industry and enterprise and we do not believe that at all. That whole concept is nonsense and the Government must adopt a more sensible approach. They cannot continue with the idiotic ideology as though it had not failed when it has manifestly done so.

People rightly believe that they are paying more for poorer quality water. The water companies may say that the chemical mix is correct, but we know that the water that comes out of the tap is abominable. As for investment, instead of going to their shareholders for money for long-term investment, which is then paid off by revenue, the private companies immediately impose a price rise on the general public who are absolutely held by those monopolies. That is how investment is financed, while at the same time the companies increase dividends well beyond what could normally be expected in any other commercial organisation.

We do not have a uniform view that this is good and that is bad. We have to look at what has happened. There has been some good and some bad in the industries that the Government have privatised. The Post Office is an excellent organisation which delivers a good service uniformly across our nation. It could compete internationally if the Government would give it the go-ahead on a commercial basis. Why are the Government obsessed with the ideology that everything in the public sector is bad and everything in the private sector is good?

We heard talk about how the Treasury determines everything. For goodness sake, the Government are in charge of it: they can decide the rules and what constitutes part of the public sector borrowing requirement and what does not—or perhaps the Minister can do it by himself. If the Government continue to box themselves into a corner of their own making, they cannot plead to the House, "How can the Post Office possibly prosper when it has to run to the Treasury every time it wants to invest two bob?" That can be turned round if there is a desire to take that utility out of the PSBR and give it commercial freedom, including the ability to raise money on the capital markets.

I hear calls of, "Unfair," but unfair to whom? The Green Paper tells us that at present what happens with regard to external financing limits and the contribution is similar to what happens to the dividends paid to shareholders. This is our business, our Post Office. Why should we not have the dividend, invest capital and take a long view as a community, collectively? The Post Office is a prime service industry. It does not have to be privatised in this way. It can serve the needs of our nation domestically and industrially.

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: The hon. Gentleman referred to a point that I made, but I am not sure that he fully understood it. The point about fair competition is, first, that it is good and, secondly, that it cannot exist where one of the competitors has behind it the full weight of the taxpayer. There can be no fair competition on that basis.

Mr. Purchase: That turns everything on its head. Any number of international and multinational conglomerates have such clout in the money markets that it is silly to talk that way about Britain, which probably has a gross domestic product smaller than the borrowing ability of some multinationals. *[Interruption.]* I do not have it wrong. It is barmy to say that we should not exercise our right collectively and as a state to borrow money to finance long-term investment in our industrial and service sectors. It is not me who has not understood; your side—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman when he is in full flow, but we do not normally use the words "you" and "your" in the Chamber.

Mr. Purchase: That is the second time I have been told that today, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I understand and I will do my best to refrain, notwithstanding the full flow.

It is right that collectively we should be able to raise money for long-term investment. It is Conservative Members who have not understood the important difference between borrowing for investment and borrowing to pay the dole. The Government are pouring money down a black hole with no chance of recovering it. They are financing unemployment, much of it the result of the so-called rationalisation of some of the former nationalised industries. That is why millions of people are claiming the dole instead of working.

We want the Post Office to be able to borrow for long-term ventures such as modernising, improving and spreading its service as widely as possible, thereby leading us to a springboard from which we can compete successfully on the international stage and win for Britain.

8.11 pm

Mrs. Angela Browning (Tiverton): I have resisted the temptation to intervene in the speeches of Labour Members since the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Ms Hoey) so ungraciously refused to allow me to do so in her speech.

Some rather contradictory views have been expressed by Labour Members. They have said that, if Royal Mail is privatised, the price to the customer will be jacked up, but that private enterprise would undercut Royal Mail. The idea that any business would jack up its prices while competing with other companies that were reducing theirs does not sit well in the marketplace with which I am familiar.

The hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mr. Purchase) disagreed with the Minister's assertion that, if British Telecom had remained in the public sector, it would not have reduced its prices or acknowledged advances in technology. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Ms Morris) claimed that privatising Royal Mail would be bad because the only way to protect the 160,000 jobs involved was to keep it in the public sector. I am not sure whether the hon. Lady believes that British Telecom could have maintained its staffing strength while reducing its prices and acknowledging advances in technology—something that has been necessary throughout the world.

I represent a large rural constituency that covers some 650 square miles and has more than 70 post offices. I take a particular interest in, and have a particular concern for, the future of those post offices, the majority of which are sub-post offices. I have had regular meetings with the sub-postmasters in my constituency. Indeed, last September I invited them all to a meeting so that they could tell me how they saw the future and what they wanted for rural post offices in particular. I am pleased to say that 30 of them attended that meeting and I then fed back their views to my hon. Friends at the Department.

I must come to the defence of the Minister. Labour Members have accused him of dithering. We all want the process to be concluded because uncertainty is not a good thing, but my right hon. Friend has not been dithering. He has spent considerable time studying what happens in other countries—especially the Republic of Ireland, which uses the switch card to good effect in the payment of benefits. I was glad, therefore, to note in the Green Paper the Government's pledge of £130 million for the automation of benefit payments. If the system is similar to that in the Republic of Ireland, it will greatly benefit my rural post offices. When the sub-postmasters met me last September, they were anxious to point out that they wanted ways to generate income other than the opportunity to sell tangible goods.

Some of the sub-post offices in my constituency are very small and do not have the room to sell a large range of stationery, let alone stock the grocery items that are so often found in small post offices. Some of them are open only two or three half-days a week and are located in people's front rooms. Their ability to increase their income and the range of services that they offer to people in the villages is obviously extremely limited.

If small post offices were computerised and able to sell a range of additional services, the benefits would be most helpful. Ticketing and similar services that can easily be arranged through a computerised service would help them to broaden the range of services that they could offer. That would help people who live in rural communities.

I have read the Green Paper carefully and I shall discuss it at a meeting with sub-postmasters in my constituency before 30 September. Before I do so, however, I should like to ask my right hon. Friend some questions. There is some concern about the payment that sub-post offices receive from the Royal Mail. When my right hon. Friend replies to the debate, will he give an assurance that that payment will continue? It is an important part of their income.

As is made clear in the Green Paper, and as Ministers have said from the Dispatch Box and elsewhere, it is important to maintain the network of sub-post offices and the universal daily delivery of mail from Monday to Saturday, regardless of where people live. In rural areas, people often live at the end of lanes, so it is important to maintain the continuity of the daily post.

Had the hon. Member for Vauxhall allowed me to intervene when she was talking about a second delivery, I would have told her that rural areas have not had one for many years. I visited the modern sorting office in Exeter, which is in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Sir J. Hannam), but which also serves my rural constituency that surrounds Exeter. I was there during the late morning and early afternoon and I saw the amount of mail that was cleared. It is quite clear that Royal Mail is now able to deliver, in one delivery, the vast bulk of the mail that it receives in a 24-hour period. Raising problems about a second delivery is just a red herring. Rural areas get their post on time without the benefit of a second delivery. Indeed, in this day and age, a second delivery is a bit of a luxury, especially in view of the small amount of post waiting to be cleared in the sorting office in the late afternoon.

Mr. Hain: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Browning: I would be tempted to do so, but the hon. Gentleman's colleagues did not extend that courtesy to me earlier.

The cross-subsidy is important for the network of sub-post offices and sub-postmasters in my constituency want some reassurance about that. As I have said, many of them have very small businesses and the amount of income they can generate, from Royal Mail and other sources, is limited.

I am convinced that the necessary guarantees will be provided, so I shall be happy to support the proposed Bill when it comes before the House. Obviously, I want to take the opportunity to respond in detail to the Green Paper and to sound out my sub-postmasters. The principle behind the Government's proposal—which is to maintain the network of sub-post offices in its present format but to increase the range of services that can be offered—is most welcome. My hon. Friends have demonstrated amply that, if Royal Mail is privatised as is suggested in the Green Paper, it has not only to defend its position in the marketplace, but to be given the opportunity to go out and compete in marketplaces around the world.

We have heard what happens in the commercial environment, particularly with direct bulk mail. I know of businesses in other parts of the world—America, for example—that send an enormous amount of direct mail into mainland Europe. They rarely use Royal Mail because other countries' services can undercut us yet, as we have heard tonight, the local postman and postmistress ends up

putting it through a letter box or delivering it to a business. We are being used in a way which produces very little profit.

I received a letter from the Post Office—as I am sure did many hon. Members—outlining its concern at the way in which the volume of mail is growing. As a result of the growth in bulk mail, person-to-person mail is declining as a proportion of the gross mail handled by the Post Office. That is extremely worrying and, as we all know, once a business loses its market share and people build in brand loyalty with other service providers, it is difficult to break into those markets.

Royal Mail must be allowed to compete domestically and internationally. Associations that it may want to develop with printing companies and others who can deliver the complete package of services that people who send commercial mail want to purchase are important because that added value element will be extremely important.

In principle, I am happy to support the proposals that Ministers have outlined from the Dispatch Box. I obviously seek reassurance on the critical issues that affect people in rural areas, particularly in my constituency. I look forward to debating them fully and I hope that Ministers will take full account of the representations made to them in response to the Green Paper.

We have heard that, this summer, Labour party representatives plan to come into our rural areas. I hope that they wear good strong boots, as it is not as balmy an environment as they would wish. When they spread their scare stories in rural areas they will find people to be quite sensible. They will also find that the Liberal Democrats got there first as, for many months, the Liberal Democrats have been telling people in rural areas, by means of questionnaires and petitions, that they will lose their daily Royal Mail and the sub-post offices in their villages. I assume that the Labour party will follow them in that. They are past masters of such scare stories and I am sure that they will share their disgraceful tactics.

I hope that people will look at the facts and will not be gulled. The people who are gulled by scare stories are pensioners and disabled people who claim their benefits from local post offices and people who look forward to personal letters from relatives once a week or once a month.

The campaign is typical of what one might expect from Opposition parties, but I hope that it will be exposed for what it is—preying on the vulnerable and not a rational response.

Mr. Michael Connarty (Falkirk, East): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Browning: I am not giving way to any Opposition Members.

I sincerely hope that the British public, who will be the prey of the summer campaign, will demonstrate, as they have in the past, that the privatisations that the Government have introduced have not only been right, but have been in the public interest.

8.23 pm

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): The most striking thing about the Green Paper is that it is riddled with contradictions. The Government have stumbled into the proposal like a drunken sailor intoxicated by the privatisation dogma.

Three years ago, we had the citizens charter, with its proposals for deregulation and extra competition. We heard no more about that. Then, two years ago, the President of the Board of Trade announced the privatisation of Parcelforce in an almost instant fashion, without proper consultation, only to be dragged by his officials into considering an overall Post Office review a week later, once it had been pointed out to him that it was not as simple as he had thought. We have had deliberations on the proposals for two years and now the Government have come up with this hotch-potch.

I remind the Government that the well-worn procedure for dealing with drunken sailors is to throw them overboard. The former Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh), lost his job as a result of the mania for Post Office privatisation, so which Minister will be next? I believe that, ultimately, the people will throw the Government overboard as a result of this privatisation. I mean no ill will towards you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I say that.

The first serious fault line in the Green Paper is the separation of Post Office Counters from the rest of the Post Office. No postal authority in the world operates a separate retail business, as the Government are proposing. Even the Dutch, who have been quoted every other minute by Government supporters in the debate, have made it clear that they oppose such a proposition.

At a conference in London on 21 and 22 June the managing director of the Dutch post office, Mr. Theo Jangsmon, said:

"I believe the separation of Counters from Royal Mail will hamper some service development".

The chairman of the Post Office, the chief executive and the rest of the Post Office management whom the Government are praying in aid to support the privatisation proposals have argued strongly in evidence to the Select Committee on Trade and Industry and elsewhere for the business to be kept together.

The former chairman of the Post Office, Sir Ron Dearing, who has been significantly silent on the privatisation debate because one might surmise that he is opposed to it, argued the same thing—that the Post Office should be kept together—in a letter to staff in January 1987, as did the Post Office Users' National Council in a submission to the Government's own review.

Are they all wrong? Do the Government consider themselves the only party to the debate who are right? I do not think so; it is essential to keep all sections of the Post Office together, because there is a synergy between the different businesses.

There are 3,092 delivery offices and more than half—1,690—are attached to local post offices. If those post offices are threatened, the delivery offices will be threatened as well. Equally, if the delivery offices are threatened with closure, as will increasingly happen under privatisation, the viability of local or sub-post offices will also be threatened.

Parcelforce is another example. When there is nobody at home, parcels are invariably returned not to the 137 parcel delivery offices—a small number, which is declining—but to one of two other places: either the 3,000 local letters delivery offices or the 20,000 local post offices. If Counters is separated from Parcelforce and the Royal Mail as an entirely separate institution in the public sector, there is no prospect of that synergy remaining, and that will threaten the Royal Mail and Counters.

[Mr. Peter Hain]

There is also a tremendous danger of Counters being left as a rump service in the public sector, with no obligations and no commitments from its sister businesses dealing with letters or parcels to support it in any way. I am not suggesting that there is an overt accounting cross-subsidy; there clearly is not, but there is an organisational cross-subsidy that results from being part of the same post office.

If, in addition, as the Green Paper proposes, private parcels operators and postal operators are encouraged to use the Post Office network as suggested in the Green Paper, there will be even less incentive for the privatised Royal Mail to continue to support the public post offices in the way it does at the moment.

I speak only for myself in this regard and may be criticised by members of my Front Bench, but if the Government privatise the Post Office—something to which I am 100 per cent. opposed—they should keep the counter business with the Royal Mail. If they are hell-bent on privatisation, they should privatise the whole Post Office, and not break it up in the way proposed. If there is an end to any obligation on the part of Royal Mail and Parcelforce to maintain current inter-business charging arrangements, the Post Office's overall viability, and particularly that of the counters business, would be threatened.

At present, there is a considerable financial flow between different postal organisations. At the end of March 1994, counters recorded an income from the Royal Mail of £221 million, against expenditure of £51 million; and from Parcelforce, an income of £22 million against expenditure of £1 million—a net income of £191 million from both businesses.

If Royal Mail and Parcelforce choose other means of delivering the services for which they currently depend on Post Office Counters, the effect on its small profit margin will be catastrophic. The Government have completely ignored that. In that event, the counters business would become a cost to the taxpayer, whereas at present it contributes to the Exchequer.

Crown offices are being downgraded or closed and replaced by franchised agents, so the Post Office's identity is being undermined. What obligation is there on Royal Mail or Parcelforce to use a local post office if it is at the back of—dare I say?—a Sainsbury supermarket, newsagent or some other retail outlet?

Royal Mail will seek to maximise its market share as a private corporation. It will be under no obligation to the counters operation. Royal Mail and Parcelforce may even regard outlets stuck at the back of a Martins newsagent or Tesco as conflicting with their corporate image. That is another reason why a privatised Post Office may not want to use counters as a separate public sector operation.

After privatisation, we saw British Telecom take away services previously provided by counter outlets, such as the booking of international telephone calls. BT is currently presenting a proposal to cease contracting the sale of licence saving stamps. That is what happens when a unified business is broken up. I could quote many other examples. I am emphasising the case for the essential synergy between the different sections of the Post Office as currently structured.

Mr. Roger Evans (Monmouth): The hon. Gentleman argues that all Post Office business should be preserved in one unit for the benefit of the Post Office and of all the people who work for it. Is that view held by the Union of Communication Workers, by which the hon. Gentleman is sponsored?

Mr. Hain: The hon. Gentleman will have to consult the UCW. I dare say that lots of postmen and postwomen will be knocking on the door of the hon. Gentleman's surgery, lobbying him to change his views. There is united opposition among Post Office staff to this privatisation. I make the case not solely on behalf of Post Office workers but primarily on behalf of the public. The counters business will suffer irreparable damage by being hived off and left as a rump service in the public sector.

There is already tremendous public concern about the diminishing number of rural post offices, which are closing at the rate of 200 a year. A privatised Royal Mail and Parcelforce will be under no obligation to maintain local letter delivery offices on the present scale. As they seek to cut costs, they will reduce the number of those offices. That is already happening, but closures will accelerate, which will undermine the viability of local post offices. They are already on death row. In the coming year, they will desperately hope that they can be reprieved through the defeat of privatisation.

Paragraph 5 on page 27 of the Green Paper states that value added tax will be applied to "non-obligatory services". Does that mean that Datapost, which is Parcelforce's express delivery service, will attract VAT? Perhaps the Minister will respond now or at the end of the debate. Datapost users want to know whether they will be charged an extra 17.5 per cent. The viability of that service, which faces stiff competition from private carriers, will be threatened by the application of VAT.

Paragraph 4 on page 27 suggests that VAT will be applied to contract parcels. The Government say that VAT will not be applied to stamps. Mention has been made of so-called granny parcels. I have never understood why it is thought that grandads never send parcels. I refer to parcels of the kind that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I might send to elderly relatives.

The Government have made it clear that such parcels will not attract VAT, but there are many grey areas and contradictions in the separation. I understand why the Government sought to separate stamps from contract parcels. It would be deeply unpopular if the public suddenly had to bear VAT to the tune of nearly one fifth on current prices.

Will metered post and other pre-paid arrangements attract VAT? We deserve an answer from the Minister, but he is not responding. It appears that there is some confusion. There will be considerable scope for evasion and loopholes in the clearly defined sectors of contract parcels and stamps.

Small businesses, for example, do not have a contract in the sense referred to in the Green Paper, but are subject to regular collections by Parcelforce. It suits Parcelforce to collect rather than to have parcels taken to local post offices or delivery offices. There is no pre-payment but subsequent billing. Will VAT be applied in those cases? That is important to small businesses, which are already facing enormous pressures as a consequence of the Government's mistaken policies. They will want to lobby the Government.

There is a suggestion that VAT will be applied to other sectors, but the Green Paper makes no reference to them. Will that tax be applied to Quadrant, the Post Office's catering operation; to Subscription Services, another Post Office business; or to Cashco, which is the Post Office operation that transports money to post offices and between Royal Mail and Parcelforce—a multi-million-pound, if not multi-billion-pound, operation? Clearly, applying VAT to those cash movements will be an enormous issue, which the Government will have to tackle.

There are equally important technical issues, and they are skated over in the Green Paper. What about the royal parks? At present, Royal Mail and Parcelforce vehicles have access to the royal parks, not merely to deliver to them and collect from within them but also, by custom and practice, to drive through them, whereas other private operators have not. Indeed, other operators are specifically barred from driving through the royal parks.

If there is to be a level playing field with DHL, TNT and the other private operators, will Royal Mail and Parcelforce vans lose those privileges, or will they maintain them? We have a right to know the answer to that question, but it is another black hole in the Green Paper.

To pursue the colour analogy, there is also the question of yellow lines. At present, Post Office vehicles can park on double yellow lines without being given an immediate fine and attracting the wrath of local parking wardens, as would happen to you or me, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As private operators—that is what the Government propose—will Royal Mail and Parcelforce vehicles cease to have the privilege of being able to park without hindrance on double yellow lines?

We should know that, as it will affect the viability of the privatised Post Office and Royal Mail that the Government are so keen on. Will they still be viable without those privileges? We should also know whether the private operators with which they will compete will have such privileges accorded to them, too.

The most serious problem of all—the Government have not addressed it, and it has not been mentioned in the debate so far, except in the opening speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook)—is the wider pattern of competition that it is threatened will be superimposed on the Post Office.

If this were simply a question of privatisation, there would be enough of a threat for us to avoid going down that road, especially for rural services, which are presently subsidised within the Royal Mail sector by nearly £300 million. A lean and hungry privatised Royal Mail could not possibly do anything other than reduce rural services. Under any privatisation regime, there would be enough of a threat to rural services, but when the extra competitive measures buried in the Green Paper are put on top of those, there is a serious threat to the viability of the standards to which we have become accustomed.

There is enough of a threat to second deliveries even now. The hon. Member for Tiverton (Mrs. Browning) did not allow me to intervene in her speech, but her constituents, especially those who are Post Office workers, should be told that she does not appear to favour second deliveries in town areas. Paragraph 9, on page 21 of the Green Paper, says:

"Nearly one area in six receives no second delivery".

That is a revealing statement. In other words, five in every six areas do receive a second delivery; 85 per cent. of all households receive one. But the Government are not terribly keen on second deliveries. Their defensive explanation, saying that one area in six does not receive the second delivery, is almost a nod and wink towards getting rid of it.

Indeed, as I know from personal experience, having worked for the Union of Communication Workers and negotiated with Post Office managers, Post Office managers have consistently tried to get rid of the second delivery for years. Now the Government are effectively giving them the green light to do so. Not only will the public suffer greatly, but 27,000 jobs will be lost as a result.

That will be one consequence of privatisation. On top of that, there will be competition. It is important that the House understands what is at stake. The three separate operations within Royal Mail are processing, distribution and delivery. The Green Paper rules out competition in delivery. Why? Is that some charitable gesture? Have the Government had an attack of conscience for a change? No; the cost of delivery is the real cost of the Royal Mail. It costs four times as much as the other two functions. In other words, 80 per cent. of all the costs of the Royal Mail fall within the delivery sphere. So no competition is being opened up there.

Surprise, surprise—competition is being opened up in the profitable areas, in distribution and in processing. There will be competition, for example, in downstream access, which will allow private operators to come in and cream off the trunking—the easy work, on which a great deal of money can be made. It is said that competition will also be allowed in consolidation, which is mentioned in the Green Paper.

That will allow small companies, which cannot now become involved in mailsort and the other pre-sorting arrangements operated by the Royal Mail, to consolidate their activities together through a new private operator. The profits can then be creamed off, then be trunked down, and the rest will be dumped back into the Royal Mail delivery network. All the costs will be picked up by the privatised Post Office, while the private operators pick up the profitable traffic.

Another vignette from the Green Paper is the encouragement of niche licences, which will allow document exchange operators, such as Britdoc, to cream off more traffic, making a great deal of money in doing so. In addition, the monopoly is to be reduced below £1, allowing extra competition. If we add to privatisation, plus all those competitive measures, the RPI minus X price-cutting formula and the European Commission's proposals to take direct mail—40 per cent. of all Royal Mail's traffic—out of the reserved sector, a cumulative pressure will build up that will mean disaster for the Post Office in its privatised state. I believe that it will threaten the viability of the entire Royal Mail service, and place a serious question mark over its flotation. Potential buyers of Royal Mail should study that idea carefully, because they may be being sold a pup.

I believe that the alternative to privatisation has been clearly set out by my hon. Friends on the Front Bench. It is commercial freedom within the public sector. That is perfectly viable, and it exists all over the rest of the world. Even within Britain, it exists, and has existed, in such institutions as the BBC, BNFL, BP when it was still 70 per cent. publicly owned, and even in British Leyland.

There is no reason why commercial freedom within the public sector cannot be delivered, except privatisation

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dogma. It is that dogma in the proposals that we started off fighting, and we shall take that fight to the country. I believe that the Government can be defeated on this measure.

8.47 pm

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): In his attack on the fault lines in the Green Paper, the hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Hain) got to the root of the problem. His warnings were well made. The hon. Member for Tiverton (Mrs. Browning) wanted to see the continuation of rural and suburban post offices. I certainly share her wish for such post offices to continue to grow and thrive, and I hope that the specific reassurances that she sought will be forthcoming from the Government.

Post offices are a crucial part of the local economy of every community throughout the length and breadth of the country. I give due praise and thanks to the men and women who daily provide us with that invaluable service. In my view, we should keep that piece of family silver, polish it up and use it for the benefit of the community, not sell it off at the first opportunity.

I shall be brief, because other hon. Members wish to speak, but I wish to add my support for the Post Office as a public service for the public good. The Victorians introduced that concept which is still supported by the majority of people in Britain. According to recent opinion polls, opposition to privatisation has risen from 64 per cent. to 81 per cent. in the two years since the Government first mooted their ideas. Even 53 per cent. of Conservative supporters are opposed to privatisation.

The reasons for change are Government driven. Treasury rules come from the Government. Access to cash for technological improvements is also controlled by the Government. As with water privatisation, there is a self-fulfiling prophesy. The Government create the rules and then pray them in aid when they want to force through their own dogma.

The Post Office is already efficient, effective and respected. Scotland's 13,000 Royal Mail staff ensure that 94.5 per cent. of first class letters are delivered next day. Given our geographical reality, that is good by any standards.

Under the existing system, the Post Office is a profitable organisation with pre-tax profits of £283 million in 1992-93 and probably even higher profits in 1993-94. The Treasury has not hesitated to dip into that treasure trove to the tune of £230 million in the year to March 1993. But that self-same Treasury also imposes cash limits, thus thwarting potential investment.

There are obvious threats to the commercial future of the Royal Mail—for example, electronic communications. Faxes equivalent to 15 million letters per day were transmitted last year, and electronic trading by computer has doubled in volume during the past year. But those challenges could be met if the Royal Mail had the freedom to do so. Its investment record, despite current Government straitjackets, is good. Greater efficiency, reorganisation, which has dramatically reduced the layers of management, and the adoption of the total quality concept have already happened within Scotland's Post Office service. So too has investment, as the new £30 million automated processing centre using the latest technology has shown, and another is to follow.

The Post Office has moved with the times and, if given proper support, will continue to do so. Freed from tough Treasury restraints, the Post Office could do much more. Financial freedom certainly seems justified. Last year, the Treasury allowed the Post Office to invest only three quarters of what it wanted to invest. That may seem bizarre for a consistently profitable organisation that has no debt and has amassed £500 million in cash. But in the curious world of the Treasury, any investment is undesirable since it contributes to the United Kingdom's budget deficit. Meanwhile, the annual dividend, which the Treasury extracts from the Post Office, currently £181 million, or virtually the whole of its net profit, is by private sector reckoning imprudently high.

Whatever guarantees are given, privatisation is bound to raise doubts and fears about the long-term future of post offices in rural areas and about the future of shops that are also sub-post offices. Those are genuine fears that the Government must address. Whatever commitment the Government make, a market-driven service will naturally pull in the opposite direction from the principle of uniform and standard delivery. It will cause uncertainties in the remote parts of Scotland and throughout the country.

It is not as if the Post Office were inefficient or out of date. It is consistently profitable, has restructured and streamlined its management, has invested in automated equipment and already operates across the boundary of the public and private sector.

I agree with the words of *The Herald* when it says that the role of the Post Office

"is changing and will continue to change as more and more people open bank accounts. It needs the freedom to expand and develop but the public interest will be better served if this happens within the public sector—as the public clearly wants."

Everything that I heard the Minister say earlier points to the fact that he has clearly made up his mind about what he will do. Is the consultation paper yet another consultation sham from the Government? Will they listen to everyone and then do what they wanted to do from the beginning? The only commitment that we had from the Minister was that he would listen to what was said to him. We in Scotland know to our cost that when the Government consult the public they do not listen. In Strathclyde, 97 per cent. of the people showed that they did not want any change in their water services, yet that was what was done. Is the Green Paper yet another consultation sham from a Government who simply do not listen to the people but most certainly do listen to their own dogma?

I am concerned about the Scottish rural areas and the suburban post offices. This privatisation is most certainly a privatisation too far. Certain activities and organisations should be run as a public service for the public good, and this most certainly is one of them.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We have nearly 20 minutes before the wind-up speeches and three hon. Members wish to catch my eye.

8.55 pm

Mr. Michael Connarty (Falkirk, East): I shall try to be brief.

Unfortunately, I was unable to be present for some of the earlier speeches and, sadly, I missed the maiden speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Ms Church), whom I knew as the health and safety representative at a national level for the Manufacturing, Science and Finance Union. I know that I will have missed an excellent contribution, one of many that will be made, and I shall read it with interest tomorrow. However, I have heard some of the contributions to today's debate and the detail into which some hon. Members have gone and I shall not go over that ground.

The question that sticks in my mind when I think of the privatisation of the Post Office, which was opposed even by Lady Thatcher as a privatisation too far, is why the Government are going ahead with it. It makes no sense. It was described by Mr. Bill Cockburn as a cash cow for the Government. It has been milked vigorously by the Treasury in the past few years—£65 million last year and £160 million have been demanded from its profits. It is a profitable organisation working well in the public interest.

Clearly the Government are still driven by an anti-public or anti-community activity ethos. They do not like things that are done by the people and for the people by organsiations owned by the people. That does not gel with their idea of how the world should be run. This is one step in which not many of their supporters will follow them.

The hon. Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh) talked about the 60 per cent. of Conservatives who did not support this privatisation. That means that of the 900 people who voted for the Conservatives in Monklands, about 580 would not support it. When one gets that far down, one should stop digging. The Government should stop and look before they pursue the action that they obviously want to take, as far as the public will allow—the privatisation of the Post Office. I hope that some Conservative Members will have the good sense to prevent them from doing that. Not that it would hurt me; it would damage the Conservatives more. When they leave office, I want it to be as a result of a resounding failure. However, it will be in the interests of the public if we stop this crazy idea.

I have read some of the economics of Hayek, the great guru pushed in the Conservative party among those in the No Turning Back group—the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) and others, some of whom are no longer with us because they were found out at the last election. He claimed that everything should be run according to a market model. In those days he went so far as to talk about having private prisons, and people laughed. According to the Hayek theory, one should even have private armies. That would be just one more step all the way for the Government. People laughed at the idea of private companies taking criminals to court and to prison, but that was the economic theory of Hayek and the lunatics of the ultra-right. The Government still support people who adhere to those crazy theories.

Two individuals are behind the proposals. One is the President of the Board of Trade. I was told that he was Tarzan in the House. I believe that he once swung the Mace around his head. We should forget that. I have another jungle image for him: that of the snake from *The Jungle Book*, which says to Mowgli, "Come inside my coils; go to sleep. It is all right—you will be safe." The President of the Board of Trade is playing that role now. He is saying to the people of Britain, "Go to sleep. Don't worry; it will be all right. The postal service will be safe in my hands." Just like Mowgli, the people of Britain should not listen to the snake behind the privatisation of the Post Office.

The other individual behind the proposals is Mr. Bill Cockburn, a Scot, I am ashamed to say, and the chief executive of the Post Office. When I and other hon. Members met him not long ago, he assured us that he was 100 per cent. behind the idea of keeping the Post Office in the public sector and fighting for commercial freedom.

There was reference earlier to people being intoxicated. Mr. Bill Cockburn is intoxicated by the smell of executive jet fuel. He has been talking to chief executives of other privatised industries, or perhaps he is attracted by the lure of share options that may make him, as it made others, millionaires while the people who work for the Post Office lose their jobs and the people who need the service lose the service.

The Government talk in the Green Paper about separating Counters, but we should examine what is happening in British Gas, which is voluntarily disaggregating its services. The Government are talking about having a retail section and closing 240 showroom outlets. They say that they will not be needed any longer. They will be amalgamated and will offer services for power or power equipment, whether involving gas, electricity or another power source.

The interesting thing about that scenario is that British Gas says that people will pay their gas bills at a post office. At the same time, the Department of Trade and Industry has set a target for the closure of Crown offices; letters have been in the public domain for some time. The Post Office executive has written that it is on target to meet the DTI's targets for the closure of Crown offices. It is important to know that that policy was inspired by the DTI, which pays Mr. Bill Cockburn, who is an employee not of the Post Office but of the DTI. He is paid directly by the DTI; he is on its salary books. It is important, therefore, that we realise that the people calling the tune are the same people who will end up privatising the Post Office.

The hon. Member for Tiverton (Mrs. Browning) said that the Green Paper poses no threat to local sub-post offices, but at a meeting at which I also spoke, the hon. Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt), the Under-Secretary of State for Social Security, admitted openly to about 60 people that stopping transfer payments by giro encashment was a great attraction. He said that it was much more attractive for payments to be made by bank automated credit transfer because giro encashments cost the Treasury 44p, but bank automated credit transfer costs 4p. The Department of Social Security is immensely attracted to the possibility of people no longer encashing giros at post offices.

The Government deal with automation in the Green Paper. To me, automation means a swipe machine for one's smart card and the ability to put one's money anywhere. Down the road, a deal has been struck with the private sector so that people receive their money through automation. We warned them off, we fought them and we beat them the last time that the Government talked about it, but the paying Department has it in mind that automation should be introduced.

Fifty per cent. of local post offices' income comes from giro encashment. A giro encashment payment costs 44p and payments will cost 4p if they are carried out through an automated bank card or switch card, so post offices'

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income will be cut by 91 per cent. Very few local sub-post offices will survive that cut in income. The 2,700 post offices that receive a flat-rate subsidy would probably be joined by another 10,000, or the service would completely fall apart.

The proposal poses a threat to rural communities in Scotland and elsewhere. As a Scottish Labour Member who is sponsored by the Union of Communication Workers, I do not apologise for saying that. My constituency party receives £8,000 for administration as part of that sponsorship, but I receive none of that money. All hon. Members should have to declare their interests in and every single penny that they receive from private consultancies. That would square everyone's idea of how hon. Members should behave.

It can cost up to £10 to send a letter to some parts of the Western Isles or the Orkneys. At the moment, people there receive such a service for a single tariff. The Green Paper contains no guarantee that a uniform tariff will not be much higher in rural areas. A uniform tariff system could mean that a service would cost 25p in the city, but £3 200 miles away, and more than that 500 miles away. It would still be a uniform tariff system. As in the case of British Gas, there is pressure for tariffs to be linked to areas. The same pressure will arise from the privatisation of the Post Office —tariffs will be linked with distance. The system whereby there is one tariff for all first and second class letters will be broken up.

A privatised Post Office would contain no guarantees that the Government will not succumb to the pressure for changes. They will succumb to that pressure because of what will be described as commercial considerations.

During my time with the Union of Communication Workers, however, I have seen a much brighter future for the Post Office. It is a potential transmitter of all sorts of mail, whether that mail is electronic or conveyed by hand. For instance, when electronic shopping is introduced goods will have to be carried to customers. Lives will be changed; the new developments will be a boon—unless the Government say that that bright future must bring profit to some private organisation, and that that is more important than the workers or those who deserve their services.

We must stop this privatisation. I have a simple solution to the problem, and I shall continue to tell people all over the country what I have been telling them already. All summer—indeed, until the present Government are out of office—I shall tell them, "Deselect, or do not vote for, any Member of Parliament who supports the privatisation of the Post Office. That Member of Parliament intends to break up something that is precious to you, and to us."

9.5 pm

Mr. Gordon Prentice (Pendle): I shall be brief, as I want to leave some time for my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. Clapham), who is a member of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry.

I was shocked, but not surprised, by the way in which Conservative Members sought to caricature our stance. The Minister said that we wanted to create some kind of North Korean Stalinist state; the whole thing was bizarre and ludicrous. Some common ground exists. The Post Office must change: the Select Committee said that, the Opposition Front Bench has said it and we all believe it. That is where we part company with the Government, however, because privatisation—in whole or in part—is not the answer.

What do we mean by commercial freedom? Before I deal with that, let me ask a more basic question: why are the Government undertaking this exercise? It is ideologically driven; it is not about improving efficiency or effectiveness in the Post Office; it is as plain as a pikestaff that it is about raising £2 billion to finance tax cuts before the next general election.

Many speakers have reminded the House just how successful the Post Office is. According to the latest annual report, which has just been published, this year's profit amounted to £306 million. It was the 18th successive year of subsidy-free profit. The external financing limit target of £181 million was bettered; the Post Office contributed £182 million to the Treasury coffers. Since 1981, more than £1 billion has gone from the Post Office to the public sector. As I have said, the Government's exercise will not improve efficiency or effectiveness.

Let me tell Conservative Members that the general public feel deep unease and scepticism, which was articulated earlier by the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton). The wider community believes that the Government will have cause to regret this privatisation. Last year, when the automated credit transfer system posed a threat to sub-post offices, I was inundated with protests: 7,000 people in my constituency, which has an electorate of 62,000, signed petitions which I delivered to 10 Downing street. The response to the current privatisation threat will be much greater.

Those sub-postmasters and postmistresses were not only concerned about automated credit transfer; they were straining at the leash to provide services that the Government have not hitherto allowed sub-post offices to provide. They wanted to act as agents for banks and building societies, and to sell tickets for various events. For months, we witnessed the absurd fiasco of the Government agonising over whether sub-post offices could provide fishing licences. It is the stuff of a hall of mirrors.

I shall pose another fundamental question. What on earth happened to the doctrine of the mandate? The Prime Minister's smiling visage is on the Conservative election manifesto, "The Best Future for Britain", in which there is some mention of the Post Office, but not a word about the privatisation of it. If the doctrine of the mandate means something, surely this threatened legislation should be stopped in its tracks when it reaches the other place.

Some of my hon. Friends, including the hon. Members for Falkirk, East (Mr. Connarty) and for Birmingham, Yardley (Ms Morris), have mentioned the widespread fears that Post Office privatisation will mean only another bonanza in pay and perks for directors and grotesquely generous share option schemes. In fact, the water industry and North West Water, which is the water company in my area, was mentioned by the Prime Minister earlier today. The flotation of the water industry was under-priced by £2 billion and £5 billion of debt was written off to enable privatisation to go ahead. Yet, by common consent, it has been disastrous. Since privatisation, charges have risen by 67 per cent. Another disastrous privatisation is that of British Rail, a natural monopoly. Privatisation of it is faltering and the scales are falling from people's eyes when they see the practical effect of privatisation. The same thing will happen with the Post Office.

Privatisation of the Post Office has been ideologically driven and it has not been thought through. The review gestated for two years during which it looked at all sorts of ways in which to make the Post Office more responsive —allegedly. It looked at breaking up the Post Office into separate functions of letter delivery, sorting and so on, and came to the not surprising conclusion that that was impractical. In fact, that idea was always hare-brained. The two-year delay in bringing forward proposals meant that the Post Office could not develop the services that it wanted. The Post Office complained about being enveloped in a fog of uncertainty and, only a few months ago, the chairman of the Post Office talked of an impending crisis. The way in which the legitimate concerns of the Post Office were swept to one side or ignored for two years spoke volumes. When the President of the Board of Trade appeared before the Select Committee, he explained away the two-year delay in reaching conclusions by saying that it was because of the complexities of the issues. It was complex only because the end gain—privatisation by hook or by crook—was the starting point. Privatisation was the name of the game, not making the organisation more efficient.

The uncertainty over the future of the Post Office was caused by anxiety about external political reaction to privatisation. That point was conceded earlier by the former Minister with responsibility for the Post Office, the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh), when, in a fit of pique after he was sacked, he accused the Prime Minister of "political funk" because the Prime Minister had failed to grasp the privatisation nettle. Well, they have grasped it now and it will sting them. In fact, the Government's intentions—real "Alice-in-Wonderland" stuff—became clear only because of a leak from the Department of Trade and Industry, which brought the President of the Board of Trade to the House and the subsequent Green Paper before us.

Many parts of the Green Paper have not been examined adequately, such as the extent of the Post Office monopoly, mentioned on page 24, where the Government say that more detailed work will be needed to ensure that, while safeguarding the Royal Mail's monopoly, there is fair competition between it and the new entrants into the market. The Minister for Industry talked about some degree of monopoly, but he could not be more precise than that.

There is a whole range of ways in which the Post Office, within the public sector, could improve the service, as Post Office people and hon. Members on both sides who want the Post Office to be a successful and dynamic organisation want. It is bizarre that the Post Office cannot enter joint ventures and that is a point that we want to address. It is bizarre that the only trading organisation in the public sector—the Post Office—is fettered when it seeks to borrow. There is a whole series of related issues that should be developed, but not with the sword of Damocles of ultimate privatisation hanging over the head of the Post Office. It is possible for the Post Office to stay in the public sector and to deliver the service that people in here and outside want.

9.15 pm

Mr. Michael Clapham (Barnsley, West and Penistone): As I have only a couple of minutes, I shall merely refer to the suggestions in the report by the Select Committee on Trade and Industry. The Minister has obviously looked at the recommendation in the report, which is that there is a need for change. However, the report does not suggest any form of ownership. If the Minister has read carefully the minutes of the evidence given by the Post Office management, he will have seen clearly that they were prepared to accept commercialisation. Their view was that if the Post Office was freed from the straitjacket of the external financing limit, it would be able to compete with Post Office services such as those in Sweden, France, Germany and Canada where the post offices are all state owned.

I urge the Minister to consider option one as the major option to go for. It would give the Post Office the opportunity to be able to raise capital on the private market. It would give it the opportunity to enter joint ventures so that it could compete with its main competitors, such as the Dutch post office, and it would allow it to continue its unique service, which is so important to rural constituencies such as mine. My constituency is made up of 21 villages and it depends on the service that the Post Office provides.

I urge the Minister to go for option one. It would give us the opportunity to keep the Post Office in the public sector and, at the same time, it would give it the opportunities that it deserves. It would also ensure jobs for the work force and the uniqueness of the service for the British people.

9.17 pm

Mr. Jim Cousins (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): It gives me particular pleasure to say something about the speech of the new hon. Member for Dagenham (Ms Church) who, in her contribution on this important matter, had the combination of very strong and clear thoughts and a gentle and firm delivery. That is an example to us all and I am sure that we shall hear much more from her in the House.

I begin with a quotation which, I hope, will establish some common ground. In this year's annual report, the chief executive of the Post Office says:

"we have ambitions stretching beyond the UK. We have the ability to be a major player in the global postal market and a burning ambition to be the postal administration of first choice —the mailing centre of Europe . . . And we have a trump card —one of the largest and best workforces and network of sub post offices in the world"—

he evidently did not visualise the separation of the sub-post offices from the rest of the network—

"an asset highly valued by customers, clients and the community alike. But, unless we can respond on equal terms to the competition from other overseas post offices and be given the opportunity to offer a wider range of activities at our post offices, we could lose ground at home and abroad and head for a spiral of decline."

We propose to achieve that by offering commercial freedom inside the public sector. Every Opposition Member who has spoken—they spoke for Wolverhampton, Birmingham, Neath and Falkirk—including the members of the Liberal Democrat and Scottish National parties, has supported the idea of achieving success through commercialisation in the public sector. That would combine the trump card of public services with the commercial opportunities that the chief executive mentioned.

In the two years that we have waited for the Green Paper £100 million has been cut from the public investment programme of the Post Office and the price of stamps has

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been subject to an entirely unnecessary increase to meet the imposed EFL targets of the Government. As a consequence, the traditional pillar box mail has declined and is falling steadily. If the Government adopt the option that they endorse in the Green Paper, they will proceed to subject the Post Office to entirely unnecessary political controversy. What we propose could be achieved within the public sector and we believe that there is consensus in favour of that option.

My hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall (Ms Hoey) made an important point when she said that the Post Office's public service is one of those great popular institutions that binds together all parts of the United Kingdom. What the Government endorse is an uncertain, twilight-zone proposal, which contains some illogical contradictions that I should like to point out in the limited time available to me.

It is a fundamental error to see this privatisation—if that is how we are to regard it—as being like those of the past. The productivity gains have already been achieved and, sadly, jobs are being stripped out of the Post Office right now, at a rate of between 5,000 and 8,000 a year. Last year, a 2 per cent. unit cost reduction was achieved in postal services. Those achievements have been made now, inside the public sector.

The fundamental point, which is not disputed by many Conservative Members who spoke in the debate, is that the Post Office service is no natural monopoly. There is no contained infrastructure that gives the Post Office some kind of superiority or exclusive access. It does not have a unique right of access to homes and businesses—it is already competing straightforwardly in those markets. There are 4,000 competitors in the parcels business from TNT down to the bike boys who we see on every street.

There is no controversy about the fact that the Post Office is already in commercial competition. The basis of the network which will keep it together and sustain it in the future—the trump card to which the chief executive of the Post Office referred—is its brand name and its good will. That would be put at risk if we separated post offices from the rest of the network and sold 49 per cent. of what was left.

We believe that the uniform price and universal delivery, which the Government claim to be non-negotiable, can be sustained in the long run in the face of competitive pressures only by a clear commitment to the Post Office as a public service, underwritten by public ownership and public control. That is our objective. The market cannot guarantee that uniform price and universal delivery. The legal guarantees that the Government promise are worthless outside public control, because if the Government intend that the Post Office should operate as a commercial organisation, they should not impose on it the unusual legal obligations set out in the Green Paper. Nor should they subject it to the internal cross-subsidy requirements, which the undertakings to deliver a standard price and universal delivery inevitably make necessary. In every other privatisation those internal cross-subsidy systems, which are essential to maintain the uniform price and universal delivery, have been the subject of specific attacks from all the regulators. That is why the Government's proposal is insecure and is a twilight zone.

The guarantees that the Government have offered cannot be delivered. Indeed, in the Green Paper, the Government make it clear that the guarantee of uniform price and universal delivery is not the legal guarantee that they offer, but that of the letter monopoly. That creates the critical gap in the whole proposal. We simply do not know how the Government propose to deal with the letter monopoly in the future. If it is withdrawn, the uniform price and universal delivery system will collapse—and it will collapse, whatever guarantees the Government offer in legal terms.

In the Green Paper, there is no guarantee of allowing Post Office Counters to take on new business. It said that that might be possible, but some severe conditions are laid down. Tonight, there is an opportunity for the Minister to make clear how he proposes to deal with that uncertainty because it is far from clear that the bit that is left in the public sector will achieve commercial freedom.

Furthermore, what will sub-post offices make of these proposals? Are they to assume that in the future they will have the exclusive right to deal with Royal Mail and Parcelforce, or will it be possible for a 51 per cent. or 49 per cent. privatised Post Office to allow parallel networks to be created to deliver mail and parcels, bypassing the sub-post offices?

We have been told that there will be a contract. Will there be exclusivity in that contract? If there is no exclusivity, the guarantees to the sub-post offices become virtually meaningless. What we are offered in the Green Paper for sub-post offices is not law, only guidelines—a phrase which may prove to be famous in the history of public administration in this country—under five restrictive conditions.

We come to the whole centre of the gobbledegook, the mishmash which the Government have created around the Green Paper—the mysterious footnote which refers us to the standard international system of national accounts, and justification for the fact that a 49 per cent. Government share ownership in the Post Office means that the Post Office will suddenly achieve commercial freedom. That is the only mechanism by which it can achieve it.

For those of us who have made the standard system of national accounts our bedtime reading, I find it odd that the Government should pick on Jacques Delors' final utterances as a means of securing commercial freedom. It is no wonder that there was a certain cry for help about that from the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) earlier in the debate.

If there is a dilemma here, it is a dilemma of the Government's own making. Forty-nine per cent. ownership does not give an escape because the same paragraph, which is quoted incompletely in the Green Paper to describe how the national accounts and the public sector should be drawn up, says:

> "A corporation which a government is able to control as a result of special legislation should be treated as a public corporation even if the government does not own a majority of shares."

If there is a dilemma, and it is a dilemma of the Government's own making, they have not escaped from it.

In the Green Paper, there is absolutely no certainty of securing the future of Post Office services. Yet at the same time the Government propose to load the privatised Post Office—the 50 per cent. plus one share ownership Post Office—with legal obligations which no commercial company would accept.

There is also a central mystery about what the Government intend to do with the share ownership that is left. In the Green Paper, it is not clear whether the Government will vote those shares. We are told that the Government will not routinely vote those shares but that there will be circumstances in which they will vote them. It is therefore vital that now, at the beginning of the process, the Minister makes clear how those shares are to be voted.

The answer lies in one of the Postman Pat stories. Some of us will recall from our literary activities the story entitled, "Postman Pat's Wildcat Chase ", in which Jess the cat—in this case the Government—fatally confuses Mrs. Hubbard's knitting with a woolly monster. This entire discussion about the significance of 49 per cent. plus one or 50 per cent. minus one, and about the possibility of commercial freedom in the public sector, is much the same as wondering whether we are dealing with Mrs. Hubbard's knitting or the woolly monster. Finally, when Postman Pat manages to convince Jess the cat that Mrs. Hubbard's knitting is not a woolly monster, he says,

"I'm sorry he made such a mess. I know he didn't mean any harm. He's not really a naughty cat—he was only running for his life."

Perhaps the President of the Board of Trade is running for his life now his hon. Friends will certainly be running for their lives later.

There is no majority in the country for this. The country well understands the significance of the trump card: the core public services and the good will and public support on which the future commercial opportunities of the Post Office depend. We propose to take up the cause of the public and to defend that trump card. We shall defend a public brand name that has been established over 150 years, and the public good will that is reflected in the core public services.

We shall resist this break-up. We shall not accept Government legislation introduced to dismember the Post Office's services. There is an alternative and, in a half-hearted way, it is already on the table. That is the alternative that we shall begin to argue for.

Mr. McLoughlin: Can the hon. Gentleman confirm what he said earlier—that if the Government decide to move forward with their preferred option, a future Labour Government would buy back the shares and renationalise the Royal Mail?

Mr. Cousins: I certainly did not say that.

Mr. Peter Ainsworth *rose—*

Mr. Cousins: Let me deal with this point first. I adopted the same formula as my hon. Friend the Member for Livingstonused. When asked the question, he clearly said that we think the Government are mistaken and foolish to embark on this. We cannot predict whether they will persist in their foolishness. If they do, we cannot predict how the House of Commons will react to it. Even if the House agrees to it, we cannot be sure what precise form it will agree to. However, should the option that the Government are advancing pass into law, we would seek to re-establish public control over these core public services. That is our policy and our intention and, if I have understood matters aright, it is also the policy of all the Opposition parties represented in the debate.

Mr. French: When asked earlier whether a future Labour Government, if there were one, would renationalise the Post Office, the hon. Gentleman's answer was yes.

Mr. Cousins: I did not say that a future Labour Government would renationalise the Post Office, or that they would buy back shares. The Government have invented those fictions. Like poor Jess the cat, they cannot distinguish woolly monsters from Mrs. Hubbard's knitting.

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: The hon. Gentleman can resort to as many formulae as he likes. It was quite clear to me, and I asked the question, that the hon. Gentleman said that a future Labour Government, should one exist, would seek to renationalise the Post Office. The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) will be able to read that in *Hansard* tomorrow morning.

Mr. Cousins: My hon. Friend the Member for Livingston will be able to read all my remarks on that matter with complete comfort, because they entirely echo his remarks at the start of the debate.

We return to the heart of the proposition. The central point was made, in a way, by the intervention of the hon. Member for Macclesfield. I do not know how we should regard him in the House, but he sits on the Conservative Benches. He, too, said that the public wanted and desired commercial freedom in the public sector. That is what the people of the country want. The Government oppose that, and are putting forward the twilight zone solution in which a public service will be broken in two and the Royal Mail and parcels will in future be neither one thing nor the other. Neither the markets nor anyone else will understand the balance of power in the organisation that the Government propose to create in their preferred option.

We say to the Government kindly and gently, as we always do—clearly, gently and firmly, in the style suggested to the House by my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham—that if they persist in that, perhaps it would be time for them to go home and think once again.

9.35 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Technology (Mr. Patrick McLoughlin): I agree with the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins) on one thing: I pay tribute to his hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Ms Church) on her first speech to the House. I heard the speech this afternoon, and it was an impressive performance. She spoke with great clarity and feeling.

I notice that the hon. Lady's predecessor, one-time Labour party leadership contender, and at one time no doubt Prime Minister contender, has decided to desert the country for a country that has now privatised its post office service. I thought that that was perhaps an adequate way to start the debate.

I congratulate the hon. Lady. We all feel for her, because we all know what a trial it is to get one's maiden speech out of the way and to start to get more into the hurly-burly of the House of Commons.

Of the speeches of the 10 Labour Back Benchers who spoke, there were four interesting contributions, from the hon. Members for Falkirk, East (Mr. Connarty), for Neath (Mr. Hain), for Vauxhall (Ms Hoey) and for Birmingham, Yardley (Ms Morris). I would expect them to make interesting contributions, because they are all sponsored by the Union of Communication Workers, and it is a pity that

[Mr. Patrick McLoughlin]

perhaps— *[Interruption.]*—it is a pity that perhaps some of them did not declare it right at the beginning of their speech. Indeed, the hon. Member for Falkirk, East—I pay tribute to him—goes a little further and says that he gets £8,000 a year from the UCW in the Members' register.

Mr. Connarty: The hon. Gentleman does not recall accurately. I said that my constituency party receives £8,000 for its administration. I receive no personal remuneration.

Mr. McLoughlin: I apologise to the hon. Gentleman if I misquoted him, but I thought that it was worth putting those four contributions on the record.

We have had several demands today from the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central and others about the commercial freedoms that they keep talking about that they would like the Post Office to have. That is interesting. They often speak about commercial freedoms, but whenever the idea of extending further freedoms to the Post Office is mooted we often receive letters from leading members of the Opposition Front Bench team, saying that perhaps those freedoms should not be given.

I have one such letter from the Opposition Chief Whip, the right hon. Member for Bishop Auckland (Mr. Foster), which says:

"I enclose a copy of a report from a recent issue of the Northern Echo. I do hope that you will ensure that the fullest consultations are carried out before any such proposal for the Post Office to deliver Sunday papers by the post is arrived at."

So the Opposition continually ask for extra commercial freedoms for the Post Office, but every time that more commercial freedoms are even considered or suggested, the alarm bells rise from the Opposition Benches.

Although, as we have made clear, we are seeking views, there are three cardinal things that we stand by, and on which we are not prepared to negotiate. Those commitments include a commitment to a nationwide letter and parcels service, with daily delivery to every address in the country. I say to my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mrs. Browning) that that involves delivery on six days to every home.

We are committed to a uniform and affordable price structure under which it will cost the public the same to post a letter no matter where it is posted or to where it is sent throughout the United Kingdom. We are also committed to a nationwide network of post offices, and we need no lectures from the Opposition about the importance of that. Some of my hon. Friends who represent rural constituencies have a number of post offices in their areas and we strongly feel that they should be given the extra commercial freedoms set out in the Green Paper.

Our postal services are operating in a world of rapid change. They must adapt if they are to thrive as businesses in the face of growing competition and if they are to continue to meet the needs and demands of their customers. A policy of standing still will not preserve our postal services, nor will it protect the jobs that the hon. Member for Neath and other hon. Members spoke so much about. It will simply ossify them and condemn them to gradual decline. Our postal services recognise the need to change while maintaining and improving their standards of service and preserving the three non-negotiable commitments to which I have referred.

Mr. Hain: If the Minister is so keen on change and on meeting the competitive demands that are undoubtedly bearing down on the Post Office, why do the Government not give commercial freedom now instead of waiting the 18 months or so that will be needed to put a Bill through Parliament—if it gets through Parliament? Why not give commercial freedom now so that we can take on the Dutch and the others?

Mr. McLoughlin: We have made it fairly clear that we are consulting on the options. It is important to move forward with the right proposals and I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman condemns that.

As I have said, our postal services are operating in a world of rapid change and must adapt if they are to thrive as businesses in the face of growing competition. The fact that we are addressing those issues and charting a way forward for the Post Office is greatly welcomed, certainly by people to whom I have spoken.

The changes facing our post office network, the largest retail network in Europe, are of course different from those confronting Royal Mail. Most services that are available in post offices are now available elsewhere and new shopping habits have evolved with the shift from smaller retailers to larger stores. To enable our post offices to respond positively to that challenge, the Government have decided to allow Post Office Counters greater commercial freedom within the existing structure. That will allow our post office network to provide a wider range of services on behalf of new and existing private sector clients. Moreover, new technology offers the opportunity to automate much of the routine clerical work which, like bindweed, is strangling the business. The Government have made it clear that they intend to bring those changes rapidly to fruition.

The hon. Member for Falkirk, East attacked British Gas, which has signed a contract with the Post Office to enable people to pay gas bills at the Post Office without charge. I thought that the hon. Gentleman would have welcomed that rather than condemn it. I certainly think that most customers and constituents welcome it.

Mr. Connarty: The Minister seems to have a paranoia this evening. I think I said that, while it had been decided that people could pay their gas bills through post offices, the irony was that the Post Office and DTI target was to close post offices throughout the country.

Mr. McLoughlin: The hon. Gentleman is wrong again. Many closures occur because no one is willing to take on the franchise. The hon. Gentleman is talking about the conversion programme for Crown post offices. As the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) said, although there is sometimes controversy on the announcement of changes, the service that is provided by the people who take over the franchise greatly improves and that is to the benefit of local consumers and townspeople. We shall not take any lectures from the Opposition on that.

I have no doubt that the Opposition are full of good intentions when they talk about giving greater commercial freedom. But no Labour Government have ever done that and I doubt that when the call comes to punch a future Labour Government will be able to do it—if Labour were ever elected to govern. We often talk about intent but the reality of government is different from the reality of opposition. I remind the Opposition of what the last Labour Chancellor of the Exchequer said at a Labour party conference. He said:

"I am going to negotiate with the IMF on the basis of our existing policies, not changes in policies, and I need your support to do it. But when I say 'existing policies' I mean things we do not like as well as things we do like. It means sticking to the very painful cuts in public expenditure on which the Government has already decided. It means sticking to a pay policy which enables us, as the TUC resolved a week or two ago, to continue the attack on inflation."

It is easy when in opposition to forget the responsibilities of Government. Labour Members are so dismissive of the past.

The hon. Member for Vauxhall said she did not believe that we would stick by any of the commitments we have given, such as a universal tariff and a free service for the blind. That was the sort of argument Labour Members used when we privatised British Telecom. What has happened since? There has been massive investment in telecommunications, there are more telephone boxes and, even more incredible, they actually work. We will listen to no lectures from them about providing and improving universal services. Every time they talk about such matters, they are wrong. We have taken the correct action and improved the service to the consumer. In addition, the companies that we have privatised have become world leaders and have attracted a large amount of new business.

My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) served on the Select Committee and he told us of some of the arguments put and points raised during its consideration of the report. My hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh), who has great knowledge of these matters, asked a number of questions. In effect, he asked me to pre-judge the Government's consultation exercise. He also made a number of suggestions about ways in which he wanted us to go further. I want to reflect carefully on his speech and include it in our consultation exercise. He made a number of recommendations that we may wish to follow at a later stage. I assure him that I have taken on board some of his points.

Mr. Cousins: The hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) described the offer of new business for Post Office Counters as mealy-mouthed. He said that the Government were imposing conditions by saying that the market was well served by the private sector, by questioning whether the involvement of Post Office Counters would create market power and by saying that there was a need to ensure that third parties were not discomfited. Is the Minister saying that he is taking the hon. Gentleman's point seriously?

Mr. McLoughlin: I do not know how the hon. Gentleman has the cheek to refer to the Government as mealy-mouthed. He should remember how he tried to scoot away from answering the clear point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, East (Mr. Ainsworth).

When the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) appeared on the "Today" programme, he was constantly pushed by Peter Hobday to say whether he would renationalise the Post Office. Finally, the hon. Gentleman said:

"No. Hang on, hang on. Let me answer your question. At the moment the Post Office is in the public sector. We want to keep in there. If it is put in the private sector we will consider that question when and if the time arrives. I must say that I personally would not rule out bringing it back."

Of course, the hon. Gentleman has to get his new orders from whoever is chosen to lead his party, whether it is a moderniser or someone else.

The Labour party's policies change at each general election. Its 1992 manifesto said:

"The provision of water is so fundamental that it is a priority for return to public control . . . We will restore public control of the National Grid and give it new duties and powers to ensure the long-term security of electricity supplies. They"—

that is the Conservatives—

"would, if they won power again, privatise water, electricity, steel and other services, and the industries built up from the public investment over past years . . . We shall extend social ownership by a variety of means, as set out in Labour's detailed proposals. In particular, we will set up British Enterprise, to take a socially owned stake in high-tech industries and other concerns where public funds are used to strengthen investment . . . Social ownership of basic utilities like gas and water is vital to ensure that every individual has access to their use and that the companies contribute to Britain's industrial recovery, for instance, by buying British. We shall start by using the existing 49 per cent. holding in British Telecom to ensure proper influence in their decisions.".

They do not say what is proper.

If any party is blinded by dogma, it is the Labour party and its dogma of constantly believing in the public sector. They have been repeating the dogma of public good, private bad at length today. We are the only party addressing the serious and wide-ranging issues to ensure that the Post Office survives and expands its business into the next century.

I was asked a number of questions to which I shall try to respond. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Ms Morris) asked about pensions. The Government are well aware of the importance of protecting pension rights of past and present employees. That is why we have given an undertaking, expressed in the Green Paper, that such rights will be safeguarded. The precise mechanism for dealing with pension arrangements in any legislation will have to be worked out with the companies concerned and we will take into account the representations of pensioners, but I give the House an assurance that employees and pensioners will continue to enjoy pension rights that are at least as good as they have at present.

The hon. Member for Gordon and, in an intervention, the hon. Member for Neath asked about Sunday collections. Perhaps they were a little unwise to raise that subject. A number of services, such as the second daily delivery of mail and Sunday collections, are not currently part of Royal Mail's social commitment, but it is an operational matter to ensure that quality targets, such as the percentage of first-class letters delivered the next working day, are not only met but improved. If, for example, the second delivery did not exist in the vast majority of places, Royal Mail could not deliver 92 per cent. of first-class mail the next working day—a figure that has made it the highest quality postal administration in Europe.

If we proceed with the Government's preferred option, we will write specific safeguards into the terms of their appointment. The targets are demanding and could well cover issues such as Sunday collections and the timing of daily deliveries. They will be subject to the scrutiny of the regulator, who will ensure that the service received by the public goes from strength to strength.

It is interesting to ask when Sunday collections were suspended. When did Royal Mail do away with Sunday collections? It will come as no surprise to the House that Sunday collections were suspended in 1976, no doubt with the agreement of the then Secretary of State or the person then responsible for the Post Office. So the improved efficiencies have been achieved and encouraged under a Conservative Government. We shall not privatise an

[Mr. McLoughlin]

industry to see it give a worse service to the public; we shall want a better service to the public, as we have seen with every single privatisation we have pursued through the House. When the hon. Gentleman asked about the Sunday collection, he hit on a very poor point. It is interesting to see that somebody who usually jumps to his feet every time he is challenged on any subject is stuck to his seat as if he were stuck there with Loctite glue—perhaps that would be a favour to us all.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown) echoed a point made by a number of my hon. Friends about the importance of the post offices in their constituencies. That was also mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, East who spoke about nationwide collection.

We heard the usual scare stories from the Scottish nationalists. The hon. Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh) could not have read the Green Paper because its assurances go a long way to meeting the concerns that he expressed.

Mr. Welsh: If there is genuine consultation and the majority of people oppose the Government's plans, will they withdraw their plans—or is it a case of the usual sham?

Mr. McLoughlin: I made it clear, as did my right hon. Friend the Minister for Industry, that there will be consultation. At the end of the day, when the Government bring forward legislation, it will be for Parliament to take a view. There will be wide consultation with all the people involved. We have not embarked on consultation to ignore what emerges from that exercise.

We have heard many scare stories from Opposition parties about every privatisation. In 1985, the right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) said that there was no evidence that the gas privatisation Bill would improve efficiency, provide a better service, produce cheaper gas or release or create competition. The hon. Member for Gordon said that 16 million gas consumers could expect only one result—to pay increased gas prices, higher than the rate of inflation, for years to come. As those remarks illustrate, the privatisation and subsequent regulation of British Gas provided an early example of what Labour and the Liberal Democrats repeatedly called privatisations too far.

The privatisation of British Gas was a great success for consumers. Their experience before and since privatisation could hardly have been more different. In the early 1980s, domestic gas prices rose more than one third in real terms. Since privatisation in 1986, real-term prices have fallen below their January 1979 level. In July 1992, real-term prices were cut by an average 3 per cent., and a further 2 per cent. reduction occurred in October. Inflation was running at about 4 per cent. The number of disconnections also substantially reduced—something that I thought Opposition parties would welcome.

We heard then all the scare stories that we heard today. That is all that the Opposition can live off and fight with. When we take privatisation forward, their scare stories are knocked out and disproved. We will bear that important point in mind as we go through the consultation process.

Opposition Members have approached this privatisation with the closed minds that we have come to expect of them. From the start, they ruled out the option of privatisation, even though some of the most successful companies in Britain today were privatised. The Opposition have resorted to the scare stories that they trotted out in the past. In the Second Reading debate on the Telecommunications Bill, the right hon. Member for Salford, East said:

"Despite the Minister's assurances, we remain unconvinced that the level and range of services available will be continued. We maintain that market forces will demand that a privately owned BT cuts those services that incur a loss or make little profit. Rural services, emergency services, call boxes and provision for the blind and the disabled have an uncertain future."
—[*Official Report*, 18 July 1994; Vol. 46, c. 41.]

The Opposition said that when we privatised British Telecom, but look what happened. The number of BT call boxes has risen from 77,000 in 1984 to more than 100,000 today, and 96 per cent. of them work at any one time—up from only 75 per cent. six or seven years ago. The service is improving all the time. BT completes 95 per cent. of customer installations within the agreed time. Its main tariffs have fallen more than 30 per cent. in real terms since privatisation and will continue to fall at a rate of retail price index minus 7.5 per cent.

The leopards on the Benches opposite have not changed their spots. For all their talk of modernisation, their diet is still public sector ownership, Government control and clause 4 socialism. The Opposition want to give Royal Mail all the commercial freedoms of the private sector but none of the financial disciplines, with all the security of being in the public sector. So much for control of public expenditure. They want to do something that no Labour Government found a way of doing in the past.

What we have heard today has been the irresponsible attack of an Opposition. What is more, despite the fine-sounding promises from Opposition Members about the far-reaching changes that they want, the Labour party has shown itself today to be convinced of the merits of public ownership, and has promised to take Royal Mail back into the public sector if the Government's preferred option is implemented. What would be next? British Telecom? British Gas? Electricity? We await the answers with great interest. In the meantime, I commend the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister to my hon. Friends.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 273, Noes 305.

Division No. 292] **[9.59 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane	Boyes, Roland
Adams, Mrs Irene	Bradley, Keith
Ainger, Nick	Bray, Dr Jeremy
Allen, Graham	Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Armstrong, Hilary	Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy	Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Ashton, Joe	Burden, Richard
Austin-Walker, John	Byers, Stephen
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Cabom, Richard
Barnes, Harry	Callaghan, Jim
Barron, Kevin	Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Battle, John	Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Bayley, Hugh	Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.	Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Bell, Stuart	Canavan, Dennis
Benn, Rt Hon Tony	Cann, Jamie
Bennett, Andrew F.	Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Bermingham, Gerald	Chidgey, David
Berry, Roger	Chisholm, Malcolm
Blunkett, David	Church, Judith
Boateng, Paul	Clapham, Michael

Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Hendron, Dr Joe
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hodge, Margaret
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Sheffld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
MacShane, Denis
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmors)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Timms, Stephen
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John Cummings and
Mr. Jim Dowd.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcl)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan

Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, Sir John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Rt Hon Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Paice, James
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Irvine Patnick.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments).*

The House divided: Ayes 303, Noes 247

Division No. 293] **[10.15 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushf)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*

Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, Sir John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Rt Hon Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Allen, Graham
Armstrong, Hilary
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Cabom, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Church, Judith
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria

Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hodge, Margaret
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jamieson, David
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
MacShane, Denis
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Oliver, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Timms, Stephen
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Jim Dowd and
Mr. John Cummings.

Question accordingly agreed to.

MADAM SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House agrees with the Select Committee on Trade and Industry that the Post Office cannot be retained in its present form; therefore welcomes the publication of the Government's Green Paper on the future of postal services which acknowledges the need for greater commercial freedom for the Post Office and provides increased opportunities for sub-post offices; recognising the importance to communities of Post Office Counters and the Royal Mail, supports the Government's commitment to the universal service at a uniform and affordable tariff, with a nationwide network of post offices; condemns the approach that the only possible solution is 100 per cent. public ownership; and welcomes the opportunity of consultation on the range of options.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c

Madam Speaker: With permission, I shall put together the motions relating to statutory instruments.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

RATES (NORTHERN IRELAND)

That the draft Rates (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 14th June, be approved.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE (NORTHERN IRELAND)

That the draft Criminal Justice (Northern Ireland) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 14th June, be approved.

EUROPEAN MOLECULAR BIOLOGY LABORATORY

That the draft European Molecular Biology Laboratory (Immunities and Privileges) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 21st June, be approved.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

Question agreed to.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(9) (European Standing Committees).

TRANS-EUROPEAN NETWORKS

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 5475/94, relating to general rules for the granting of Community financial aid in the field of Trans-European Networks.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

Question agreed to.

Procedure

10.29 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): I beg to move,

That—(1) Standing Order No. 37 (Procedure on divisions) be amended, in line 7, by leaving out 'this direction' and inserting 'the nomination of tellers';

(2) this House approves the Third Report of Session 1992-93 from the Select Committee on Procedure (House of Commons Paper No. 880 (1992-93)) so far as it relates to the printing of, and the presentation of, Private Members' Bills; and

(3) Standing Order No. 13 (Arrangement of public business) be amended, at the end, by adding—

'(12) An Order appointing a day for the second reading of a private Member's bill shall lapse at the rising of the House on the preceding sitting day if at that time the bill has not been printed and delivered to the Vote Office, and the House shall make no further order appointing a day for the second reading of the bill until it has been printed.'.

Madam Speaker: I have selected the amendment standing in the name of the right hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P.Emery).

Mr. Newton: I shall try to be brief.

The three procedural questions that we are debating this evening all originate from recommendations from the Select Committee on Procedure. I am glad to have this further opportunity to express again the House's appreciation to my right hon Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P.Emery), as Chairman of that Committee, and to his colleagues for their work.

The first paragraph of the motion, relating to Divisions, implements a recommendation from the Committee's second report of the 1991-92 Session. Standing Order No. 37 stipulates that at least six minutes should elapse before the occupant of the Chair orders the doors to the Division Lobby to be locked. The Committee thought this was anomalous, because for nearly 20 years a period of eight minutes has been allowed in order to give Members whose offices are in other buildings time to reach the Lobby.

The Committee also pointed to an ambiguity in the wording of the Standing Order, and the proposed amendment corrects both defects by remedying the anomaly and providing that the six minutes should run from the nomination of the Tellers. Two minutes from the calling of the Division to the appointment of Tellers, plus a further six minutes to the order to lock the doors continues to give a total of eight minutes. The amendment is therefore a helpful clarification of the Standing Order.

As you said, Madam Speaker, my right hon. Friend the Member for Honiton has also tabled an amendment and I must say, straightforwardly, that I speak with a bit more caution about it. The Standing Order provides that, two minutes after the Speaker's direction to clear the Lobby, she should put the Question again and then appoint Tellers. My right hon Friend's amendment would enable the Speaker, at her discretion, to appoint Tellers at any time within that period of two minutes. The second part of his amendment would ensure that the total period of time before the locking of the doors into the Division Lobby remained unchanged.

I acknowledge, of course, that, on a few occasions, my right hon Friend's proposal would allow Members to begin leaving the Lobby a little earlier than they can at present. The number of occasions on which it would be sensible to make use of this provision, however, is limited.

First, there would have to be no initial uncertainty about who the Tellers were to be. Secondly—perhaps this is the more important point—it would be necessary to ensure that the Division Clerks were on the spot. In practice, we are probably talking only about Divisions which are expected and which follow immediately after another Division.

We need to consider what might happen if Tellers were appointed, as could easily occur, before the Division Clerks were on the spot. Some of the places where Division Clerks may be on duty—for example, in Committee—are a considerable distance from the Chamber. It would be very difficult for them to get to the Lobby within the allotted two minutes. The failure to arrive in time, where Tellers had been appointed early, could aggravate the irritation caused to Members, and at the same time cause difficulty for the Clerks. Those are the points that some people have made.

We should also bear in mind the fact that such a provision would depend on an exercise of discretion by the Chair, which it is by no means clear that the Chair would wish to have. I have the Chair's authorisation to say that the Speaker has considerable reservations about the proposal. In practice, the Chair would find it very difficult to exercise that discretion. In those circumstances, where the gain to Members would be limited and fairly infrequent, we should at least think carefully before making such a change. I put those points before the House.

The second and third paragraphs of the motion which we are debating this evening relate to the Committee's third report of the previous Session. It is the practice of the House, for obvious reasons, not to give a Second Reading to a Bill which has not been printed. Many private Members' Bills are never printed—they may well have served the sponsor's purpose by giving him or her an opportunity to make a speech under the ten-minute rule.

That is not a criticism—the private Members' Bill is a perfectly legitimate political device, even if it is introduced with no serious expectation that it will be passed into law. As the Procedure Committee points out, however, on many Fridays the Order Paper contains the titles of a number of Bills which could not possibly make progress, but it is not apparent from the Order Paper which Bills those are.

The Committee has therefore recommended that, if a Bill is not printed by the rising of the House on the day before that on which it is set down for Second Reading, it should be dropped from the Order Paper and only revived when eventually printed. That in no way diminishes the rights of the Member promoting the Bill, because his Bill cannot in any case be read a Second Time until it has been printed, and as soon as it has been printed, he can revive the Bill and have set it down again for Second Reading. The third paragraph of the motion makes the necessary consequential change to Standing Orders.

The Procedure Committee's third report also considered what it regarded as a loophole in the rules, which allows a Member who has been refused leave to introduce a Bill under the ten-minute rule then to present substantially the same Bill from behind the Chair under Standing Order No. 58. A Bill with an identical long title cannot be presented from behind the Chair, but a Bill with only a marginally changed long title can.

The Committee's view was that that was an abuse, and recommended that the refusal by the House of leave to bring in a ten-minute Bill should be treated as the rejection of that Bill at a substantive stage, with the effect that a Bill with the same or a similar long title could not be presented

[Mr. Newton]

again in the same Session. If the House approves that part of the Committee's report, it will give effect to that recommendation.

I hope, in this rather hasty fashion, that I have given the House some flavour of the fact that these are modest and unspectacular but sensible modifications to our Standing Orders. With the reserved note that I have expressed about my right hon. Friend's amendment, I commend the motion to the House.

10.35 pm

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): I beg to move, as an amendment to the motion, in paragraph (1), to leave out from 'amended' to the end of the paragraph, and insert 'in line 4, by leaving out "After the lapse of" and inserting "Not more than", and in line 7, by leaving out "six minutes from this direction" and inserting "eight minutes from the direction to clear the lobby".'.

I thank my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House for arranging this debate, and for bringing forward two fairly small recommendations made by the Select Committee on Procedure, which have been waiting for debate for some time—since 1990-91 and 1991-92.

There are two factors relating to ensuring the eight minutes before a Division. We know that there is elasticity, in that Madam Speaker can elongate that time if she feels that it is necessary. That is not altered. The recommendation dealing with the publication of private Members' Bills follows the recommendation of the Committee, and I am delighted to see that the Government have brought that forward.

The motion has allowed me to table an amendment to follow a unanimous recommendation from the Procedure Committee, which is in paragraphs 18 to 26 of the third report of Session 1992-93 That report has been before the House for some time, so it is not new, and it has not been bounced on the House. I shall remind the House quickly of what the report says:

"Standing Order No. 37 provides that two minutes shall be allowed after the Speaker . . . has put the question and called the division (by saying 'clear the lobby'), before the Speaker shall put the question again"—

that two minutes is absolute; it cannot be reduced—

"If Members against shout 'Aye' and 'No', tellers are then appointed by the occupant of the Chair. When they take up their positions, the doors are unlocked"

and the Division starts.

It goes on:

"The Committee has considered whether the Chair should be given the discretion"—

it is not mandatory—

"to reduce the period of two minutes on occasions when the names of tellers are available at the Chair in less than that time. It is not proposed that the overall time of at least eight minutes before the doors are locked should be reduced."

The second part of my amendment would ensure that that is the case.

The report goes on:

"Such a change would appear to us to have the advantage that it may well enable Members to leave the division lobby up to a minute or more earlier at the start of a division. We believe that this would be especially helpful in divisions involving a large number of Members at predictable times such as seven or ten o'clock. It would also overcome the frustration felt by Members standing waiting for the counting of the division to begin."

On a number of occasions, I have heard hon. Members say, "How long are we waiting for?" It is like waiting for the kettle to boil.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): The right hon. Gentleman made the point that the recommendations in the report were unanimous. Bearing in mind some of the recent difficulties that we have had on the Procedure Committee, we should be grateful for that.

Are not the last two Divisions an excellent example of what the right hon. Gentleman is saying, especially the second one? When we knew that there was to be a second Division, hon. Members were waiting to vote before going home, except those of us who are left in the Chamber. No harm would have come—the Tellers were obviously ready, and the Clerk was ready. There is no reason why the second Division could not have been done as we recommended.

Sir Peter Emery: The hon. Gentleman puts clearly the main point of the Committee's report. We continued:

"We have sought evidence from the Government, Opposition and Liberal Democrat Chief Whips and from the Clerk of the House and the Serjeant at Arms. The evidence of the Clerk of the House and the Government Chief Whip is published with this report. The Serjeant at Arms told us that he had no objection to the proposal. No other replies were received.

We understand that tellers are not always ready until the full two minutes have elapsed after the division is first called and that this period does enable Members to make a final decision on whether to press a matter to a division. We also appreciate that the division clerks have to reach the lobbies from wherever in the building they are carrying out their duties. If the two minute period is reduced, it may not always be possible for the clerks to get to their desks before the tellers get to the doors. On balance, we do not think these factors will apply in the circumstances when the House would most benefit from the Chair having discretion to appoint tellers earlier, namely when"

there are several Divisions, as was rightly pointed out by the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick).

At present, the exit doors of the Division Lobbies are not unlocked by the Doorkeepers until two Clerks and two Tellers are in position. We do not propose to alter that arrangement.

"We therefore believe that the occupant of the Chair should be given discretion to put the question the second time once the names of the tellers have been supplied to the Clerks at the Table at any point up to a maximum of two minutes".

Ms Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): Has the right hon. Gentleman sought the advice of the fire service on the health and safety considerations involved when doors are locked for so long between Divisions?

Sir Peter Emery: I am torpedoed. The answer is no, we have not. We did not think this matter one for the fire service, I must openly admit.

We take no powers away from the Chair. We do not insist that the Chair act in any particular way. All the amendment does is give the Chair the right to call the second Division in a shorter time. That would allow Members not to have to stand waiting in the Lobby while the Tellers—*[Interruption.]* Does the hon. Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) wish to get to his feet and intervene?

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman had better make his comments standing up, or they will not be recorded.

Sir Peter Emery: That is what I was trying to suggest, Madam Speaker.

We are trying to help Back Benchers by ensuring that they are not in the Lobbies longer than necessary. This power, we believe, should be given to the Chair. I urge the House to accept the amendment.

Amendment agreed to.

Main Question, as amended, agreed to.

Resolved,

That—(1) Standing Order No. 37 (Procedure on divisions) be amended, in line 4, by leaving out "After the lapse of" and inserting "Not more than", and in line 7, by leaving out "six minutes from this direction" and inserting "eight minutes from the direction to clear the lobby".

(2) this House approves the Third Report of Session 1992-93 from the Select Committee on Procedure (House of Commons Paper No. 880 (1992-93)) so far as it relates to the printing of, and the presentation of, Private Members' Bills; and

(3) Standing Order No. 13 (Arrangement of public business) be amended, at the end, by adding—

'(12) An Order appointing a day for the second reading of a private Member's bill shall lapse at the rising of the House on the preceding sitting day if at that time the bill has not been printed and delivered to the Vote Office, and the House shall make no further order appointing a day for the second reading of the bill until it has been printed.'.

Catering Committee (Reports)

10.43 pm

Mr. Colin Shepherd (Hereford): I beg to move,

That this House approves the First Report from the Catering Committee of Session 1993-94, on Refreshment Services for the House of Commons (House of Commons Paper No. 75), and the First Report from the Catering Committee of Session 1992-93, on Refreshment Provision for Line of Route Visitors (House of Commons Paper No. 307).

I am pleased to propose the motion to approve the two reports, representing between them nearly two years' work by the Catering Committee. I thank my colleagues on the Committee for the assiduous way in which they have tackled the two inquiries and for the spirit of co-operation that has prevailed throughout. I should also like to express our thanks to all those who helped in the preparation of the reports—and especially to the Director of Catering Services and her staff, who unfailingly and efficiently assisted the Committee throughout our inquiries, to the Parliamentary Works Directorate for its assistance, and to the various consultants who provided specialist advice.

I shall concentrate first on the major report of the Committee, which is an in-depth study of the long-term catering needs of Members of the House and other Refreshment Department users, and which examines the need to move towards compliance with health, hygiene and safety at work legislation, in line with the policy of the House authorities.

In the course of our inquiry we received evidence, written and oral, from Members, from the trade union side of the Whitley Committee, from the Secretaries and Assistants Council and from the Parliamentary Press Gallery. One of the purposes of our inquiry was to increase the safety of Refreshment Department staff, and we took evidence from the Hotel and Catering Workers Union. That was in addition to meetings, on and off the record, with the various consultants and others. The Committee is enormously grateful to the Members and other witnesses who contributed to the inquiry.

It became obvious to the Committee at an early stage in our inquiry that simply tackling the problem of seeking to comply with the relevant legislation would be time consuming and costly—not to mention the need to remedy the effects of what might politely be called deferred maintenance. It was also obvious to the Committee that doing nothing was not an option. Indeed, a specialist in environmental health said in evidence:

"an in-depth inspection by an EHO from Westminster City Council would result in at best an improvement notice or at worst a prohibition notice being served."

Hon. Members may recall the difficulties that were experienced in another place a few years ago, when there was an incidence of salmonella. That resulted in a complete refurbishment of the kitchens on what can only be described as a crash basis, with lack of time spent on site investigation and planning, leading to a massive overrun of cash and of time. Luckily, in that case there were no long-term serious effects from the illness, but the Committee feels that there is a substantial risk that a similar or even worse instance could occur here at any time, and the risk of a serious accident to Refreshment Department staff is also ever-present.

Having concluded that rapid action was necessary to attempt to remedy the worst defects, the Committee determined to take a strategic view of what should be

[Mr. Colin Shepherd]

provided; it did so with the aid of a food service consultant's report, which was then progressed by a team of architects who refined the proposals to offer practical solutions that would not have adverse effects on this historic building.

The report that the House is being asked to approve is a result of the various deliberations that followed. Some detailed planning has yet to be done, but I shall highlight the main changes that we propose.

From a health and safety point of view, probably the worst area, and the most urgently in need of improvement, is the kitchen servicing Members' and Strangers' cafeterias. Refurbishment of that area, which was initially planned for 1992, was postponed because we were advised that the refurbishment that was planned would not solve the inadequacies of the kitchen. Under the Committee's plan, the cafeterias would be enlarged and converted into one large cafeteria, with dedicated seating for Members. The kitchen would be moved from its present position to the area below the Tea Room that is currently occupied by Annie's Bar and other domestic offices. That would provide greatly increased capacity and a safer, cleaner, more efficient kitchen, with proper ventilation capability.

The Members' Tea Room is another area that fills the consultants with anxiety for both customers and staff. Indeed, they suggested that there should be a great reduction in the number of menu items, and one thread that ran through the evidence that we took was that that suggestion would meet with a strong rejection. I have to declare an interest as a regular user of the Tea Room—I think that you are too, Mr. Deputy Speaker—and say that the unique nature of the service that one receives is something to be closely protected. That is not to say that improvements cannot and should not be made, particularly to the quality of the food and beverages provided there. The Committee therefore set out to find a solution to the conundrum.

The proposed solution is an example of why the strategic approach adopted by the Committee is, in our view, the best way to solve the various problems, and we do not consider that it would be feasible to select projects from within the package of proposals. With the change of position of the Members' and Strangers' cafeteria kitchen, it will be possible to provide a proper service to the Members' Tea Room which is directly above it. Thus it should be possible to eliminate the long and inefficient counter which some consider is also unsightly, and to eliminate the long queues which many of us experience when we only want a quick cup of tea. The change would give more space for Members without any significant change to the range of items currently offered.

If the House approves our proposals, several consequential changes will be necessary. We propose that the Lady Members' Room, which is situated on the other side of the main Terrace entrance to the Strangers' Bar should be relocated to allow an enlarged Strangers' Bar to be created in its stead. We recommend that the present staff bar should become Annie's Bar. It will also be necessary to change the location of the barber's and to close part of the north curtain corridor. Perhaps I should again declare an interest and say that this proposed closure is regrettable to those of us who have offices in that area. However, the plans provide for alternative access to the affected areas.

As these consequential changes affect accommodation that is not currently occupied by the Refreshment Department and involve substantial work, I expect that the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell), the Chairman of the Select Committee on Accommodation and Works, may seek to speak in the debate. I met the members of that Committee on two occasions to explain the proposals of the Select Committee on Catering.

The other consequential change which has a connection with the other reports that we are debating is to the souvenir shop. The success of souvenir sales and the location of the shop have led to continual overcrowding and lack of space for stock. Our proposal is to create a self-contained shop close to the present position and available to pass holders only. Our proposals for visitors are contained in our other report, to which I shall refer shortly.

As well as these major changes involving substantial alterations to our front-of-house facilities, the problem of compliance with legislation has led us to propose a complete rebuilding of the central kitchen located on the ground and principal floors. That rebuilding will enable a total reorganisation of the kitchen that services the Members' and Strangers' Dining Rooms and the private dining facilities in order to avoid the major risk of cross-contamination of food that currently occurs in this area.

These changes are many and a little difficult to visualise, but reference to our report, copies of which are in the Vote Office, should clarify our proposals. The changes will enable the problem of the staff changing rooms to be addressed at the same time. Those have been the subject of much concern for many years; earlier proposals were shelved because if they had been adopted the money spent would have been wasted.

Those are the Committee's major proposals. There are others in the report that time will not allow me to comment upon in detail. Perhaps I could highlight two. My first comment is on the Members' and Strangers' Dining Rooms. We heard in evidence that at lunch time the Members' Dining Room, which has a capacity of 120, served an average of only 21 covers, while next door the Strangers' Dining Room is regularly over-subscribed. The Committee proposes that for a trial period of 12 months the Members' and Strangers' Dining Rooms should be exchanged at lunch time only. At the end of that trial period I expect my Committee to review the situation and receive representations from hon. Members.

The Committee proposes in its report that the dispense bar for Members and Strangers' Dining Rooms be relocated so as to allow the principal floor corridor with its elegant stone vaulted ceiling to be opened up. When the Select Committee on Finance and Services considered our report, it felt that that was an unnecessary expense at this time. I understand that my right hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon), who is the Chairman of that Committee, will seek to speak later in the debate. As hon. Members would expect, the examination by that Committee was thorough.

To keep the cost of the redevelopment to a minimum, my Committee had already made several reductions, including the deletion of a proposal for a new wine bar. In addition. the Committee has looked carefully at the programme of works to ensure that the most dangerous

areas are tackled first, but proposes that the work should be phased over several years. That, too, will assist in spreading the financial load.

Another aspect should be borne in mind when costs are being considered. There will be those inside and outside the House who will accuse us of extravagance. Those who would make those allegations should be reminded that there are at least 3,700 people entitled to use Refreshment Department facilities, many of whom are expected to work very long or unsocial hours. Hon. Members, in addition to working long hours, do not often have the option of eating elsewhere because of the demands of parliamentary business. My Committee therefore makes no apology for proposing measures that will protect all those who eat here, while in the process making improvements to our refreshment services.

The main element of the cost is in making the structural changes necessary so that proper kitchens and other domestic offices can be installed. To that end, we already have in the kitty some £2.5 million, which will be used to offset some of the costs. That money comes from accrued surpluses from the trading accounts over the past few years.

If our proposals are adopted, many years of under-investment, resulting in potential hazard to customers and Refreshment Department staff, will be corrected, resulting in a healthier, safer position for everyone. The Refreshment Department will be able to meet the provisions of the relevant legislation that has been approved by Parliament as appropriate for the rest of the population. At the same time, the existing facilities will, for the most part, be retained or improved. In the case of the Members and Strangers' cafeterias, an increase in the seating capacity and an improvement in the quality of food will result.

Those who press the case for the continuation of Annie's Bar and for formal lunches in the Members' Dining Room will have the opportunity to demonstrate the need. The Members' Tea Room will continue to offer broadly the same choice of food as at present in improved surroundings and with shorter queues at peak times, especially for those requiring only beverages.

The other report on which the House is being asked to express a view relates to refreshment provision for Line-of-Route visitors. We received many representations about the appalling lack of refreshment facilities for visitors, some 100,000 of whom tour the Line of Route every year. In addition, Members, their staff and staff of the House frequently receive visitors and it would be advantageous to make light refreshments available for those visitors to purchase.

The Committee is also aware of the overcrowding that often occurs around the existing souvenir kiosk when Members' parties ask to make the necessary detour to that busy area. We took evidence in the inquiry from Members, consultants, the Serjeant at Arms, the Public Information Officer and the Education Officer. We also received memorandums from many Members and others. Again, we are most grateful for the contributions of all concerned.

The Committee considered the various options, including the use of the former St. Stephen's tavern, which is situated at the corner of the phase 1 parliamentary building. We did not consider the former tavern to be suitable for the purpose because of its location but, together with colleagues on the Accommodation and Works Committee, we intend to review its use as the phase 2 parliamentary building nears completion.

We are of the opinion that the best long-term solution is to convert the present Westminster Hall cafeteria into a visitors' centre, which as well as offering light refreshments would include toilet facilities and a souvenir kiosk selling a range of items more appropriate to visitors, including school parties. The cafeteria is well located at the end of the Line of Route and exit could be arranged so that visitors could rejoin the current public exit route through the carriage gates.

Although the Committee identified the problem as needing early attention, it was also aware of the continuing use, mainly by staff, of the cafeteria at lunchtime. The other current overcrowded facilities available to staff would not be able to absorb those users. The Committee therefore proposes that the change should be made at the earliest opportunity after the additional capacity becomes available as a result of the redevelopment plan contained in our other report or, at the latest, when the refreshment facilities in phase 2 become available.

In the meantime, there is the continuing problem of the overcrowding of the souvenir kiosk area. As a temporary measure, the Committee concluded that a suitably attractive temporary kiosk should be erected in the north-east corner of Westminster Hall until the visitors' centre became available. Although that proposal might seem controversial to some, I remind the House that, until about 100 years ago, this historic place saw all manner of activities. One witness said that it was not always the "solemn, gloomy cavern" that it is today. The Committee recommends, therefore, a temporary course of action for the consideration of the House.

The House has a rare opportunity tonight to take a long-term view of its future need for refreshment services. The reports, taken together—bearing in mind the refreshment provision contained in the phase 2 new parliamentary building—propose a long-term strategy that will remedy the past lack of maintenance, bring the House towards compliance with legislation in accordance with its policy and provide vastly improved facilities for Members, staff and visitors alike.

The reports were agreed unanimously by the Committee and I commend them to the House.

11.2 pm

Mr. Jim Callaghan (Heywood and Middleton): A former friend of mine inherited his father's shop. In renovating the premises he noticed that the front step was badly worn. Being a thrifty man, he decided to dig up the step and turn it over to use the unworn part and so save money. However, when he dug up the step, he discovered that his equally thrifty father had already taken the same action. The moral is that sometimes, for all one's thrift, it is necessary to spend money to renovate and replace equipment for good safety reasons.

There is a parallel with the story that I have recounted, and that is the necessary refurbishment of the refreshment services. When we consider the facilities offered by the Refreshment Department, it is obvious that much of the kitchen equipment is old, inefficient and scheduled for replacement. Premises are dilapidated, do not reach the standard required by current legislation and are generally inadequate for the number of customers.

[Mr. Jim Callaghan]

The number of people using the Department on a daily basis is as follows: Members, 651; Officers, 150; staff, 942; Members' staff and research assistants, 1,300; security staff, 500; and workmen, 180. That is a total of 3,723. But as there are about 10,000 security passes in circulation, the number of customers is far greater than 3,700. In addition, there are about 800 visitors a day. There are also contractors—the number is variable—and banqueting guests.

Apart from the demands of increasing numbers of customers, the past 20 years during which I have been a Member have seen immense changes in the areas that impact on the Refreshment Department. For example, there have been tremendous changes in people's eating habits—styles of food, menu and diet. There have been changes also in working hours, styles of service in employee catering, modern technology and value for money.

With the increasing number of customers and their demands, it can be seen that the pressure on accommodation has meant that there has been limited opportunity to expand refreshment facilities in line with the increase in refreshment requirements of the potential users.

Reports in 1966-67, 19967-68 and 1978-79 concentrated on financial and operational matters and services tended to develop in a piecemeal way. At the same time changes in people's eating habits and expectations led to an expansion in the range and variety of food demand. That meant that existing resources had to be adapted in an ad hoc manner.

With all those changes, the Committee decided to undertake a wide-ranging inquiry into the services provided by the Department. It sought to assess whether the health and safety, hygiene, fire and ventilation standards are being properly met. The Committee had to bear in mind the fact that in the past piecemeal changes, such as the refurbishment of obsolete equipment, did not deal with the underlying problems. Nor did they provide a cost-efficient solution. Instead, the Committee had to bear in mind the importance of remedying the effects of years of deferred maintenance and modernising and of reordering the kitchens to ensure greater safety and efficiency.

The Committee was satisfied that a longer-term policy was required, while taking into account the Palace of Westminster's status as a grade 1 listed building, limitations on space and the need to provide services that can respond to flexible demand. The Committee decided to make recommendations for a programme of necessary and in some cases urgent work, to be phased over a period of years to avoid disruption and excessive peaks of expenditure.

Accordingly, the Committee commissioned two surveys. The first, from Food Service Associates (Henley) Ltd., included an extensive study of the existing Refreshment Department and made substantial suggestions for change. The second report was from Winton Food Management Service, which specialises in the hygiene and safety aspects of catering. In view of the urgency of some recommendations, the Committee agreed as early as 15 July 1992 to purchase immediately refrigeration equipment.

The Winton report commented that an in-depth inspection by an environmental health officer would result at best in the serving of an improvement notice or at worst —I want the House to remember this—a prohibition notice, which would result in the relevant areas being closed until remedial works had been undertaken.

Mr. Michael Stephen (Shoreham): When was the last time that a Member of Parliament, or anybody else, contracted food poisoning or was injured by fire in the Palace of Westminster?

Mr. Callaghan: There was an outbreak of salmonella poisoning in the House of Lords a year or two ago. That is what we are afraid of—that a disaster is waiting to happen.

Ms Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that it is a question not of reported cases of food poisoning? We do not know the extent to which people become ill as a consequence of food eaten here, insanitary arrangements, and lack of compliance with health and safety and food hygiene standards in the kitchens of the House.

Mr. Callaghan: I agree.

The Committee took oral and written evidence from a wide range of opinion. Witnesses included Members of Parliament, staff, members of the Parliamentary Press Gallery, and Whitley Committee and trade union representatives. It became clear to the Committee that compliance with relevant hygiene and safety legislation was necessary.

We heard from Food Service Associates at the start of the oral evidence that doing nothing was not an option. The Committee accepts that there is no alternative but urgent and effective action to ensure that relevant health, hygiene and safety standards are met in Refreshment Department outlets.

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): The hon. Gentleman mentioned an environmental health officer, but am I correct in thinking that no such officer came to the Palace or made a report?

Mr. Callaghan: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely correct. Outside consultants said that if environmental officers came to the House—which they cannot, because it is Crown property—they might close the place down.

If those standards are not met, we shall encounter the same problems as arose in the House of Lords kitchen some years ago. It was clear from evidence presented to the Committee that the area most in need of urgent attention is the Members and Strangers cafeteria. Another area that will require upgrading is the principal kitchen. Other areas urgently needing attention are the Churchill Room, the Press Gallery kitchens and the Westminster Hall cafeteria.

However, major works in the House can be undertaken only during the summer recess. So we recommend a redevelopment plan over six years, under which the modernisation of the Refreshment Department will be phased in. The Strangers and Members cafeterias will be treated as a top priority.

Under our recommendations for a phased approach, the cost of the work would be similarly spread, so that it would not take a disproportionate share of the works budget in any one year. The provision of such funds is therefore a matter for decision by the House of Commons

Commission on the basis of recommendations from the Finance and Services Committee after a debate to enable the House to express its views.

The implementation of our report is not a matter for the members of our Committee. We have simply drawn attention to what needs to be done. We are concerned that emergency unplanned expenditure under crisis conditions would lead to uncontrollable costs—but I ask the House to remember that doing nothing is not an option.

In recommending the report to the House, I congratulate the Chairman of the Committee, its members and the officers who served it. I also congratulate all the witnesses who helped the Committee to produce such a detailed and sensible report.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. Before I call other hon. Members to speak I should point out that the debate will finish at 12.13. Apart from the two Front-Bench Members, six other hon. Members want to catch my eye, and if hon. Members give their co-operation, all six may be successful.

11.11 pm

Mr. Paul Channon (Southend, West): As my hon. Friend the Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd) said, I speak on behalf of the Finance and Services Committee —and I shall speak only for a few minutes, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Hon. Members who have taken the trouble to find out already know the Committee's views, because we published our minutes a short while ago.

I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Hereford and his Committee for their excellent work in producing the two reports, and to the Director of Catering Services and the Director of Works and their staffs for the enormous support that they have given to the Catering Committee and to my Committee in the course of several discussions on that important topic. I must also say how much I agree with every word spoken by the hon. Member for Heywood and Middleton (Mr. Callaghan), who made a powerful case in favour of the changes.

Many hon. Members have said this, and it is in danger of becoming a cliché, but the first thing that the House must understand is that we cannot do nothing. There is a very urgent requirement to take action in line with hygiene and health and safety legislation. My hon. Friend the Member for Hereford will correct me if I am wrong, but I understand that the Refreshment Department has nine kitchens and more than 300 staff. We have a duty to ensure that its staff work in a safe environment and that the meals produced here—last year there were about 1 million of them—are not at risk from health hazards.

Mr. Stephen: My right hon. Friend will be aware that the taxpayer would have to produce a very large sum to finance the schemes, if they are approved. On the evidence that we have been given concerning an outbreak of salmonella in the House of Lords some years ago, is he really satisfied that that level of expenditure is really necessary?

Mr. Channon: Reluctantly, I must tell my hon. Friend that we are. Naturally, when the Finance and Services Committee first considered the report and its major proposals, we took it with a pinch of salt, if I may use that expression. However, the more we investigated, the clearer it became that it was essential that something radical be done.

I shall deal with all the points that my hon. Friend raised, and the first thing to say is that we operate as if we were covered by legislation. It is our policy, in the end —perhaps not too far ahead—to remove the immunity from health and safety legislation that we currently possess. It must remain a reasonable aim for the House of Commons to ensure that our facilities reach the standards that we have required others to adopt, under legislation that we have voted for—certainly I have voted for it—in the past.

Secondly, if we are to undertake such major changes we must have a strategic approach. Will they be introduced as a logical scheme or not? I think that, for the first time, the consultants and the architects have planned a logical scheme. No doubt there are differences of detail, which can be debated later, and can be changed. And colleagues can make their views clear tonight. But we must have an overall solution and not introduce piecemeal measures that will be much more wasteful and cause just as much disruption and a great deal of extravagance and not solve the problem.

I regret saying it, but, in the light of the deferring of maintenance during the past few years, we cannot delay the schemes any longer. Schemes, costing some £2 million, have been put off recently until a comprehensive plan could be agreed. It is extremely difficult to undertake works in the Palace which will not cost a lot of money. In a grade 1 building of this kind it is vital to respect the quality of the building during such work.

We are also hampered by the need to do most of the work during the summer recess. When else can it be done? Such constraints are familiar to the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell), who may seek to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and the members of his Committee, who compile the 10-year rolling programme of works. They need to be associated in the decisions that have to be made annually.

If the House wants to go ahead with the programme, we shall look carefully at each year's works programme when we prepare the estimates. We shall also use the £2.5 million trading surplus from the Catering Committee to reduce the total cost to public funds. The projects can be funded within the normal scale of financial provision for the works vote.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hereford raised two points of detail with which I shall deal briefly. The first was the question of the dispense bar. My Committee is not at all sure that the proposal for that is a good idea. Nevertheless, we shall reconsider it when the overall proposals are re-examined. It is quite expensive and there may be other objections to it as well. We do not have a closed mind, but we are suspicious.

The souvenir kiosk is a matter for the authorities that control Westminster Hall. It is not a matter for my Committee. The first figures for such a kiosk were vast. I am glad that they have been substantially reduced, although it is not cheap even now. However, I do see merits in making better provision for Line of Route visitors, and I accept the target of creating a visitors centre in the space now used by the Westminster Hall cafeteria. But that project needs a great deal of work before final plans can come forward.

Mr. Steen: My right hon. Friend said that the work could be contained within the normal vote for repairs to the Palace. Can he give the House some idea of what we are talking about in terms of annual expenditure?

Mr. Channon: Yes. I would mislead the House if I went into that in too much detail. I shall write to my hon. Friend if he would like. I have here the expenditure for the House of Commons works votes and the total costs will not vary considerably if the proposals are taken forward. I assume that my hon. Friend is in favour of the proposals, as he was a member of the Committee, was present when the Committee deliberated on the matter and voted in favour of the report. I take what he says as a constructive statement in support of the Committee's proposals.

My final point relates to the Refreshment Department. In the past 10 years a great deal has been done. We have a new and effective management team and an excellent staff, and the operation to deliver the services has become much larger. There are now 31 outlets spread over three sites.

My Committee will continue to monitor the Department's financial performance, and our aim is to support it in its aim to provide good food at reasonable prices to those who have to be here. We are gradually transferring costs from the House vote to the trading operation and setting sharper financial targets. If we are to improve standards further, we have to rebuild the kitchens and reorder some of the outlets.

I accept the arguments put forward by my hon. Friend. I congratulate the Director of Catering Services and her staff and my hon. Friend and his Committee. They deserve the support of the House on the two reports that the Committee has produced. The House has no practical alternative but to accept the reports tonight.

11.18 pm

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): I shall be brief because I know that several other hon. Members wish to participate.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd) and his Committee on the two reports that they have produced and the time that they have spent doing so. On numerous occasions, my hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) has had to excuse himself for two or three hours to attend the Catering Committee. Likewise, I have had to attend the Accommodation and Works Committee. I receive a lot of support from members of my Committee and I am sure that the hon. Member for Hereford receives tremendous support from his Committee members, although I may be more fortunate than he in that I hear no dissenting voices after my Committee has presented its reports.

I thank the Chairman of the Select Committee on Finance and Services for his work in trying to accommodate all the reports from the Catering Committee. While we are all in the mood for congratulating and thanking people, I should like to take perhaps the only opportunity that we are afforded in the House to thank Committee members, who serve the interests of all hon. Members and who undertake a task that is distinct from their jobs as constituency Members of Parliament and their pursuit of a political career. They serve the House and do the job voluntarily. No one even offers them £1,000 for tabling questions.

I have found out about the work that the Catering Committee has already completed and I have read its reports and proposals. Hon. Members are in the House a lot of the time and spend many hours here. When we go to the Refreshment Department for our meals, we expect them to be adequate and facilities to be readily available, and we should be assured that hygiene is given top priority. Some hon. Members have voiced disquiet over the fact that the Refreshment Department would probably have been closed a long time ago if it were an outside catering organisation. We should appreciate what the Committee are doing to try to improve that position.

In many ways, the exercise promoted by the Catering Committee in both reports on refreshment services is not unlike the task that my Committee faces whenever it is asked to justify the expenditure of public money on improvements to the fabric of this fine Victorian palace. Both Committees face some degree of criticism due to the lack of understanding of two major factors.

First, it is the duty of the domestic Committees and the House of Commons Commission, in the context of a responsible, co-ordinated and planned set of programmes, to reduce the backlog of refurbishment work that has built up over many years, and to provide hon. Members and staff who have to work in these buildings with the essential minimum health and safety standards that would be taken for granted in many public buildings and commercial enterprises. Secondly, it must be recognised that the twin demands of the need to meet the stringent quality requirements of a historic, listed building and to undertake work without disruption to Parliament and its Committees add a premium to the work that is carried out.

I compliment the Director of Works and the Director of Catering Services on their efforts to tailor their major refurbishment and deep-servicing programmes into the period of the recesses. That is even more difficult when, as nowadays, so many hon. Members and staff continue their work throughout the recesses.

At one time, as soon as the recess started, House officials had far more opportunity to work because most of them were unoccupied and hon. Members had gone on holiday or to their constituencies. Today, when one comes back during the recess for a week or a fortnight, one finds that hon. Members may not be here, but the staff usually are. As a result, that poses further problems for hon. Members, the Director of Works and others.

On the second report, the time is long overdue when the House should be expected to provide visitors with some sort of refreshment when they come here. Many of our constituents, some of them disabled, travel for many miles and several hours to see their Member of Parliament and to visit the House. It is no more than common decency that they should be able to rest and have a cup of tea in decent surroundings, instead of being rudely tipped out into the street at the end of their visit.

Some weeks ago, a party of schoolchildren from my constituency visited the House. At 1 pm, when we had finished the tour, the children had to leave Westminster Hall and go out into the rain because there was nowhere in the House for them to have a sandwich or a cup of tea before returning at 2.15 to see the Speaker's procession and try to obtain tickets for the Strangers Gallery.

That does not only happen to my constituents; it happens every day of the week to hon. Members who receive visitors. That is deplorable. We visit Parliaments in other countries and see what they offer—particularly the Canberra Parliament, which has a new building. The Government there encourage children to visit the building

and see democracy at work. If we want to encourage young people to know what democracy and Parliament are all about, it is high time that we provided decent facilities for visiting constituents.

I do not want to go into the details of all the proposals. As the hon. Member for Hereford will know, my Committee has studied them in depth, and they have been adequately covered in the speeches of other hon. Members —particularly that of my hon. Friend the Member for Heywood and Middleton (Mr. Callaghan), who is a member of the Catering Committee, and the speech of the Chairman of the Committee himself. My Committee, however, is aware of the effect of the proposed changes on accommodation. I suggest full consultation with those whose accommodation or facilities would be affected, and careful consideration should be given to the views of English Heritage and those in whom control of Westminster Hall is vested before a temporary souvenir kiosk is introduced into that historic part of the building.

The report mentions staff changing rooms. I have often talked to staff, especially the catering staff downstairs. They have no rest room, and they have to go into the toilets to change their clothes. This country has the mother of Parliaments; yet where in the world could we find another Parliament that does not even provide facilities for staff to change their clothes? In fact, we have now converted rooms in the area to give staff such facilities, but they still need a rest room. They should have at least as many facilities here as they would have outside; at present, they have far fewer facilities.

I mentioned alternative accommodation for Members. We know what happens once a Member is moved out of accommodation that he has enjoyed for 10, 15 or 20 years, especially if he could step straight out on to the Terrace: that is a lovely location. There could also be problems for those who frequently use Annie's Bar and the Strangers Bar; indeed, the changes in that regard have already prompted criticisms. My Committee, however, unanimously approved those changes, considering them reasonable, and I believe that they will lead to a major improvement.

11.28 pm

Mr. Alan Haselhurst (Saffron Walden): It is a great pleasure for me to speak soon after the hon. Member for Heywood and Middleton (Mr. Callaghan). We have both been Members of Parliament for 17 years, although at one stage he displaced me in the part of his constituency that we once shared. Now we find ourselves participating in the same debate, and very much on the same side. I very much endorse his remarks. I echo his tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd) for the unruffled way in which my hon. Friend undertakes the thankless job, in a sense, of being Chairman of the Select Committee on Catering. As Chairman, he is therefore often the main target for brickbats which come his way from any disgruntled person who did not perhaps like his previous meal.

Our great difficulty in addressing the subject is that we are open to the charge that we appear to be recommending the expenditure of a large sum of money. There will be ready critics, certainly outside the House and, perhaps, some inside the House, who will ask how dare we suggest spending a large sum of money on ourselves. It needs to be emphasised, as has already been mentioned, that it is a debate about facilities not for 651 Members of Parliament, but for many thousands of people—the 3,000 people who work here in addition to Members of Parliament and the many more thousands of people who visit in the course of the year. We have a responsibility which goes beyond trying to ensure that there is some sort of basic standard of luxury for Members of Parliament. It should extend to ensuring that there is a decent standard of provision for all the people who work here in whatever capacity and also for those who visit.

My hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham (Mr. Stephen) has sounded a warning of the concerns which, of course, we should feel. It would be reprehensible if it could be shown that we were behaving in a cavalier fashion and were apparently prepared to put the pen to a cheque for a very large sum of taxpayers' money for apparently frivolous purposes. I have certainly been convinced from our work in Committee that the proposed provision is not a frivolous purpose.

The difficulty with which the Committee was faced in trying to address the problems first stemmed from the nature of the Palace itself. It is not possible to imagine that Sir Charles Barry or those who instructed him could have known that, 140 years later, the Palace would be used so heavily. If we were to adjust this fine building to the needs which confront us, we would be involved in making changes to the fabric which would be, of necessity, more expensive than if were playing around with a more modern building or if we were simply starting from a blank sheet of paper. So that there are inherent extra costs in almost anything that one seeks to do to change the arrangements in the Palace.

We are, of course, catering for very much greater numbers than ever could have been envisaged when the basic design of the Palace was undertaken. So we would be trying to superimpose in this magnificent building substantial new requirements which would be very difficult to accomplish, certainly at minimal expenditure. There is also what may be called the domino effect when we start to make changes in the confines with which we are presented. For example, if we say that we must have proper provision for the receipt of raw materials of food and the consequence is that something is moved down the line, further changes come about, which help to cause the expenditure to mount.

Those were some of the practical difficulties with which the Committee was faced. It was not an attempt to find out how we could have a bonanza, but an attempt to meet minimum requirements. I defend resolutely the fact that we must make changes in the House which conform with the standards that we have imposed on everyone else outside the Palace of Westminster. We have not invented those standards for ourselves. We have a responsibility when proposing the expenditure of money to ensure that the people who come to this place should be as safe and as secure as we expect them to be anywhere else.

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): I have listened carefully to my hon. Friend; he has put some sound and rational arguments. Nevertheless, does he not accept that we can move only at a certain speed without incurring the wrath of the public and that we have to be sensitive to what they will think? Perhaps a more phased approach to the changes would be appropriate.

Mr. Haselhurst: We have done very little for 40 years. That is pretty good phasing. When we now come to an accumulated problem, we are still saying, for all sorts of practical reasons and for reasons of financial responsibility, that we should still phase the changes over a number of years. We can look our electors and taxpayers in the eye and say that we are not embarking on a madcap scheme. There is an accumulation of work that needs to be done within this fine building. We have a responsibility to the building and to those who will enjoy it in the future to do something now, having refrained from doing anything over a number of years. We have avoided, it could be said, some of the responsibilities that we have imposed on other people.

The other problem is that we have a balance of needs for which to cater. That has been borne in on me since I have had the honour to be a member of the Catering Committee. We have 651 Members of Parliament who have very strong views. It is the 651 Members of Parliament who will make decisions about whether certain things are done. However, we must think about all the other people who have a great interest in what happens to the catering services of this building.

We have seen in the evidence given to the Committee some very idiosyncratic views which have been put forward with great passion, as one might imagine, from elected representatives of the people. However, there are many other people who may have the same strength of view and who certainly have great strength of numbers. We must think of them. The Palace is not just for Members of Parliament, although we are entitled, while the public give us the privilege of being here, to have the enjoyment of those facilities. We have a responsibility to those who work for us—those who work for the nation in maintaining this Palace—to ensure that facilities are provided.

It is a matter of balance. We cannot get it right by saying, "Oh, this area of the Palace must be a facility for Members of Parliament; forget the rest." When one has to try to balance the needs of Members' staff, visitors and Members themselves, one gets into awful difficulties when one is in a confined arrangement. We do not have excess space that we can freely dispose of, in this direction and that direction, to cater for all needs. The proposals for the consideration of the House tonight are very carefully balanced to try to give something to everybody and to ensure that we maintain standards for all.

I refer briefly to St. Stephen's tavern. I am tempted to adopt the words of Sir Winston Churchill—that it is

"a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma."

So it has seemed to all the bodies of the House that have had to consider what should happen to St. Stephen's tavern. We were quite right to knock on the head the possibility of its being a visitors' centre. I am sure that the proposals that we are putting before the House are much more practical and I hope that they can be fulfilled in time. I also hope, however, that we shall not lightly dispense with the idea of St. Stephen's tavern. It is the possible expansion chamber for our needs, particularly if we are sensitive to the needs of staff if we take hold of the Westminster Hall cafeteria for a visitors' centre at some stage. We must be sure that we have sufficient cafeteria space and bar space for our staff. Perhaps St. Stephen's tavern would provide that opportunity.

Finally—and I hope not frivolously—I refer to the possibility of having a kiosk in Westminster Hall. I must take as many visitors round this Palace as any other hon. Member does and I take delight in encouraging my constituents to come to the Palace of Westminster. I passionately believe that we should open this place as much as possible to the people who put us here. A visit to the Dutch Parliament by the Catering Committee made us realise how poor we are in presenting ourselves to visitors. We can do much better, but there are limitations that the Palace imposes upon us.

Something that gives great delight to visitors is the opportunity to buy some little souvenir of their visit to the Palace. None of us should underestimate the thrill that people feel about visiting the Palace. I will own, without, I hope, being silly, to feeling a thrill about being here anyway, as an hon. Member. The thrill is all the greater for our constituents, who may visit the Palace just once in their lives. We should give them the opportunity to make a simple purchase. That may seem trivial, but it is important.

We all know that the current kiosk is situated out of place for the needs of the many people whom we have the pleasure to escort around the building. Logic dictates that there should be something at the end of the tour and the end of the tour, logically and inescapably, is Westminster Hall. We must take a broad view about its use, bearing in mind, as my hon. Friend the Member for Hereford said, that its history is colourful. It has embraced a great many functions, not least as a market stall site, so, as a temporary measure, we should not eschew the idea of providing a facility there for visitors to buy souvenirs.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham that we should be rightly concerned that we are not frivolous in our expenditure of money. In the same breath, we should acknowledge that if we expose those thousand or more visitors a day to the possibility of the simple pleasure of purchasing a souvenir at the Palace, that will help the finances of the operation. That will tend to reduce the taxpayers' burden for all that we seek to provide.

I honestly believe that we can tell the public that we are not being frivolous. Yes, there is a large price tag attached, but it has been thought through. The proposals are an attempt to represent the needs of all the people who use the Palace, not least the public. We owe it not just to ourselves and to all who work and visit here, but to future generations to make some sensible decisions and to get on with it.

11.42 pm

Ms Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): I will be brief because I know that other hon. Members want to speak.

I know from personal experience what a thankless task it is serving on the Catering Committee. I therefore congratulate the Committee's Chairman, the hon. Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd), and other hon. Members on their work. Some progress has been made given that we are debating the report.

We have heard a lot about whether spending money on essential work is wasteful. If the Government were prepared to pass legislation to remove Crown immunity —I have been promised that by Ministers in answers to parliamentary questions—we would not be having a debate on whether it is right to spend a certain amount to bring the House up to the standards that comply with existing health and safety legislation which applies to the rest of the country. I hope that the Leader of the House will acknowledge that the Government are prepared to

introduce such legislation, because it would then be as clear as clear could be that the money has to be spent, otherwise we will have to pay a high price.

As has been said, we must remember that we are talking not just about the Members who work here but about our staff, the Officers of the House and the thousands of people who visit this place on special occasions to lobby their Member of Parliament. I hope that the Leader of the House will take note of that.

If we complied with existing health and safety legislation, I would never see another mouse in the Pugin Room, as I did a couple of weeks ago. There is a mouse in the House and that is unacceptable. This Victorian Palace is completely outdated and our kitchens would be closed down if the Crown immunity legislation was enforced. We must spend the money necessary to bring the House up to an acceptable standard.

I return to the issue of environmental health officers. I have no doubt, from incidents in which I have been involved, that, if Westminster were prepared to allow environmental health officers to visit and carry out inspections, this place would be closed down—and closed down from tomorrow, never mind anything else.

Mr. Stephen: Does the hon. Lady agree that many catering establishments throughout the country are absurdly and grossly overregulated, and that many of them have been forced out of business by the oppressive bureaucracy which goes with the regulations?

Ms Walley: I speak as vice-president of the Institution of Environmental Health Officers, although I have no pecuniary interest to declare. I must tell the hon. Member for Shoreham (Mr. Stephen) that two wrongs do not make a right. People who visit this place are entitled to expect high standards, and we should be leading the way.

Let me raise another couple of health and safety issues. It is an outrage that the staff employed by the Catering Committee do not yet have all the facilities which they should have, and which the law requires staff elsewhere to have. The fact that they do not have proper rest room accommodation—that they must go down to the ladies' toilets and lock themselves in the toilet for a lengthy period if they want a cigarette, and also go there to change—is unacceptable. It is something which we could change if we were prepared to undertake a comprehensive review of the accommodation in this place; we could give these issues the top priority that they deserve.

As for the small matter of whether we could perhaps change and reorder the different facilities that we have, frankly, I am disappointed that the report does not address the banqueting facilities. I believe that our constituents have a right to come and visit us and lobby us. As we have heard, they want to come and look round the building: they want to see this important Palace, which is so rich in history. When my constituents travel down from Stoke-on-Trent, it is difficult for them to find toilet facilities, never mind a basic cup of tea. I resent the fact that we have all those banqueting rooms which can be booked at great expense, yet constituents who come down to participate in the democratic process do not have access to basic facilities. I would like to see that matter addressed. I am pleased that there is some reference to remedying that with regard to the so-called policemen's cafeteria in Westminster Hall, and the changes that could be made there. However, I am disappointed that we have no time scale for that.

I have a sense of déjà vu from my days on the Catering Committee: we are talking about exactly the same issues three, four or five years on. Although we have some proposals which could, in the fullness of time and subject to this and that, bring about some change, we do not have any firm guarantees. I must tell the Chairman of the Catering Committee that I would like a firm guarantee that our constituents, rather than all the activities that take place in the banqueting rooms, will be given priority.

Dr. Spink: What about the money that that brings in?

Ms Walley: Regardless of what the hon. Gentleman says about bringing in money, I think that my constituents who are not able to pay £35 for a special lunch have as much right to visit this place as those who pay huge amounts of money.

Finally, I turn to the issue of St. Stephen's tavern. I have long advocated that that building should be seen as part of the Westminster complex—it should be seen as part of the Palace. I do not know the best use for that building. I have always taken the view that it is a place where schoolchildren, groups of pensioners and groups of constituents could go. I see from the report that my recommendation has not been accepted, and I am disappointed about that. But I still feel strongly that, given all the demands for extra accommodation, not least day care, creche and child care facilities for the thousands of people who work here, we should keep St. Stephen's. We should send not only the Catering Committee but the Accommodation and Works Sub-Committee, or whatever it is called these days in its revamped form, on some sort of exercise; it could come back with positive proposals for St. Stephen's so that we can start to address the lack of facilities. Then the whole thing would slot into place.

I appreciate that time is brief, so I shall confine myself to those few points at this stage.

11.48 pm

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): I am proud to be one of the seven members of the Catering Committee. I recognise that many of the myriad kitchens that we have are antiquated and that most of them need an injection of funds. The only question is: how much money is needed, and where should it come from?

Do we really need an army of staff and caterers on the payroll—more than 300 of them—to provide the catering in the Commons? Or should we do something different, and not cater under our own flag for the police, the security staff, the researchers, the secretarial staff, Officers of the House and Library staff?

The reports are thorough, and I pay tribute to the Committee's Chairman. But I do not believe that we have yet dealt with the problem of how to pay for its chief recommendations.

Conservative Members are committed to deregulation and contracting out. We insist that local authorities privatise and open their services to competition, but we do not do that here in the Palace of Westminster. It is a closed public monopoly, paid for by the taxpayer. Instead of contracting out our canteens and cafeterias, as the British Airports Authority does so successfully at Heathrow, we insist on keeping control and paying an army of staff—of

[Mr. Anthony Steen]

whom we are proud and who serve us well. We really should consider alternative ways of operating our catering establishments.

At Heathrow the catering outlets were losing a mint before Sir John Egan arrived to do the splendid job that he does. He said, "We are airport operators, not caterers." Here at Westminster, we are legislators, not caterers. Sir John cleared the available space at Heathrow, and then said to certain well-known outlets, "Why don't you come in and put in all the equipment you need? You pay for it, and operate your business here free of charge and rent. In return for the franchise, we will share the profits with you." I believe that the BAA takes about 20 per cent. of the profits.

Amazingly, the many catering outlets at Heathrow now make enormous profits, and are open 24 hours a day, every day of the year.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): No, they are not.

Mr. Steen: If my hon. Friend wants to intervene, I shall give way. If not, perhaps he will let me continue.

Mr. Haselhurst: Is my hon. Friend seriously suggesting that a combination of Dunkin Donuts and Burger King would satisfy hon. Members of this House?

Mr. Steen: We do not have to go for those chains. There is a wide variety of outlets at Heathrow, including wonderful Italian restaurants, health food restaurants and other restaurants declared by Egon Ronay to be among the best in Britain. I do not know whether my hon. Friend considers him a good judge of quality, but I certainly do. We should consider the lead that has been given at the BAA in the context of this report.

The BAA has turned space that it ran at a loss—to encourage passengers to fly from Heathrow—into profitable outlets where millions of people enjoy the best food ever; and the BAA makes enormous profits as a result. Why not do something similar here, even if not in all our outlets? We may need to keep the Members' Dining Room and the Strangers' Dining Room, but why cannot outlets in some of the places occupied by canteens, such as the Churchill Room and the Press Restaurant, be contracted out?

There are many talented men—and women—on the Catering Committee. I hope that the members of the Catering Committee, rather than the officials, might choose some of the outlets. We might even taste the food. I have been a member of the Catering Committee for two years, and I am desperately waiting for the opportunity to speak about food, let alone taste it.

I would welcome an opportunity to contract out to private enterprise some of the canteen and cafeteria space. If I may say so to my right hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon), that would be a most sensible way of considering the funding of some of the expensive and important work in this very important Palace, which we could fund not through the public purse but through the private purse.

Mr. Stephen: Does my hon. Friend agree that the standard of catering in some of the cafeterias is sometimes appalling? Is there any reason why private sector caterers should not have an opportunity to show that they can do better?

Mr. Steen: I pay tribute to the work that is done by the staff in the Palace, in difficult circumstances, but it is also true that some of the tiny Italian cafés dotted around the capital produce magnificent food in space in which one could not even swing a cat. I have great difficulty in understanding why the quality that one can obtain in commercial outlets cannot be provided here, where we have much more space.

The Members' Tea Room is a good example of an enormous amount of space, yet it is always argued that we cannot improve the quality without new facilities. I question that. One does not always have to spend more money to produce the quality items. I agree that considerable work needs to be done in the Palace, but I question whether it must be funded from the public purse.

My idea is that the report might be accepted, with certain modifications, but that the way that it is funded should be considered. If we went down the route of privatisation and the contracting out of some of the outlets, there might be a 20 per cent. return of profits, which would be paid to the Exchequer, whereas at the moment we have to fund those outlets ourselves.

The food would also improve dramatically. We could have health food. We could have all the types of food that have been mentioned by Opposition Members as well as Conservative Members. The catering could be run commercially—not in house by our enormous work force.

I shall not discuss the phasing of that, which would need to be decided by the experts, but I am worried about the amount of money that the taxpayer is asked to pay to run the Palace, and that is one of the ways that we could find to inject funds from outside.

One criticism might be made about contracting out—that the Serjeant at Arms might well say that the question of security would prevent him from accepting that proposal. I believe that there are many ways round the question of security. I believe that the running of the Palace of Westminster can be done equally well if we inject private money and private enterprise. The Catering Committee's report is an important step in identifying the work that needs doing. I am sure that, with the Finance and Services Committee taking a new approach to funding, we can do that without any criticism from the taxpayer, and we can make great progress by bringing in the private sector.

11.58 pm

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Although I should like to be associated with all the congratulations that have been given to the Catering Committee, in the few minutes that are available to me I want to make an argument that has yet not been made, although to an extent it was mentioned by the hon. Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst) and my hon. Friends the Members for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) and for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms Walley). It is the alternative that I presented to the Catering Committee in a letter in October which I do not think has been given a great deal of consideration.

The groups that need our prime attention are those on the Line of Route, the 100,000 people who come to the House every year. When we decide, how can we put into some kind of hierarchy those who most deserve the resources of the organisation and those who least deserve them? We do not have the information. Although the suggestions about the Line of Route are worth while, we

are told that they will not be implemented for about six years, if then. There is an alternative that should be implemented.

We have all had the experience that my hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) so vividly described, and it is a disgrace that that continues. Prime attention should be given to those who have been neglected, the parties of schoolchildren and elderly people who come here. I suggested to the Catering Committee that the Line of Route be reordered so that it ends up on the Terrace where people might spend a few moments and then use the banqueting facilities there.

Information on who uses the banqueting facilities is a state secret, nobody knows. Over a number of years I have asked, "Who are these people? Are they deserving groups? Are they cultural groups or charities?" An examination of the invitations that I have had showed that two out of 20 were charities and that the rest were either lobbyists or commercial organisations.

I tried another way of finding out which groups are entertained there. I asked for a breakdown of the political colour of the hon. Members who book those rooms and I was told that in 1991, Dining Rooms A and B were booked 1,566 times—1,399 times by Conservative Members and 167 times by Labour Members. That is 90 per cent. compared with 10 per cent. Although the letter was written many months ago and has nothing to do with recent events, it is interesting to note that there is an almost exact correlation in the two main parties between hon. Members with consultancies. Some 85 per cent. of Conservative Members who are eligible have outside consultancies and directorships, compared with 14 per cent. of Opposition Members.

That is the only information, and one is tempted to conclude from it that those banqueting rooms are used mainly for entertainment that is commercial in character. We know that some of it is political in character. I have informed an hon. Member that I intended to refer to an organisation that is declared in the Register of Members' Interests. It is called the Vivian Bendall Parliamentary Dinner Club and it exists for

"functions sometimes held at the House of Commons, the financial benefits from which go to the Ilford North Conservative Association."

In 1991 there was a celebrated court case in which an hon. Member whom I have not informed was involved. His constituency chairman was a Mr. Andrew Mudd and it was claimed that American visitors paid for the privilege of entertainment in the Palace.

A limited amount of entertainment space is involved, and if we are to cater for the most deserving groups of people who come here in great numbers, there must be a loss. I urge the Catering Committee to consider again not the long-term reordering of Westminster Hall but eating into the banqueting facilities that are used by commercial organisations that could afford to pay for them.

Mr. Gale: The hon. Gentleman is treading a dangerous path. He should recognise that a large number of my hon. Friends book those rooms for entirely worthy charitable organisations for receptions that are attended by large numbers of Labour Members.

Mr. Flynn: I have made the point that I am aware of that, but I asked for transparency and I have not got it. In questions over a period of five years I have asked for a list of the organisations. That information is not divulged. All that is available are the names of hon. Members, and that is all that I have to go on. If I believed that they were being hired by charities—*[Interruption.]* It is not true. Hon. Members would try other methods to find out. The atmosphere in the House, which has been vividly described by the press in the past few days, is of almost soft corruption. That has become part of the Palace of Westminster: soft corruption has become endemic here, and part of that is the use that is made of the banqueting facilities.

12.4 am

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): I thank the hon. Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd) and the members of his Catering Sub-Committee for the report. I also thank the professional advisors to both the Catering Sub-Committee and the Finance and Services Committee.

The report is a substantial piece of work which deals comprehensively with a range of issues. The approach adopted by the Committee was the right one. It took evidence widely and then approached its task with vigour. It is the clearly expressed wish of the House to comply with hygiene legislation and, separately, with health and safety legislation as though that applied to the House prior to the removal of Crown immunity. Hence the concentration on the refurbishment of kitchen facilities set out so clearly in the report.

Times have changed for this Palace. There is an increase in the numbers working here and the way in which we do our jobs has changed. There are more full-time Members of Parliament, who are serviced by more full-time professional research staff. Hence there is more pressure on the catering facilities. The Committee has responded in the only way possible. Of course, there is a range of disputes about who can use what. My hon. Friend the Member for Heywood and Middleton (Mr. Callaghan) told us of the extent of the pressures on the facilities of the House. The key—frankly, the only answer—is to make adequate provision and that is clearly what the Committee set out to do.

I very much agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell), who said that we are talking about provision not just for ourselves and for those who work here, but for those who come to see us. We need to make provision for visitors to this place. I like the imaginative idea of a visitors' centre and I congratulate the Committee on it. It has dealt with the matter in the right way. I like the history of the building and I know that many visitors are enthralled by it. Of course there will be disagreements, of course it will not be easy to satisfy everyone, but I think that the Committee has done its best and in a way that is financially prudent as well as encapsulating the scope of all the issues that were in front of it.

12.6 am

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): I suppose that I could be thought to be wearing a number of hats tonight —as a member of the House of Commons Commission and of the Finance and Services Committee and as Leader of the House. It is principally in the latter capacity that I felt it appropriate to say a few words.

I join hon. Members in the thanks expressed to my hon. Friend the Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd) and, indeed, the hard-working members of his Committee from

[Mr. Tony Newton]

both sides of the House. It is an observable fact to anyone who has been here for more than a few years that the pressure on our refreshment facilities has been growing steadily and has put huge demands on people.

I want to place firmly on the record the fact that I think that Sue Harrison, the Director of Catering Services, and her staff have responded splendidly to those pressures against a background of very difficult circumstances. Even the most cursory tour of the facilities that lurk in the basement and behind the scenes—and I have done more than just a cursory tour—rapidly reveals that everything that they have achieved has been despite, not because of, the facilities with which they have to work. There must be a limit to what they can be expected to achieve, whether in quality or efficiency, in working conditions that often leave much to be desired—although that is putting it mildly—which border on the antique and which suffer from some of the deficiencies that my hon. Friend the Member for Hereford emphasised.

There has been a variety of piecemeal and ad hoc improvements over the years. The Catering Committee, after a great deal of very thorough work, has concluded that the problem now needs to be addressed more strategically with an overall modernisation plan, systematically planned and executed over about five or six years. I must say straightforwardly to the House that it would be difficult for anyone to say that, in principle, the Committee has not made an extremely strong case, not only in the interests of Members of Parliament but, as has been repeatedly emphasised, in the interests of staff and those who visit this building.

Within the structure of the domestic Committees as we now operate, if the House agrees the motion, the details of implementing the report will be a matter for decision by the Finance and Services Committee and the Commission. I welcome the remarks of my right hon. Friend the Chairman of the Finance and Services Committee. I agree that it is right that some of the earlier plans for refurbishment of the Refreshment Department have been postponed, so that some £2 million which would have gone on further short-term improvements, but without resolving the strategic problems, can now be applied to the strategic plan.

I also agree with my right hon. Friend that it is right for the £2.5 million trading surplus to be used to reduce what would otherwise be the cost to public funds. That is a legitimate concern, which some of my hon. Friends and others raised. I welcome my right hon. Friend's assurance that each year's expenditure will be looked at in the context of that particular year's Estimates, with the aim of finding the remainder of the funds for the project within the normal scale of financial provision of the works vote.

Against that background, I hope that the House will agree to my hon. Friend's motion.

12.11 am

Mr. Colin Shepherd: With the leave of the House, I thank my colleagues on the Catering Committee for their support during the debate. It is clear that there is much work for us yet to do in seeking to address the many concerns expressed tonight. We were already acutely aware of most of them, and I have no doubt that we will be bending our minds to them.

I see tonight's exercise, as does my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House, in the light of the Ibbs structure working, with the domestic Committees talking and working together and producing reports that are surveyed and analysed by the Finances and Services Committee, a report going to the Commission, and financially accountable action flowing as a consequence. That is an important improvement in the way that the House runs its affairs.

Because the House did not previously have a structure to the way that it ran its affairs, we had years of what I lightly called deferred maintenance—but I shall now call it botched, unstructured, ad hoc, non-maintenance. It led to a state of chaos below stairs and back of house, with everything in the wrong order and in the wrong place, and needing radical action.

The Committee was acutely aware of the need to be prudent, to phase, and to avoid the expenditure of hunks of money that would be indigestible in the way that the House is run—that it would all flow in a series of bite-size pieces that enable proper planning. One hazard of this building is that, once the structure is opened up, it is not clear what is there. That problem hit the House of Lords, where what started as a £3 million business ended up a £11 million business because no preparatory work was done. We wish to avoid that pitfall.

We will examine the Line of Route. The advice that we received was that, for security reasons, it is best to keep visitors on the Line of Route and away from the Terrace. We are acutely aware of the need to provide visitor facilities. As soon as the Members and Strangers cafeterias are completed and we deal with whoever lunches in the Westminster Hall cafeteria, we can provide those facilities. We need to crack ahead with the programme as quickly as possible, and then we shall have long overdue visitor facilities.

We shall continue the consultation for which the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) asked. We are consulting the Administration and Works Committee, and we shall examine the relocation of offices—

It being one and a half hours after commencement of proceedings on the Motion, Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Order [11 July.]*

Question agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House approves the First Report from the Catering Committee of Session 1993-94, on Refreshment Services for the House of Commons (House of Commons Paper No. 75), and the First Report from the Catering Committee of Session 1992-93, on Refreshment Provision for Line of Route Visitors (House of Commons Paper No. 307).

Mr. Charles Edward Winter

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

12.13 am

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): I wish to bring to the attention of the House the case of Mr. Charles Edward Winter. He is a constituent of mine who, on the face of it, has suffered over the past 12 years from a disturbing combination of incompetence, dishonesty, collusion and suppression of evidence, from 1985 to the present day. He has been as much the victim of circumstances as of malpractice on the part of a host of professionals to whom he went for help.

In 1981, Mr. Winter was a wealthy hotelier. He is now bankrupt. The circumstances of his bankruptcy have driven him to make rash threats against those whom he considers responsible for his present situation.

Mr. Winter owned the Queen's hotel in Bishopton lane, Stockton-on-Tees, with his second wife, Anne Barlow. It burned down in 1981, leaving Mr. Winter to pursue a long and involved insurance dispute. The final settlement fell far short of the value which he attached to the hotel. Furthermore, he feels that the accountant, John Chilton of Chipchase Manners, whom he instructed to deal with his claim, acted negligently. Indeed, Mr. Winter was awarded £100,000 damages against that man.

Similarly, Mr. Winter strongly believes that his legal representation in the matter—Robin Bloom of Jackson and Company—gave him wrong and harmful advice in respect of it and was therefore negligent. He also has a grievance against firms of solicitors—Paul Bennett of Punch Robson for allegedly suppressing legal evidence in the form of documents since 1982, and later Booth and Company in Leeds from 1985. He also alleges perjury on the part of Robin Bloom of Jackson and Company, who did not bring this written evidence to light until 1993.

Mr. Winter attributes his subsequent bankruptcy largely to a threefold negligence. First, he claims that the damages that he was awarded were insufficient and that the accountant, Mr. Chilton, gave him an untrue picture of his own means. He also transferred assets to his wife so as to reduce his legal liability. His house, which was apparently worth only £60,000 last year, when the matter was in the courts, is now advertised in the local newspaper at £300,000.

Secondly, the barrister who took Mr. Winter's case acted negligently in failing to apply for costs to be paid by Mr. Chilton and said that if Mr. Winter did not accept the situation he would make a recommendation to the legal aid board that Mr. Winter was being unreasonable, and his legal aid would be withdrawn.

Thirdly, there was the suppression of written evidence, which could have helped him between 1982 and 1993.

Mr. Winter believes that these three facts have contributed to his being made bankrupt, which he would otherwise have avoided.

From 1982 there followed a protracted period during which Mr. Winter sought justice on the points that I have described, as well as with regard to a large capital gains bill, which was disputed between himself and his second wife, from whom he had become estranged and whom he subsequently divorced in 1982.

To advise him on this latter point Mr. Winter instructed a separate firm of solicitors, Bolsover, Manning and Scott, whose handling of his case he found to be far from satisfactory. Lacking all confidence in his legal representation in his divorce proceedings, he instructed a further set of solicitors—Punch Robson—to deal with matters relating to ancillary relief, and to ensure that the ex-Mrs. Winter met her side of their joint tax obligations in respect of the cash received on the insurance policy on the Queen's hotel. Incredibly, Mr. Winter has reason to believe that these solicitors—Punch Robson and Harvard and Company—acting for Ms Barlow, his ex-wife, acted in collusion rather than properly on his behalf, and that as a result they strung out the proceedings over 12 years, to the point where Mr. Winter was finally broken, financially and otherwise.

Over the course of these unfortunate events Mr. Winter has tried time and again to pull his life back together again. He has remarried and with his third wife, Linda, he has attempted a number of business ventures. But the cost and stress of his various actions has weighed heavily against him. Consequently he has remained largely unemployed and was declared bankrupt in February 1993, after spending £160,000 on solicitors' fees, being allowed to go into debt for £30,000 and having bankruptcy finally enforced upon him by the Inland Revenue. His losses now total over £1 million according to expert witnesses. He is also faced with the loss of the home he now lives in and the site of the Queen's hotel.

You will not be surprised, therefore, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to hear that these events have left Mr. Winter a very bitter man. He feels that, having paid so many professional people for advice, he should have received the correct advice and should have gone back into business fairly quickly. Instead, he is bankrupt. He has sought to resolve the matter for 11 years, writing to the ombudsman, to the solicitors' and barristers' complaints organisations and even to the European Court.

As a final cry for help, he resorted to threatening to kill Paul Bennett, John Chilton and Mr. Harvard, for which he was duly put on remand in custody for eight and a half months. When the matter came to court the judge, Mr. Justice Hannah, recognised the effect that the collusion of the solicitors had had on my constituent.

The purpose of this Adjournment debate is to bring the case of Mr. Winter to the attention of the House. Clearly there is little scope for intervention in the internal affairs of a self-regulating body such as the legal profession. However, I sincerely hope that all the relevant papers from all the firms to have had a hand in Mr. Winter's affairs can be placed before an independent representative of that profession for independent scrutiny. Those documents are all held by Mr. Winter's trustee in bankruptcy, and an eminent Queen's counsel is now being consulted.

I should like to press my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary and the Inland Revenue to review their decision to declare Mr. Winter bankrupt. I should also like them to reconsider the size of his capital gains tax bill. Perhaps in that light they will be able to give Mr. Winter an opportunity to restart in business, and thus to try to get back on his feet and start earning his own living. He has not been able to do that for the past 12 years.

The case is extremely complex. In summary, Mr. Winter seeks justice for himself in five ways. First, he would like the £55,000 that was paid to the Inland Revenue to be returned, plus interest backdated to 1989. Secondly, he would like the Queen's hotel site to be restored to his sole name. Thirdly, he feels that there should be a

[Mr. Tim Devlin]

guarantee that no enforcement proceedings will be lodged against his home, thus protecting himself and his new family from homelessness. Fourthly, he would like £160,000 worth of solicitors' fees back on the ground that all the solicitors whom he instructed failed in their duties on his behalf. Lastly, he would of course like the restoration of the £1 million loss that Ernst and Young and his property advisers, Storey Sons and Parker, estimated that he had suffered.

I am sorry to have to tell the House that my constituent has suffered severely from stress as a result of those protracted proceedings, and he is now in North Tees hospital suffering from pneumonia and a blood clot above his heart. That has been brought about by the stress of all the proceedings. I very much hope that Mr. Winter will soon be able to make a full recovery, and I am sure that that process will be greatly helped by anything that the Minister can say to comfort him this evening.

12.21 am

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): I shall begin by picking up the last point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin). I am sure that the whole House would want to echo what he said about our good wishes for Mr. Winter's restoration to good physical health. The story that my hon. Friend has told is one with which we would all feel deep sympathy. Clearly it is an unhappy story in which a whole series of things have gone wrong with Mr. Winter's life. None of us could listen to it without feeling deep sympathy with him over the turn that his life has taken.

I have discussed Mr. Winter's case with my hon. Friend, and I know that he has taken a long-standing and deep interest in it. He has sought, not only in this debate but in correspondence with a wide range of interested bodies, such as the Inland Revenue and others, to argue that case to the best of his ability, and to offer Mr. Winter advice on how he might be able to improve the position in which he finds himself.

However, having said all that, I must confess that I find myself at some disadvantage in trying to suggest how I, as the Minister with direct responsibility for the Inland Revenue, can help in Mr. Winter's case. The reasons for that are various. Not the least of them is the fact that, as my hon. Friend will be well aware, the relationship between Ministers and the Inland Revenue does not allow a Minister to intervene directly in a particular taxpayer's affairs. The Inland Revenue is established by law as an independent body, and it is a responsibility of the commissioners of the Inland Revenue, not of the Minister responsible for the Department, to make individual decisions about specific taxpayer cases.

That being said, I have asked the Inland Revenue to review Mr. Winter's case once again in order to see whether anything can be done to alleviate the situation in which he finds himself. There is not much doubt in my mind—the judgment reached by the Inland Revenue confirms this—that the handling of the case from the narrow point of view of the Inland Revenue does not lend itself to any revision which could help Mr. Winter.

The circumstances are, as my hon. Friend has recounted, that, as a result of the fire in the hotel in 1981-82, an insurance claim was made by Mr. Winter which represented a substantially larger sum of money than the sum that he had originally paid for the hotel, with the result that, since it was not reinvested in the hotel or in a similar activity, no roll-over relief was available and a capital gains tax liability crystallised.

Mr. Winter appealed unsuccessfully against that assessment and the capital gains tax due was confirmed. I know that Mr. Winter feels—I have some sympathy with him—that if he had been properly advised at the time, he might have acted differently, with the result that the capital gains tax liability might not have crystallised. I accept that it is possible to think in retrospect of how different behaviour by Mr. Winter might have avoided the crystallisation of that tax liability, but the Inland Revenue cannot deal with what might have been; it has to deal within the law with what happened.

The fact of the matter is that Mr. Winter did not act in a way that allowed him to claim roll-over relief, so the tax liability crystallised, leaving the Inland Revenue with a statutory responsiblity to collect the tax due within the terms of the law. I emphasise that I understand how, in retrospect, it is possible to see how affairs might have been differently handled, but, from the point of view of the Inland Revenue, they were not differently handled and it had to deal with the facts as they were.

Then we come to what the Inland Revenue does when a tax liability has crystallised and it has the responsibility to collect it. The liability crystallised during the tax year 1981-82 and it was only earlier this year that the Inland Revenue took action which led ultimately to the bankruptcy of Mr. Winter. No one could conclude that the delay between 1981-82 and the ultimate action to provoke the bankruptcy of Mr. Winter earlier this year constituted anything other than very patient action by the Inland Revenue, reflecting the recognition on the part of its officials of the difficult circumstances in which Mr. Winter finds himself.

However, the task of the Inland Revenue is not merely to be sympathetic to an individual taxpayer, which it has been in this case, but to deliver its broader responsibilities to taxpayers in general to collect tax that is due from people whose actions have led to the crystallisation of a tax liability.

That is the circumstance in which the Inland Revenue finds itself in Mr. Winter's case and, therefore, it is difficult to argue that the Inland Revenue should have acted differently, either in dealing with the assessment of liability on the facts available, or in dealing with the collection of that liability in the difficult circumstances in which Mr. Winter finds himself.

We have considered Mr. Winter's circumstances in detail. We, and I am sure all hon. Members, feel considerable sympathy with him in the sad tale that my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South related, but I do not believe that any of the judgments that were reached by Revenue officials in the course of that story were wrong. Even if I did, it is not within the competence of a Minister to instruct or to lean on the Inland Revenue in its dealings with an individual taxpayer.

Having considered the matter, I conclude that the Inland Revenue acted reasonably and within the powers that are theirs and theirs alone to exercise. While I can offer my hon. Friend and, more pertinently, Mr. Winter sympathy on the position in which he finds himself, I cannot offer my

hon. Friend any prospect that the Inland Revenue will act differently or in a way that will alleviate the unfortunate position in which Mr. Winter finds himself.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at half-past Twelve midnight.

House of Commons

Wednesday 13 July 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

LERWICK HARBOUR ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL

Considered; to be read the Third time.

Oral Answers to Questions

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Afghanistan

1. **Mr. Hanson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met representatives of the United Nations to discuss the continuing hostilities in Afghanistan.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd): I apologise for the absence of my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary, who is in former Yugoslavia today.

My right hon. Friend has not recently discussed Afghanistan with representatives of the United Nations.

Mr. Hanson: In view of the continuing slaughter of innocent people in Kabul and other centres of population in Afghanistan, will the Foreign Secretary and the Minister arrange an early meeting with the United Nations to raise two matters—first, the need for an urgent arms embargo, especially on weapons from Pakistan; and secondly, the early re-establishment of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees in Afghanistan, which was withdrawn from the country in January? While the slaughter continues, both measures are needed.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have regular contacts with United Nations representatives. In recent months, we have supported two Security Council presidential statements calling for an end to the hostilities and for support for the programme of humanitarian aid.

The United Nations is seeking to re-establish its presence in Afghanistan. A proposal is under consideration to put a mission from the UNHCR back in the country.

Rwanda

2. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about Government policy with regard to the situation in Rwanda.

9. **Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Rwanda.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We are fully joining in international efforts to bring a halt to the bloodshed. On 8 June, the Security Council approved the deployment of an expanded United Nations force. We have offered 50 trucks to the United Nations Aid Mission in Rwanda, UNAMIR, and we are considering whether we can do more. We have supported the French initiative to mount a humanitarian mission until the expanded UNAMIR can be put in place.

Since 6 April, we have given more than £11 million in humanitarian aid, and a further Overseas Development Administration assessment mission is now visiting the region. Once it returns we shall consider what further bilateral assistance we can provide, including in the areas covered by the French initiative.

Mr. Hughes: I thank the Minister for his answer and for the letter to us all from the Minister for Overseas Development. Can he assure the House that we are giving as much humanitarian assistance as is needed? Can he ensure that the people of Rwanda are protected in the humanitarian zone? Given the finding that genocide has been perpetrated in Rwanda, can he assure the House that all responsible for it will speedily be brought to justice by the relevant international authorities?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I have outlined the humanitarian assistance that has been given to help refugees in the humanitarian zone and the neighbourhood, and a mission is assessing whether we should be doing more.

I can confirm that the French have established a humanitarian zone and that people can live there safely.

A Security Council resolution of 1 July established a commission of experts to analyse the information relating to violations of international human standards in Rwanda.

Mr. Worthington: Is not it true that the French stepped in only because of the failure of the United Nations to act with urgency, and that the French have committed themselves to pulling out at the end of July? All my information leads me to believe that there is no commitment to replace them. Surely the Minister realises that 50 trucks are wholly inadequate as supplementary logistical support. Whatever else happens, can the Minister assure us that we will be spared the obscenity of the Government of Rwanda becoming the president of the UN Security Council in September?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The hon. Gentleman has heard what I said and he has been in correspondence with my ministerial colleagues. I can only reiterate that the provision of British equipment is the result of what has been requested of us by the United Nations. Of course, we are not the only country that has responded in that area. A number of countries have offered logistical support, including ourselves, America, Russia, France, Canada and South Africa. So there are others involved. As the hon. Gentleman knows, the troops sought by the Secretary-General are coming from a number of African countries, which I think is right; they are from Ghana, Senegal, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Congo and Mali. Local countries have taken the initiative at the request of the Secretary-General.

Mr. Lester: In his report to the Security Council, the Secretary-General suggested that, because the performance of the Security Council and the international community in dealing with the issue was, I think he said, deplorable, he would set up an inquiry into the operation of the international community when confronted with crises such as that in Rwanda. Has my hon. Friend any news about the inquiry? Has it been set up, and at what stage will we hear the result of it?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I am not aware of any detailed conclusions that have been reached; but of course I shall be happy to answer a question from my hon. Friend when those details are available.

Dr. John Cunningham: The United Nations agreed a force for Rwanda, but did not agree its deployment. Now that its deployment has been agreed, we are told that it has been held up because of lack of logistical support from western countries. Why is further delay occurring? Genocide continues in Rwanda and hundreds of thousands of terrified people are flooding across the borders of some of the most impoverished countries in the world. Of course, no sensible person blames all that on Her Majesty's Government; I am not suggesting that. *[Laughter.]* I am dismayed that Conservative Members think that this is a laughing matter; it just shows how pathetic their attitude really is. We want to know from Foreign Office Ministers whether it is lack of capability or lack of political will that is preventing the United Nations from getting its act together.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Certainly it would be wrong of the right hon. Gentleman to blame the British Government and I defend the British Government—

Dr. Cunningham: I did not say that.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: No. I appreciate that the right hon. Gentleman was seeking to cast blame widely—including, in part, on the British Government. We have responded to the request of the Secretary-General for the supply of equipment. We have made that equipment available; it is being inspected by United Nations people at the moment and will be ready for deployment when the United Nations is ready. It is not lack of support from the British Government that is constraining activities in that area. As to humanitarian aid, we responded immediately and provided a substantial amount of help; we are ready to do more. As the right hon. Gentleman knows, the British Government cannot be accused of not taking our international commitments seriously as we are the fourth largest contributor to United Nations operations in the world.

Israel

3. **Mrs. Jane Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Anglo-Israeli relations.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Douglas Hogg): They are excellent.

Mrs. Kennedy: I am pleased to hear that from the Minister. Is he aware of concern about the British Government's attitude to the continuing Arab trade boycott of Israel? Does he agree that British companies need the shield of legislation to allow them unequivocally to reject demands that they comply with the boycott? Will he consider introducing such legislation here?

Mr. Hogg: There is concern about the trade boycott and we deplore that boycott. I am glad to say that the tertiary and secondary boycott has been falling away and that there has been a substantial increase in the volume of United Kingdom exports to Israel. In 1993, exports to Israel were up by 50 per cent; in the first five months of this year, exports to Israel were up by 26 per cent; and Israel is now the third most important export market for United Kingdom goods in the middle east.

Sir David Madel: What is the Government's attitude to the idea that Jerusalem could become the capital of an independent Palestinian state as well as the capital of Israel?

Mr. Hogg: That is certainly a matter which should be given the utmost consideration by those who will have to negotiate Jerusalem's status. It has long been agreed that that status will be addressed at the very end of the peace process, which I consider both inevitable and right, but the parties to the negotiations will wish to think seriously about finding a way for Palestinians and Israelis to share Jerusalem.

Sir David Steel: Will Her Majesty's Government give a warm welcome to last week's political initiative from King Hussein of Jordan, which has received a ready response from the Israeli Government? I understand that official talks between the two countries are taking place this very week.

Mr. Hogg: The right hon. Gentleman is quite right, and we do indeed give a warm welcome to the speech made by His Majesty the King of Jordan. Negotiations between Jordan and Israel will start on 18 July, and will deal with such important subjects as the border, security and water. That is a very welcome development, and we applaud it.

Mr. John Marshall: I welcome the recent improvements in relations between Britain and Israel, but may I ask my right hon. and learned Friend to agree with people in Israel who—remembering what happened in the years before 1967—are reluctant for Jerusalem ever again to become a divided city?

Mr. Hogg: I do not think that I can sensibly add to what I said to my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, South-West (Sir D. Madel). The question of Jerusalem is of key importance, and is best dealt with at the end of the peace process. There are powerfully competing emotions among all sides in the negotiations, which must be dealt with sensibly.

Dr. Howells: I am sure the Minister will agree that the international community has a duty to help the new Administration in Gaza and Jericho. No doubt he is aware that that Administration requires an estimated £900 million of aid just to stabilise living conditions for the 700,000 Palestinians who live in Gaza, mostly in deplorable conditions. Will the Government give a lead in ensuring that the money promised by donor countries is delivered to those who have the great task of rebuilding Gaza?

Mr. Hogg: But we are giving a lead. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman has not overlooked the statement made on 8 July by my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary, who

made it plain that, in addition to the £70 million that we would make available over the next three years, we were providing an additional £5 million in bilateral assistance. That will go largely to the Palestinian police force, but there will be other technical support. The hon. Gentleman should also bear in mind the fact that, for example, the Bank of England is now helping the Palestinians to establish a Palestinian monetary authority. We are already playing a full part, and we now look to others to do likewise.

Asia-Pacific Commercial Sections

4. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what the Foreign Office is doing to reinforce commercial sections in Asia and the Pacific.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I am glad to say that exports to the Asia-Pacific rim region rose by 28.5 per cent. in 1993 to £13 billion, and that since 1990 total export promotion effort at the Foreign Office posts in Asian and Pacific rim countries has risen by 23 per cent.

Mr. Butler: I welcome the increasing trade in what might be termed a frontier market, but I was seeking assurances about the amount of additional assistance that the Foreign Office is offering business men. Can my hon. Friend confirm that the increased co-operation with the Department of Trade and Industry will continue, so that our business men receive as much assistance in these important markets as business men in our European competitor nations?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My hon. Friend is quite right. As I have said, the export promotion effort has risen substantially: we have created 40 new front-line commercial jobs at posts in Hong Kong, Tokyo, Osaka, Seoul, Bangkok, Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur, Delhi, Singapore and Hanoi, and at the British trade and cultural office in Taipei. My hon. Friend can rest assured that a great deal of effort is going into meeting that frontier market.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: How many letters has the Foreign Office received from British business men or businesses suggesting—indeed, complaining—that Britain's attitude to China over Hong Kong is costing them business?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Some facts speak clearly for themselves. In 1992, exports to China were up 72 per cent. and in the first quarter of 1994 they were up 22 per cent., so we are on course to do the same again this year. I do not accept what the hon. Gentleman has said. There have been assurances from Chinese Premier Li Peng and from the Vice Premier and Foreign Minister that China will not discriminate against British companies in commercial interests.

Dr. Spink: I congratulate my hon. Friend on the performance of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in trade development in recent years. Notwithstanding the statistics that he has just given us in relation to China, is my hon. Friend satisfied that we are doing as much as we can —and as much as our major competitors—to capture that fast-growing market?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: All I can say is that we are doing extremely well. I cannot give precise comparisons because they are difficult to make. I believe that we are making an enormous effort to help British exporters, who are responding.

Yugoslavia

5. **Mr. Hutton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the work of the war crimes tribunal investigating atrocities in the former Yugoslavia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We co-sponsored Security Council resolution 827 which established the international tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. We welcome the recent appointment of Judge Richard Goldstone of South Africa as the prosecutor. In the meantime, we have been co-operating with and supporting the work of the acting deputy prosecutor, Mr. Blewitt, who has been setting up the prosecutor's office in The Hague.

Mr. Hutton: I thank the Minister for that reply. Can he tell the House when he thinks that the first indictments will be issued by the tribunal and when the first prosecutions are likely to start? Does the Minister think that the time may be right for the British Government to give serious consideration to the establishment of a permanent United Nations tribunal to deal with war crimes and human rights violations around the world?

Mr. Hogg: The former part of the hon. Gentleman's question is a matter for the prosecutor. I understand that there is some chance that there will be trials before the end of the year.

On the second part of the hon. Gentleman's question, the position is that the United Nations International Law Commission has produced suggestions—a draft—for the establishment of an international criminal court. Clearly there are attractions in that. We now have to consider whether it is practicable. If one were to be set up, it might be the appropriate forum in which to try war crimes such as those to which the hon. Gentleman refers.

Mr. Jenkin: Given the situation in the former Yugoslavia, which is symptomatic of the failure of our common European foreign policy led by Germany, will my right hon. and learned Friend join me in welcoming the Karlsruhe judgment in Germany this week? Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the speeches by President Clinton proposing a leadership role for Germany oversimplify foreign policy in Europe and are rather more reminiscent of Joseph Kennedy than of J. F. Kennedy?

Mr. Hogg: What is happening in former Yugoslavia has more to do with the bloodiness of human nature than with anything on the part of the German Government or any other Government. I disagree with my hon. Friend on that point.

Bosnia

7. **Mr. Raynsford:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the situation in central Bosnia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The situation in central Bosnia is stable. The ceasefire between the Bosnian Government and the Bosnian Croat forces has held up well. The United

Kingdom UNPROFOR contingent has played an active part in monitoring the ceasefire, chairing the joint liaison commissions and assisting humanitarian work in the area.

Mr. Raynsford: Does the Minister agree that to establish a lasting and successful peace framework in central Bosnia it will be essential to respect two principles: first, that the internationally recognised boundaries of Bosnia should be preserved in any peace settlement and, secondly, that there is a right for refugees and displaced persons to return to their areas of origin, from which many were forced out by the horrors of ethnic cleansing? Will the British Government be resolute in pressing for those principles as part of a peace settlement?

Mr. Hogg: Both are important principles. The map worked out by the contact group provides for the preservation of Bosnia-Herzegovina as a complete entity, the external frontiers of which will be respected. The return of refugees is also tremendously important, but we must keep in mind the fact that before people will go back and, a fortiori, stay there, they must have confidence that they will be safe. If there is a settlement, the international community can achieve some things by way of implementation. I hope that it can instil confidence, which is a necessary precondition for the achievement of that second element.

Mr. Cormack: Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that the achievement of peace in Bosnia—we all wish the Foreign Secretary well in his difficult mission—depends primarily on the Serbs; that the Bosnian Government have behaved extremely responsibly in recent weeks; and that, as he himself said, the alliance with the Croats has held?

Mr. Hogg: I welcome the alliance with the Croats, and it is true that the federation between the Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Croats seems to be holding firm. It is important to keep in mind the fact that the recent infringements of the ceasefire were committed by both sides—by the Bosnian Government as much as by the Bosnian Serbs. It is important to be aware that the contact group's proposal will not work unless it is accepted by both sides; so we look to both sides to accept it.

Dr. John Cunningham: Everyone wishes the Foreign Secretary well on his mission to former Yugoslavia and we hope that he will be successful in impressing on the combatants the fact that this is perhaps their last opportunity for a negotiated settlement. It is sad that the current offer to the Bosnian Government is worse than was available when they had the opportunity to reach a settlement in 1992. Of course we wish the Foreign Secretary well, but will the right hon. and learned Gentleman assure the House that, if a success is not achieved in the next few days, there will be no early abrogation of either the sanctions against Serbia or the arms embargo on Bosnia?

Mr. Hogg: If a settlement is not reached because the contact group plan is rejected—I am focusing now on the question of rejection by the Bosnian Serbs—it is certain that sanctions will remain in place and that they will almost certainly be toughened. It is probable that the arms embargo will not survive. The pressure to relax the arms embargo in the event of the Serbs rejecting the plan will probably prove irresistible.

Lady Olga Maitland: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, at this stage, it would be a tragedy if the contact group were not successful, bearing in mind the sacrifices that have been made by French and British troops in delivering aid in Bosnia? I hope that he will continue in his endeavours to encourage everyone to sign the agreement.

Mr. Hogg: I agree with my hon. Friend. This is a critical moment. If the parties do not accept the plan that has been proposed and worked out by the contact group, there is a grave danger that war in Bosnia will re-ignite and develop with ever-increasing intensity.

Albania and Macedonia

8. **Mr. Austin-Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he has taken or proposes to take in the light of Serbian aggression against Albania and Macedonia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Following the occupation by Serbian troops of a hill near the Serbia-Macedonia border in mid-June, the British chargé d'affaires in Belgrade made representations to the Serbian authorities. We welcome the recent agreement brokered by UNPROFOR, under which Serbian and Macedonian troops withdrew from the vicinity of the hill. We are not aware of any recent cases of Serbian aggression towards Albania. We continue to watch developments in the region carefully.

Mr. Austin-Walker: Does not the Minister recognise that the west's inaction when Milosevic first used his tanks and aircraft against Ljubljana gave a green light to Serbian aggression against Bosnia-Herzegovina? Does not the right hon. and learned Gentleman recognise that appeasement of Serbian aggression and acceptance of their ability to gain territory by force encourages acts of aggression against Macedonia and Albania and the further persecution of the Albanian majority in Kosovo?

Will the Government now stand firm against Serbian aggression and try to prevent the conflict in the Balkans from getting completely out of hand?

Mr. Hogg: The hon. Gentleman should not indulge in generalities; he needs to be careful not to induce people to suppose that the Government mean, or that he means, things that we do not or he does not really mean. It is our policy to try to persuade the parties to accept the plan worked out by the contact group. We are not in the business of waging war; the hon. Gentleman sounds as if he is, but that is not the policy of his party's Front-Bench spokesmen.

Sir Peter Emery: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware of the Macedonian resolution passed almost unanimously by 53 nations in the Parliament of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe demanding of Greece the recognition of Macedonia and the withdrawal of any trade restrictions? Would that not greatly assist Macedonia with any problems that might arise in the future?

Mr. Hogg: I have indeed seen the resolution to which my right hon. Friend refers, and I welcome it. The Greek Government's policies towards Macedonia are quite wrong, especially that of imposing sanctions. We were very pleased when the European Court of Justice took up

the issue. Proposals worked out by Cyrus Vance address all the relevant questions which divide Macedonia and Greece, and I very much hope that Macedonia and Greece will be prepared to accept the compromises worked out by him.

Ms Quin: Is not Macedonia facing a grave crisis in terms of its security and economy, with industry virtually at a standstill and unemployment rocketing? I welcome the Vance initiative, but what contact is the Minister having with the Greek Government and his European Union partners to resolve the problem, as it seems that the European Court avenue is not going to provide a speedy solution?

Mr. Hogg: The hon. Lady is right that the European Court is not prepared to take interim action—a fact which I very much regret, as it would have been a useful way forward. We have been in frequent bilateral contact with the Greek authorities and the issue has been raised frequently by Ministers in the context of various European Union Councils. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary intends that it should be raised at the next Council meeting which, I believe, is early next week. It is a very important issue and we will continue to press the Greek Government on it.

Nigeria

10. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further plans he has to try to persuade the Nigerian authorities to respect the result of last year's presidential elections.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Secretary of State is worried about developments in Nigeria. The Nigerian Government claim to want a speedy transition to democratic government, but their actions contradict their claims: their decision to put Chief Abiola on trial cannot help to achieve that end. Meanwhile, their regressive economic policies are stifling industrial production and domestic and foreign investment and damaging Nigeria's standing with its creditors. We are urging all sides in Nigeria to join in constructive political dialogue.

Mr. Bruce: I thank my hon. Friend for that answer. Will he emphasise that the British Government's friendship towards the Nigerian people makes it absolutely clear that we want democratic accountability to come to Nigeria, that we want the President who was elected almost a year ago to be allowed to take his place, and that we want the Parliament that was freely elected to be able to take control from the military Government?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I can, of course, confirm that we wish Nigeria to return to democratic civilian government. Last June's elections were the most free and fair in Nigeria's history. It is important that Nigeria should have a President who is acceptable to all, and it must be for Nigerians to resolve whom that should be.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Is the Minister aware that there is grave concern about the arrest not only of Chief Abiola but of many other people who support the democratic process in Nigeria? Some people in this country, including Nigerian students, say that we should at least impose an arms embargo, if not go further, to try to ensure that Nigerians accept the democratic process.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: As the hon. Gentleman will be aware, in conjunction with our European partners and the American Government we have imposed certain sanctions against the Nigerian military: visa restrictions, bans on high level visits and on military training, and restrictions on defence sales. Those will remain in force for the time being.

Paraguay

11. **Mr. Streeter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the United Kingdom's relations with Paraguay following the recent visit to the United Kingdom by President Wasmosy.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory): Relations are excellent. We were delighted to welcome President Wasmosy to the United Kingdom for the first time last week.

Mr. Streeter: During the recent visit of the Paraguayan President, did my hon. Friend have a chance to discuss with him the difficult question of drug trafficking from Latin America? Does he agree that it is time for a fresh initiative to try to stem the flow of life-destroying drugs from South America to Europe?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Yes, Paraguay is on a number of drug routes, which is why we so warmly welcome its Government's commitment to getting on top of that scourge. During the President's visit, we signed a drug assets confiscation agreement and we look forward to its being put into practical effect.

Mr. Grocott: Does the Minister acknowledge that a key issue for people concerned about strengthening the democratic process in Paraguay is the establishment of a civil service free of party political interference—one which has security of tenure for its civil servants and is professionally recruited on merit? Does he share my deep concern, however, that we are in a weak position to lecture any other country on such subjects, having so weakened our own civil service under the present Government?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I entirely reject the hon. Gentleman's insinuations about this country, but I welcome without reservation Paraguay's return to democracy after more than 50 years.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Is not the significance of President Wasmosy's visit the fact that he is a directly elected Latin American President who received his symbols of office from a predecessor who was also directly elected—something for which Latin America is now once again becoming renowned? Is it not of great value to have within Mercosur, the trading bloc of southern America, a country with a long-standing record of free enterprise and free trade?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Yes, we welcome the return to civilian democratic government of almost all the countries in that continent. There is an especially interesting development concerning trade in the southern part of South America, in that we hope that the Mercosur agreement will come into effect at the beginning of next year. There will

be a free trade zone among the countries of that region, and Paraguay will be at the centre of it, so our excellent trading relations with that country will stand us in good stead.

International Paedophile Rings

12. **Mrs. Golding:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent talks he has had with other Governments about international paedophile rings.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We take every opportunity in all international forums to urge action against child prostitution.

Mrs. Golding: I thank the Minister for that reply. Will he consider having talks with the Sri Lankan Government, who are taking strong measures to combat paedophile rings? For example, they have established a Cabinet sub-committee and set up a separate unit in every police department, the tourist board is closely supervising hotels and guest houses, and the Government are carrying out a public awareness programme as well as conveying strongly to foreigners the message that they will not tolerate the exploitation of children. Does the Minister think that other Governments could learn from that? If so, what could his Department do to co-ordinate a campaign against that vile practice?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: As the hon. Lady knows, I have myself been in touch with the Sri Lankan high commissioner on all these matters. I can tell her that there is a great deal of police co-operation between Britain, Sri Lanka and other countries. The national crime intelligence service has a paedophile unit which gathers information on known British rings and liaises with its counterparts in the region of which the hon. Lady speaks. British officers take an active part in the work of Interpol in dealing with offences against minors. Interpol provides a useful focus for international police co-operation in the area.

Mr. Dickens: Does my hon. Friend agree that the time of kid glove action is over and that we must go for a mailed fist result? We must really go after the perverts—the evil people who prey on the bodies of children in an unnatural way. Would my hon. Friend consider discussing with people overseas and our Home Office whether, on a second conviction, castration might be a very suitable approach? One would be surprised to see how few people would need to be castrated to stop this evil practice against children —and I would do the same for those who rape women.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I do not think that my hon. Friend's suggestion is a matter for the Foreign Office.

Bosnia

13. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made to the Bosnian Government in respect of recent breaches of ceasefire agreements; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have repeatedly urged all sides to show restraint and we are supporting UN efforts to extend the ceasefire. We are also pressing the parties to accept the proposals put forward by the Geneva ministerial meeting on 5 July. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary and his French colleague Mr. Juppé are taking action with the key players in Croatia, Bosnia and Serbia on their current visit.

Mr. Wareing: Does the Minister agree that the breaches of the ceasefire have been mainly by the Muslim Government from Sarajevo since the recent ceasefire agreement was arranged? It is important that we get the right message through to the Bosnian Muslim Government. Does the Minister agree that it is erroneous to tell the Bosnian Serbs that whenever they have breached the ceasefire agreements they may be confronted by air strikes when there are not tit-for-tat threats against the Muslim leaders in Sarajevo? If there is to be a successful conclusion to the present peace negotiations and if there is to be agreement by the Bosnian Serbs, this country and the United Nations must show an even-handed approach.

Mr. Hogg: On the first three paragraphs of the hon. Gentleman's question, the factual position is as follows: in terms of the number of infringements during the past month's ceasefire, the Bosnian Serbs committed the most, but perhaps the most serious infringements were committed by the Bosnian Government. Looking forward, I greatly welcome the fact that Mr. Akashi was able to negotiate an extension to that one-month ceasefire.

Mr. Charles Kennedy: In the context of what the Minister said earlier, when he surmised that the arms embargo could be lifted, and given the fairly trenchant position that the Foreign Secretary and the Government have taken on the issue, what would be the British Government's position if such a development were to come about or draw near?

Mr. Hogg: It is true that for two years or so we have argued strongly against the relaxation of the arms embargo as we believe that such a relaxation would run the risk of seriously re-igniting the war in Bosnia. That remains our view, but it also remains a fact that if the present negotiations do not succeed and, in particular, if they are rejected by the Bosnian Serbs, the pressure to relax the arms embargo—most especially, although not exclusively, in Washington—will probably prove irresistible. We shall have to judge our own policy as the facts develop.

Commonwealth Institute

15. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the future of the Commonwealth Institute.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I am pleased to announce that the Minister for Overseas Development has today informed the acting chairman of the Commonwealth Institute that the Government are willing to provide a grant of £2.4 million over the three-year period from 1996-97 to enable the institute to regenerate its galleries and become self-supporting by March 1999.

Mr. Eastham: I thank the Minister for his reply and also for kindly telephoning me this morning in relation to the matter. Is he aware, however, that the Commonwealth Institute in London is desperately in need of cash to finance the refurbishment of the building, which will cost about £5 million? Given that grants were previously in the order of

£2 million per year, does not £2.4 million over three years pale a little in comparison? Does that not show a negative attitude towards the Commonwealth?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: No. The Government are most certainly committed to the continued strength of the Commonwealth. The offer that the Government have made is under discussion with Mr. David Thompson, the acting chairman, and it is on condition that the institute raises £5 million in sponsorship and submits satisfactory business and building maintenance plans. Mr. Thompson is confident that, with the restructuring in hand and with the assistance that he will receive from private sponsorship, he will be able to maintain the building and make the Commonwealth Institute a viable and flourishing institution for the future.

Mr. David Howell: Does my hon. Friend accept that that is excellent news which will be widely welcomed on both sides of the house? Does he further accept, as I am sure that he does, that that institute or club, the Commonwealth, is not only thriving, but growing and that more and more countries are seeking to join it? Does he realise, as I am sure that he also does, that the provision is a very good move which reflects the growing interest of this country and Commonwealth members in grouping together for the future?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I very much agree with my right hon. Friend and I am grateful for his encouraging comments. We hope that the Commonwealth Institute will thrive and flourish with an injection of private sector funds as well as Government assistance in the interim period because it is an important institute for the development of the Commonwealth which we wish to see flourish and thrive. As my right hon. Friend will be aware, we paid some 30 per cent. of the costs of the Commonwealth secretariat in London and 60 per cent. of our bilateral aid goes to Commonwealth countries.

Mr. Rogers: I do not quite understand why the right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) thinks that the Government are advancing when there is a cut in grant from £6 million to £2.4 million. The Minister and the Government are sending out completely the wrong signals to the Commonwealth. We should like to know whether the Government intend to privatise or to hive off that valuable and focal institution because that is what they are doing under the restructuring. Will the Minister tell us what status he envisages for the Commonwealth Institute after 1996 and whether, when the process which he seems to be undertaking starts, he intends to repeal the Imperial Institute Act 1925 and the Commonwealth Institute Act 1958 under which the institute is governed? When will that process be put into train?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: No, I cannot agree with the hon. Gentleman. The Government believe that the Commonwealth Institute has a great future ahead of it, in the way in which I have indicated, with assistance from the private sector and help from the Government over the interim period. The institute is, of course, run by its own body of management, governing body and trustees. There is no plan to repeal the Acts of Parliament to which the hon. Gentleman referred, which established the Imperial Institute and later the Commonwealth Institute.

Korea

16. **Mr. Garnier:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the current state of relations between North and South Korea.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: It is too soon to know how the new leadership in Pyongyang will approach relations with South Korea, but we hope that the death of Kim Il-sung will not lead to a lengthy postponement of the summit talks between South and North Korea earlier planned for this month.

Mr. Garnier: Does my hon. Friend accept that the words "North Korea" are merely shorthand for the dangers posed by nuclear proliferation? Has he seen reports that North Korea may have as many as six—certainly at least two—nuclear devices which it is seeking to develop to a state in which it can deliver them overseas? Is he aware that North Korea is trading in nuclear technologies with a number of countries whose interests are not favourable to ours? Will he use the hiatus caused by the death of the North Korean leader to accelerate rather than decelerate pressure on that country to reduce nuclear proliferation?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: There is no hard evidence that North Korea possesses nuclear weapons. There must be suspicions, however, because North Korea does not allow the necessary international inspections which would assure us that plutonium is not being diverted. We take the drive against nuclear proliferation extremely seriously. We are glad that North Korea has not denounced the non-proliferation treaty, and we hope very much that it will allow the necessary inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Mr. Winnick: In the context of North Korea, does the Minister know whether Marxism-Leninism now accepts entirely the Conservative principle of hereditary succession? Will Ministers be writing to congratulate the North Korean leadership on a new development in Marxism-Leninism?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: They do like to try to keep it in the family in such countries. That is a feature of Marxist dictatorships. The succession to the leadership is a matter for the North Koreans. It is important to note that the dictator concerned is one of the last vestiges of a socialist world order that is now widely discredited.

Mr. Duncan Smith: It is pretty well established that both Iran and Iraq have been spending substantial sums —Iran has been spending up to $0.5 billion every year —on nuclear proliferation. Much of the technology has been transferred to Iran and Iraq from North Korea and China. Does my hon. Friend have any clear plan to deal with that? It would seem that the policy of non-proliferation has pretty well failed in many countries and that we should be looking to something much harsher.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I do not agree with my hon. Friend that non-proliferation has failed. We are working to achieve an indefinite extension to the non-proliferation treaty. We are also working to negotiate a comprehensive test ban, provided that it is part of a wider move to prevent proliferation, especially among the states that my hon. Friend mentioned.

China

17. **Mr. Mike O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the United Kingdom's relationships with the Chinese Government.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Relations with China have improved recently. On Hong Kong, we have reached agreement on defence lands and have made progress in our discussions on financing the new airport. Our trade figures show a 72 per cent. increase in direct exports to China last year and a 22 per cent. increase in the first quarter of this year. We also have an active dialogue on human rights and international and United Nations matters. The Minister of State, my right hon. Friend the Member for Eddisbury (Mr. Goodlad), will be visiting China from tomorrow.

Mr. O'Brien: What representations did the Government make to the Chinese Government after the underground nuclear test on 10 June, which was conducted in defiance of international opinion and in breach of an international moratorium? Can the Minister able assure the House that that second underground nuclear test in nine months met with firm representations from the Government and that difficult relations over Hong Kong did not prevent the Government from expressing concerns about real and important nuclear issues?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Yes. We have expressed our disapproval of the continuing underground testing in China and I am glad that China has at least indicated its intention to participate in negotiations for a comprehensive test ban.

Mr. Waterson: Despite the public rhetoric of the Chinese Government, will my hon. Friend continue to keep the pressure on them to accept the democratic through train up to and beyond 1997?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Yes. My right hon. Friend the Minister of State will doubtless be carrying those discussions forward during his forthcoming visit.

Mr. Gapes: When will the Government next have discussions on Bosnia in the United Nations Security Council? Will the Government be trying to work with the Chinese to veto any move by the United States to lift the arms embargo? In view of the remarks of the right hon. and learned Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg)—and of the Prime Minister yesterday, when he said that he was against the unilateral lifting of the arms embargo—may we have a categorical assurance that our Government will not give way to misguided pressure from the American Congress and President Clinton but will work with others to stop the lifting of the arms embargo?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has made it known to the United States Government that any unilateral move of the sort suggested by the hon. Gentleman would be strongly deprecated.

Embassies (Science and Technology Sections)

18. **Mrs. Anne Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the criteria for the establishment of a specialised science and technology section within British embassies abroad.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Science and technology work is carried out by different sections within a wide range of our overseas posts, as appropriate and in response to demand.

Mrs. Campbell: Does the Minister agree that it is crucial that scientists and businesses in the United Kingdom are kept aware of developing science and technology in other countries, particularly in the United States? Will he explain why he has decided that the science and technology counsellor in Washington can be absorbed into another section when the German embassy in Washington maintains a section of five people, the French embassy maintains a section of six people, and the Chinese embassy maintains a section of 11 people?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I believe that we are extremely well served by the new arrangements established in Washington. We have created responsibilities at counsellor level for a counsellor with science and technology responsibility and also in other areas, including transport, energy and the environment, in line with the kind of arrangements which prevail in Paris, Bonn and elsewhere. We also have one full-time first secretary below him and a part-time first secretary assisting him.

The hon. Lady makes a comparison between France, Germany and Japan, or perhaps it was China. She should be aware that the academic contact between British academics and American academics, because of the common language and culture, is very extensive indeed and, I am sure, nothing like so extensive in the countries that she mentioned.

South Pacific Forum

19. **Mr. Luff:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he plans to visit the south Pacific forum in Brisbane this summer.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, my right hon. Friend the Member for Eddisbury (Mr. Goodlad), will take part in a post-forum dialogue which follows the south Pacific forum in Brisbane.

Mr. Luff: Does my hon. Friend understand the concern that Britain's role in the region is not always as significant as it once was? Against that background, does he understand the welcome that will be given to my right hon. Friend's visit to Brisbane, emphasising the fact that we must take a very close interest in the affairs of the south Pacific?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Our annual attendance at ministerial level in discussions following the conference shows the importance that we attach to the area. There will be an opportunity to identify shared policy priorities and objectives. My right hon. Friend will continue with his visits in Australia and New Zealand. Furthermore, we maintain a significant aid programme in the area which shows our continuing interest.

Mr. Faulds: In view of the contortions of a slightly earlier question, will the Minister consider, on his way to visit the south Pacific forum in Brisbane this summer, the necessity to apologise to the Chinese Government for the —*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. That is a little way out geographically.

Middle East

21. **Mrs. Dunwoody:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the peace process in the middle east.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I welcome Mr. Arafat's return to Gaza and Jericho, which symbolises progress in the peace process. We shall continue to provide assistance to his new Administration. We welcome recent progress on the Jordanian track of the peace process and hope for progress on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Earlier, the Minister skated rather rapidly over the question of the boycott. Why is it that France, Germany and America and various other countries have very firm anti-boycott legislation, but the British Government, who know that British businesses are losing out in this matter, absolutely refuse to support the European directive or to introduce legislation in this House which would outlaw such activities?

Mr. Hogg: I do not think that legislation would be helpful. We have already been successful in persuading the Arab states to relax the boycott. I have already spoken of the relaxation in the secondary and tertiary boycotts. Israel is now the third most important United Kingdom export market in the middle east, and there have been substantial increases in UK exports to Israel. That shows that the boycott is extraordinarily ineffective.

Cyprus

22. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about relations between the United Kingdom and Cyprus.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Our relationship with Cyprus is close. We regard the division of the island since 1974 as damaging and unacceptable. We continue to work, both at the United Nations and in our capacity as a guarantor power, for a peaceful, just and lasting settlement. We believe that the package of confidence-building measures put forward by the UN offers the best way to make progress towards such a settlement. The gap between the two parties is now narrow. I hope that they will be able to seize the present opportunity to take a decisive step forward.

Mr. Marshall: Does my hon. Friend agree that it would be quite wrong for Mr. Denktash to have a right of veto over Cyprus's application to join the European Union? May we have an assurance that the Government will support that application, whether or not the current measures lead to agreement?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We do support and have supported the application. Neither Mr. Denktash nor anyone else has a veto over the application, but we recognise the difficulties of bringing in a divided island: that is why the position will be reviewed by a European Union observer at the start of next year.

Civil Service

3.30 pm

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Mr. William Waldegrave): With permission, Madam Speaker, I wish to make a statement on the White Paper on the civil service, published today.

It is nearly 150 years since the Northcote-Trevelyan report first laid out the principles of a professional civil service, accountable through Ministers to Parliament, recruited on merit, politically impartial and dominated by a high ideal of the value of public service. Over the years since, the civil service has seen the demands laid upon it change in ways that could not have been imagined then. But the core principles established at that time have remained unaltered. They have served the country well; they continue to do so.

Today's White Paper therefore reaffirms those same fundamental principles. These principles help us to live in a decent society, but they have economic value, too. No one should underestimate the advantage we get from the justified reputation we have as a country in which our public service is honest, competent and apolitical.

None the less, no organisation can stand still in changing times. The public rightly expect to see continuing improvements in the standards of service in the public sector within the resources which can be afforded. That is why this Government have introduced a series of wide-ranging reforms, now brought together under the banner of the citizens charter, aimed at delivering better service ever more efficiently. These include the financial management initiative, the next steps programme, the efficiency reviews and the "Competing for Quality" programme.

I believe that the House should pay tribute to the way the civil service has handled these and other initiatives. They have already produced marked increases in both performance and efficiency. The size of the civil service is at its lowest level since the second world war, and the new structures are showing considerable gains in efficiency. The White Paper published today sets out how the Government see these reforms being taken forward and draws together the implications for the future of the civil service.

One central principle of management unites all these reforms—that of delegation to and within properly accountable organisations. We should now take further steps in that same direction, building on what we know works, rather than going off in a new direction.

But it is a fact that the most radical change so far has been in those parts of the civil service, much the largest in terms of numbers, which provide service directly to the public. The role of departmental headquarters and of the Cabinet Office and the Treasury now needs to change, too. The central role should be to set tough targets and to monitor performance on the basis of better information than we have at present. But staff throughout the civil service should be given the power to manage and operate in ways that best meet their particular tasks and needs, rather than within a single, central blueprint, adequate for all, but well fitted to none. We therefore intend to carry the next steps process further.

The Government propose that Departments should take greater responsibility for deciding their organisational structures, the pay of their staff and the best mix of efficiency measures to meet the never-ending pressure to raise standards within tight running costs. Departments themselves should judge, for example, how best to use privatisation, contracting out and market testing. Centrally driven initiatives have shown in recent years how more competition and choice improves quality and reduces costs: Departments themselves must now take these well-established policies forward if we are to see the full benefit from them. The central Departments should continue to measure, monitor and report to Parliament, but with less second guessing of Departments' plans.

To do that, we need better information systems and more modern accounting practices. The Prime Minister has therefore asked the efficiency unit to conduct a scrutiny on management information systems and my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer is publishing today a Green Paper on resource accounting and budgeting. The Green Paper paves the way for important reforms of the way in which we account for public money and opens up the possibility of changes in the way in which the Government plan their spending, both of which will complement the changes that I am proposing in the White Paper.

Departments will be given the freedom to determine their own management structures at all levels matched to their own needs. We expect them to be tauter and flatter than now. The Government propose to extend the delegation of pay and grading—which at present covers around 60 per cent. of the civil service—to cover all civil servants below the senior civil service. I shall return to pay arrangements for the latter in a moment.

The senior civil service needs to support both the collective responsibility of Government and the particular responsibilities of Departments, and to underpin both policy making and high-quality service delivery. But it, too, cannot be immune from change. It needs changing qualities and skills to match its changing tasks. The Government published an efficiency unit report on those issues last winter, known as the Oughton report, and the White Paper includes the Government's response. The Government accept the efficiency unit's main recommendations, but propose additional changes. Our main conclusions are as follows.

To strengthen cohesion across the civil service and bring in all those with substantial management responsibilities, the Government propose to create a new senior civil service, including those broadly down to the present grade 5 level. It will include up to 3,500 people.

There should be more interchange between this senior civil service—and, indeed, the rest of the civil service—and outside employees. Open competition should become a more normal part of the process for selecting people for senior appointments. It need not be used in every case, but it should be considered in every case. Such competitions must be superintended, as now, by the Civil Service Commissioners, independently of Ministers, to guard against the possibility of politicisation. I am publishing today, alongside the White Paper, a report on the future role of the commissioners. I myself believe that if the civil service is as good as it should be at training and career development, most senior posts are likely still to be held by insiders, as they would be in most big firms; but we should set no targets one way or the other.

Next, the Government propose to introduce explicit written employment contracts for members of the new senior civil service. For the great majority, they will

provide for employment for an indefinite term, but with specified periods of notice. Fixed-term and rolling contracts would also be used as appropriate.

As figures in the White Paper show, it is a myth that the civil service is an organisation in which people serve as a matter of course until retiring age. Substantial numbers of senior staff have left early in recent years and that is likely to continue.

Finally, the White Paper proposes that a new, more flexible pay system should be introduced for this group. There should be a range for permanent secretaries' pay, with the positions of individuals determined by a remuneration committee with a majority of non-civil service members. Below that, we propose a system of wider, overlapping pay bands broadly linked to levels of responsibility, with progression based on performance, giving more room for manoeuvre to Departments to change their structure to fit their needs. As a first step, the Government will implement the wider pay ranges recommended by the Senior Salaries Review Body for the present grades 2 and 3 and will ask the review body to recommend a pay range for permanent secretaries. Those proposals will, in time, allow for greater differentiation in individuals' pay within the overall pay bill. No immediate pay increases are entailed.

The proposals for greater delegation to Departments and reform of the senior civil service represent a considerable further challenge for the civil service. We are seeking to raise standards of service within tight control of running costs. Staff numbers will continue to fall, from 533,000 at present to significantly below 500,000, with reductions at all levels. Wherever possible, that will be achieved through natural wastage and by voluntary departures. From the autumn of this year, the Treasury will give special assistance to Departments with any additional costs.

The Government believe that the civil service is fully capable of achieving what we have asked of it. It will be helped to do that by the greater flexibilities and the management changes that I have announced, against the background of the reaffirmation of the old strengths and values which underpin the civil service, which the Government have reaffirmed today, and with which, I believe, the whole House will concur. The civil service must continue to offer attractive and exciting careers to talented people who wish to serve their country in some of our most important and challenging jobs and it will be helped to do so by up-to-date organisations and structures.

The civil service has a unique role maintaining our unwritten constitution. It does not belong to one Government or party. The Government, therefore, plan to consult Opposition parties as well as others with an interest in the proposals that I have outlined today. We shall, of course, consider carefully the forthcoming report from the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee.

The Government's objective in publishing the White Paper is to map a way forward for the civil service to the end of the century and beyond. The result will be a smaller civil service, more flexible in organisation, better able to respond to changing tasks, properly rewarded on the basis of responsibilities and performance and offering challenging careers for both staff and managers with a reaffirmed commitment to the unchanging principle of public service. I commend the White Paper to the House.

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): The statement is a menu for the accelerated privatisation of the civil service, which threatens to destroy the constitutional principles on which the civil service has rested for 150 years since Northcote-Trevelyan. Those principles include ministerial accountability, the unity of the civil service and the public service ethic as the standard for civil servants' actions. All of them will be undermined by the statement.

The right hon. Gentleman is squeezing out around 50,000 jobs by cutting the running costs of Departments. Is not that a wholly arbitrary exercise, in which he has abdicated his responsibility for the overall direction and general goals of the civil service? Is not he doing that because market testing has manifestly failed, even though he has constantly exaggerated the forecasted savings from the exercise?

The right hon. Gentleman said that centralised pay bargaining in Whitehall would end. Is not he reneging on long-term civil service pay agreements into which the Government solemnly and unequivocally entered two years ago? Will he tell the House how many hundreds more civil servants will be needed to negotiate pay agreements in each Department? Does he recognise that there will be a massive duplication of bureaucracy with the creation of at least 150 separate pay-bargaining units, and that 3,000 civil servants must be trained for that? Currently it is done by a mere 40 in the Treasury.

Will this be a repetition of what happened two years ago when the Government introduced performance-related pay, when nine Government Departments individually approached Andersen Consulting and paid nine fat fees for the same advice? As for personal contracts and performance pay for the top 2,000 civil servants, how does the right hon. Gentleman propose to measure the performance of a top civil servant—by how much he pleases the Minister?

On open competition for top posts, is not it true that Ministers make the final choice of appointee and that, despite the right hon. Gentleman's denials, his proposed changes will open the way for more politicisation of the civil service, which the Government have taken too far already? Does not he recall the then Home Secretary a few years ago insisting on appointing as head of the Prisons Agency a man who had no knowledge or experience of the prison service, but whose private sector views made him ideologically sound? This Government have quangoised Britain with their own political placemen. Are they now going to do the same for the top ranks of the civil service?

Why is there no mention of equal opportunities in the civil service, with the right hon. Gentleman's retention of the elitist fast stream entry to top jobs? The real objection to this White Paper is that it has no vision. The public do have concerns about the civil service—about how Ministers increasingly rule by fiat and compromise civil servants' political neutrality; about what Pergau and the Scott inquiry reveal about the secrecy culture in Whitehall; and about the dismantling of an institution which has hitherto been the envy of the world. None of these matters which really worry the public are dealt with in the statement. It is not just a missed opportunity: it is a major backward step from the good governance of our country.

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), as usual, gets it almost entirely wrong. I believe that he will find that he has misjudged the White Paper and the mood of the House.

The hon. Gentleman asked, as if it were a difficult question, how we can measure the performance of senior

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civil servants— *[Interruption.]*— clearly showing himself as unaware as is his hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett), who is misadvising him, that senior civil servants have been on performance pay for many years.

Next, the hon. Gentleman mistakenly asked whether Ministers make the final choice. That is not true. The Civil Service Commission makes the final choice. I have today published a paper—the hon. Gentleman should study it —which rightly explains the role of the commission. If it is necessary, as I believe it is, to bring in more people to the senior civil service to gain their experience, those jobs must not be politicised. It is therefore vital that the choice remains with the Civil Service Commission.

Nothing in the White Paper or in the Government's reforms changes ministerial accountability to this House, or the accountability of civil servants, through Ministers, to this House.

Typically, in a recent article, the hon. Member for Oldham, West claimed that the Government intended to reduce the numbers of civil servants to 50,000. We intend, I hope, to reduce their numbers to below 500,000—the hon. Gentleman got the decimal point wrong, just as he has got virtually everything else wrong on this occasion.

Mr. Robert Jackson (Wantage): I congratulate my right hon. Friend and his advisers on the hard thinking and hard work that have gone into the White Paper.

Will the Government acknowledge that the wider recruitment and wider exchanges that they seek as between the senior civil service and the private sector will come about in practice only if pay amounts as well as pay structures in the senior civil service are made comparable with those in the private sector? Secondly, will my right hon. Friend press for an early debate in Government time, as soon as the House returns, on these important proposals?

Mr. Waldegrave: On the latter point, I will, of course, report to the Leader of the House what my hon. Friend has said.

Needless to say, the Select Committee is already engaged in cross-examinations on my hon. Friend's point, and I look forward to appearing before a sub-committee of the Select Committee next week to discuss it.

We believe that there should be more competition for the top jobs; that is the challenge that we offer the civil service. The other side of the coin must be that we develop the capacity over time to respond in terms of pay, so that these jobs attract a reward commensurate with the competition that they entail. That will take time. There is no overnight pay increase in the White Paper; but we need greater flexibility and wider pay bands to enable the civil service to attract its fair share of people from outside on equal terms.

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): The White Paper has much in it to be commended. It is important not to oppose change merely for the sake of opposing it, but the record of Ministers shows that they have often favoured change merely for its own sake, particularly in respect of privatisation.

The White Paper does not deal well enough with the worry that, with greater flexibility at senior levels of the civil service and with greater emphasis on performance among those who give advice, the robust independence of the civil service will be affected. That is not addressed in the White Paper and it needs to be addressed more seriously by Ministers. The one great gaping hole—

Madam Speaker: Order. As the hon. Gentleman and the House have seen, a number of hon. Members are seeking to ask questions. I want questions and not statements now.

Mr. Taylor: There is a gaping hole in the White Paper that I would ask the Minister to address: why are the same rules, the same issues of independence and proper public appointment subject to independent scrutiny not being applied to the great growth areas of the state—the trusts, quangos and appointees subject to ministerial appointment —when the Minister places such importance on the independence of the civil service?

Mr. Waldegrave: The White Paper addresses head on the essential point that the hon. Gentleman fairly makes. Its entire first chapter deals with the importance of maintaining a robustly apolitical and independent civil service. I have absolutely no doubt that, should by some misfortune the Labour party or the hon. Member's party find their way into power, the civil service would serve them with exactly the same loyalty with which it has served us. Anybody who doubts that is casting an aspersion against the civil service. We reaffirm that today and I join the hon. Gentleman in reiterating its importance.

The hon. Member's second point is a real one. My right hon. Friend Secretary of State for Health has just published guidelines for the selection and conduct of trust boards and the Treasury has just republished and reinforced its guidance on appointments to non-departmental bodies. They are separate matters from the issues that we are looking at today, but they are important and should and are being addressed.

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): Will my right hon. Friend accept that any savings to the taxpayer as a result of the White Paper will be welcomed by Conservative Members, unlike the Opposition, who have no regard to the British taxpayer? He said that he hopes to reduce the civil service by some 33,000 to around 500,000. Are those all going to be saved posts or will any be contracted out? If they are all saved, that is a reduction of something like 6 per cent. in the overall head count. Does he agree that it is still rather conservative compared with the reduction in overheads that most private companies have had to make during the recession? Does he agree that our investment in information technology in the civil service has not produced the return it should have done?

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend is right to say that, when we look at our own organisations, we should consider the very rapid change undertaken by large organisations outside, many of which have had to undertake change quicker under the compulsion of the markets than we have achieved. None the less, I pay tribute to the civil service because it has changed fast. The fall in numbers—that is a gain in efficiency and a return for the taxpayers who pay for us all—has been faster in recent years than in the period running back to 1979, though there has been a considerable drop in numbers since then. Some jobs will be contracted out or privatised, some will go because we analyse that there is no need for the function at

all, and others will be go due to sheer efficiency gains. In the past 18 months, the ratio of efficiency gains to contracting out has been running at about 60:40.

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): Despite the right hon. Gentleman's claim that so much of the reform is apolitical, is he aware that one of its serious aspects is the way in which fixed-term appointments will be made? Who will decide, when the term ends, whether that person will be reappointed? Is that not the time when the Minister concerned can exert his own pressure? Finally, 108 members of the Government are paid for out of public funds. We are reducing the numbers of civil servants, yet the numbers of Ministers have increased year by year. Why does he not turn his attention to that?

Mr. Waldegrave: The latter point may be for my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister rather than being my direct responsibility. On the former point, I agree with the right hon. Gentleman. We have come down against fixed-term contracts for the generality of the new contracts that will be negotiated. They must be negotiated with the staff for the very reason that the right hon. Gentleman gives. The cliff edge might produce a sense of insecurity and it is part of an efficient and apolitical civil service to give advice to their political masters that may not be welcome; civil servants should have the confidence to do that.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): Will this pruning and semi-privatisation of the civil service apply across the board in Northern Ireland? Will it apply to both the Northern Ireland Office and the Departments in Northern Ireland? Will the right hon. Gentleman assure the people of Northern Ireland that—contrary to pressures from Dublin —any new members of the Northern Ireland civil service will be appointed, as they are in this part of the United Kingdom, solely on the basis of merit rather than religion?

Mr. Waldegrave: As the hon. Gentleman well knows, the Northern Ireland civil service is a separate body; however, the principles underlying our proposals apply to it with equal force. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland will be considering how, and to what extent, they might be implemented in the particular circumstances of the Northern Ireland civil service.

The Northern Ireland civil service selects on merit, and the principles—well known to the hon. Gentleman—according to which it seeks to extend the pool from which it selects to all communities are an important part of that.

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): Is the Minister aware that the Select Committee will need to examine the details of the White Paper and discuss them with him? Personally, I welcome the fact that the Government have seen the need to reassert the essential values of the civil service at this time. I am also pleased that they recognise that the service is not the property of any one party, and are prepared to consult the Opposition; and that the Select Committee will have a role in considering its future.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am happy to reaffirm the importance of the Select Committee's work. We have explicitly stated in the White Paper that we shall await its report before reaching any final conclusions. It has taken an interest in a number of aspects—for instance, civil service Acts and statutory backing for ethical codes. I must say that the hon. Gentleman seems to show more understanding of both the issues and the sense of the House than does his Front-Bench spokesman.

Sir Peter Tapsell (East Lindsey): Does my right hon. Friend agree that Britain is one of the few countries in which corruption at the top levels of Government is almost unknown? That is largely due to the dedication and high integrity of senior civil servants. Is my right hon. Friend confident that introducing an increasing number of people from an entirely different ethos, and without such long training, will not lead to a lowering of standards, with serious consequences for our political life?

Mr. Waldegrave: I entirely agree with the first part of what my hon. Friend has said. We should be proud of the standards in our civil service. As I said in my statement, they not only make life better in this country, but provide an economic advantage: people invest here in the knowledge that the British officials with whom they will deal are not corrupt.

As for my hon. Friend's second point, let me remind him that during the war many people who entered the civil service—I think of, for instance, Roger Sherfield and Oliver Franks—greatly added to its strength. We have lost something of that since the war has become more distant. If we can widen the pool of able people who wish to serve the public by working in the civil service at some point in their careers, I do not think that that implies any lowering of standards. The great men and women who served at that time, and later, reinforce my belief.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman could have delivered his piece with a little less rattle and a little more conviction. Do the Government really intend to pursue the introduction of performance-related pay in the higher echelons of the civil service? How on earth can such performance be measured?

Mr. Waldegrave: I would not want to compete with the hon. Gentleman in terms of rattle. There is virtually no organisation in the world, including the British senior civil service, that does not have some measure of performance-related pay. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member and the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) are decades out of date if they think that people have not been addressing these problems and solving them perfectly satisfactorily.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): I notice that my right hon. Friend's statement does not refer to the Fulton report. Is not it true that the philosophy of that committee, which was established by a Labour Government, is followed by the bold and imaginative ideas that my right hon. Friend has outlined today, particularly in terms of the need for a widening of recruitment into the civil service and for greater management efficiency? In terms of the accountability of the senior civil service to the House, is it possible that the Select Committee system has some part to play in the appointment of certain members of the senior civil service?

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend is right that part of the important advice from the Fulton committee was that we should achieve a greater interchange and wider experience in people's careers before they reach the top of the public service. That has not happened enough, although it has happened to a considerable degree and we want it to happen more. We are abolishing one thing that was derived

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from the Fulton report, the senior open structure down to grade 3, because we have come to the conclusion that that is too narrow a basis for the unified cross-departmental senior civil service that we need. As we need better devolution to Departments and less Treasury and Cabinet Office interference in the management of Departments, we also need to retain a capacity to move people laterally. That is why we have established the new senior civil service structure.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): The Minister's statement will require careful examination, but will he answer some questions? If power is to be devolved to civil servants in Departments who will no longer be accountable to Ministers for many aspects, is not it true that an incoming Government might regard the friends who have been brought in by this Government as wholly unsuitable and be entitled to remove them on the grounds that their performance is of a political character, quite unacceptable to the decision reached by the electors, which normally removes the Ministers who run the civil service?

Is not it also true that all the fine language used by the Minister is a cover for a return to the "spoils system" which has ruined the American civil service and which goes back before the Northcote-Trevelyan reforms and will ultimately create great distrust among the public about the operations of the civil service because it is being put on the basis of accepting the Government's political philosophy which is wholly foreign now to the majority in this country?

Mr. Waldegrave: If the reforms did any of those things, I would join the right hon. Gentleman in opposing them. It would be wise for the right hon. Gentleman to heed his own advice, which is that what we are saying does require close attention. What will be devolved is structures, pay and management matters. Accountability for those matters lies ultimately through the Minister to the House. The right hon. Gentleman, with his long experience—I have read his diaries on many of these points—often found himself resenting detailed management intervention from the central Departments. If we can find ways of minimising that within proper accountability structures, we will have done something valuable.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the real reasons why we get into the mess that we do with respect to the amount of money spent on the civil service is the legislative burden that both sides of the House impose on it? Would not it be sensible, in the light of the review that is taking place, for us to consider reducing the duties imposed through Acts of Parliament which drive so many of the increases in duties imposed on our civil servants and in the functions imposed on the people of this country?

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend has made an extremely good point. That is why my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, together with my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade, has launched the major deregulation initiative. Over the years, under all Governments, we have found ourselves steadily increasing the amount of regulation that we ask the civil service to carry through—and it carries it through efficiently on all occasions. We then find that we have placed new burdens on industry and on our population, which we regret. I accept the principle of what my hon. Friend said and we are introducing measures under the vigorous leadership of our right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade.

Mr. Peter Mandelson (Hartlepool): Is the Minister aware that many people will regard the White Paper not as a clear, bold blueprint for the future, but as a rather patchy, inconclusive mish-mash? Will he confirm that his Cabinet colleagues, led bravely by the Foreign Secretary, threw out some of his more ludicrous, extreme proposals, and that what remains in the White Paper will not lead to the creeping politicisation and deprofessionalisation of the senior civil service which many fear? Does not he agree that, to overcome the serious concerns and worries that have been expressed by hon. Members this afternoon, he should consider introducing a new code of ethics that will govern and safeguard the neutrality, standards and professional independence of the civil service?

Mr. Waldegrave: I did not notice the hon. Gentleman under the table at the Cabinet discussions; perhaps he was there. I do not think that he knows how they went. The result is a policy and a White Paper which have been whole-heartedly endorsed, as I believe my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will confirm, by every senior Minister in the Cabinet and elsewhere. The code of ethics point that the hon. Gentleman makes is a real one, but he should note that, last year, we brought together for the first time in the civil service management code all relevant documents, including the Armstrong memorandum and other important documents. It is vital that they are properly disseminated. They are part of the terms of service in the civil service. We await what the Select Committee says on the matter. The hon. Gentleman and I have no argument on the importance of maintaining that code. The Select Committee may wish to advise us on whether the code should be statutorily backed in some way. Now, as in the past, it is binding on civil servants and it must remain so.

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): To what extent does my right hon. Friend expect competition for the top jobs in the civil service to result in an inflow of permanent secretaries from outside? Will he give an assurance that such a move will maintain and enhance the standards of public service which the House is entitled to expect and which the Public Accounts Committee considers twice a week and on which it reports to the House every Session?

Mr. Waldegrave: Eight out of the present 35 permanent secretaries came from outside, including the head of the Treasury, so the process started some time ago. I do not know whether the number will increase. That depends ultimately on the skill, determination and resources that we put into the training of our people to enable them to compete properly. As for the service of the public and of the House, we must look at as wide a field as possible to employ the best possible people.

Dr. Tony Wright (Cannock and Burntwood): Can the Minister say why it was sensible to make his statement on the White Paper before the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee had completed its investigation into this matter? Why was it sensible to have overlooked the recent, devastating conclusions of the Public Accounts Committee, which said that standards in the conduct of public business were at their lowest point since before the Northcote-Trevelyan reforms and that the reason for that

decline was the increased inter-penetration of the public and private sectors and the erosion of the public service tradition? Why was it sensible further to erode that tradition rather than to deal with the issue? If it is sensible for the Civil Service Commission to consider new appointments to the senior civil service, would not it also be sensible to have a public appointments commission—

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must resume his seat. I have asked for brief questions. I am attempting to assist hon. Members and call as many of them as possible, but I am not getting the co-operation from them to which I am entitled. I intend to have it from now on.

Mr. Waldegrave: On timing, we would have been happy if the Select Committee had finished its work first, but it did not seem possible to wait indefinitely. As we can consult it further, it seemed sensible, as we had finished our work, to publish the White Paper.

The hon. Gentleman provides a travesty of what the PAC report said. In the clearest terms, it stated that there was nothing in the reformed structures that inherently or in any way threatened public accountability or standards, but that in a more devolved system—and I accept that this is right—it is necessary to take even more trouble to ensure that everyone understands what his or her duties and responsibilities are.

Mr. Alan Howarth (Stratford-on-Avon): Does my right hon. Friend accept that market accountability is not the same as democratic accountability and that both are required from the public service? Will he describe to the House the Government's view of the principle that should determine the balance between them?

Mr. Waldegrave: What drives the public service is accountability ultimately to the democratic process. There are certain parts of the public sector into which, if one does it properly, one can introduce choice and competition to the benefit of standards in general. However, in no sense is the public sector comparable to the market; otherwise, those things should be in the market. It is much better to privatise something which really should be in the market, and that is what we believe in. There is a distinction, or the Government would not be in this business in the first place. Nevertheless, there are things that can be learnt from private sector markets to the benefit of both sides.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): Does the right hon. Gentleman consider that the record and standing of this Administration are such that they will commend this policy to the public? Is he really happy with the contraction which has occurred and which now means that if our constituents write to certain Government Departments, the chances are that their letters will be mislaid?

Mr. Waldegrave: As a matter of fact, I believe that the performance of Departments in responding to letters has steadily improved in recent years, but where there are failings, they must be put right. That is a perfectly proper thing to do. The principle that I am setting out—giving Departments the chance to organise themselves properly to deal with the tasks that they face—will help with such problems where they exist rather than hinder.

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): Does my right hon. Friend accept that he is managing with skill the latest stage in a process which began with the Fulton commission under a Labour Government and continued with the White Paper on central Government reorganisation in 1970? This is the latest stage, so it has taken about a quarter of a century to get things moving which, I suppose, is quick by British standards. However, will he accept two caveats? First, our nation has a fine tradition of public service, which we must do nothing to damage. Secondly, in giving more accountability and separate management control to Departments, as we planned 25 years ago, will he ensure that there is still plenty of movement between Departments, especially between the Department of Trade and Industry and the foreign service?

Mr. Waldegrave: I strongly endorse what my right hon. Friend says about the standards and principles that lie behind our public service. He is right to say that the origin of a fair amount of the White Paper goes back a good many years—he said about 25 years, and that may be fair. In fact, that exactly parallels the time that it took to introduce the original Northcote-Trevelyan reforms, which were not fully implemented until the 1870s.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): Why have the Government retained the fast stream for top management jobs? Does not it place a severe limitation on people getting to the top on merit?

Mr. Waldegrave: The study that was published today on the so-called fast stream, which the hon. Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett) so dislikes—I should say that we issued a report partly in response to the hon. Member's badgering, so I must pay tribute to him for that—concluded that there is no large employer that does not have some means of trying to get hold of a share of the best output from universities and colleges. What is wrong is the name "fast stream", which gives the impression that the people involved in it have some privileged route to the top, whereas, in fact, they have not. It would hobble the civil service most unfairly in the jobs market if it were not allowed to go on what is called the "milk round" to try to get its share of the best people from our universities.

Mr. James Paice (Cambridgeshire, South-East): May I welcome especially the delegation of responsibility for the management of budgets down through the senior civil service? Is not it the case that with delegation comes responsibility for more effective decision making? Have not the Opposition perhaps missed the fact that with responsibility ultimately comes a great deal of job satisfaction for people who have been deprived of any responsibility in the past?

Mr. Waldegrave: The point that my hon. Friend makes seems entirely right. It was accepted by the Labour party when the original next steps programme was introduced. Although the party's then spokesman, the late John Smith, criticised the Government on other matters, he accepted that devolution was a sensible way to proceed, and I believe that he was right to do so. When the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) has calmed down, I am sure that he, too, will find that it is the sensible thing to do.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): As most women working in the civil service are in the secretarial and clerical grades, what proposals has the Minister for increasing equality of opportunity for both men and women across the grades in the civil service?

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) said that there was nothing about equality of opportunity in the White Paper. In fact, there is a considerable passage. I believe that the civil service is a good equal opportunities employer and, in terms of the proportion of applicants, the numbers entering the service are about right. We are getting better at employing more senior women. That is necessary, but there is much more to do, and also more to do in reaching out to people in the ethnic minority communities. The White Paper addresses that subject, too.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): While my right hon. Friend is busy pushing his new broom through the corridors of Whitehall, will he consider the fact that one of the greatest impediments to the transfer of employees from the public to the private sector and vice versa is their pension entitlement? Will he share with the House his thoughts on what he intends to do about that?

Mr. Waldegrave: The imbalance in pension entitlements was at its most acute when there was very high inflation. I have not heard private sector employers arguing about it so much since then. In the schemes that we now have in place for swapping people to and fro, which are welcome both to private industry and to the civil service, we have not found such factors to be a bar.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Privatisation has led to the disappearance of a Department of State—the Department of Energy—and is leading to further uncoupling of the work of the Department of Trade and Industry, and to the disappearance of the accountability for measures to the House. The next steps agencies are taking over from Departments, and often run things in a rubbishy fashion. Does not the Minister realise that in the end a small civil service might be a manipulative civil service—in fact, no civil service at all?

Mr. Waldegrave: There is a good deal of rubbish in what the hon. Gentleman says. I remember a Conservative Government setting up the Department of Energy. That was nothing to do with privatisation, and the fact that energy policy is now run from within the DTI is nothing to do with privatisation either. When the hon. Gentleman attacks the "rubbishy" next steps agencies, he should remember that he is attacking two thirds of the civil service. I do not believe that that is right. The hon. Gentleman will find in the White Paper evidence of the fact that, according to a whole range of indicators, the performance of the next steps agencies is improving services to the people who rely on them. If the hon. Gentleman doubts that, he should study the evidence that we have placed in the Library. If he does so, he will find that he is wrong.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): In connection with the question asked by the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) concerning fixed-term contracts, will my right hon. Friend tell the House whether the White Paper says anything about the principle of secondment? Does not that principle provide the opportunity, on a two-way basis, for people from the civil service to play a role in industry and vice versa? Does the White Paper say anything about that?

Mr. Waldegrave: It does; it endorses the importance of more secondments and of those who work with the civil service to arrange them. I have in my Department several secondees from outside; they make a valuable contribution and I believe that it helps to develop their careers in the private sector, too. Equally, those from the civil service who go out find that their careers are enhanced. I do not believe, as some Opposition Members seem to, that any threat arises from the mixing of the public and private sector cultures. Both gain from it.

Mr. Mike O'Brien (Warwickshire, North): The Minister has been anxious to assure us of the political impartiality of new entrants into his new model senior civil service. Will he confirm here and now that active participation in one's local Conservative association will be a disqualification rather than the qualification for a new entrant?

Mr. Waldegrave: The rules on that are perfectly clear. Those who work for political parties on either side—presumably there are people on the Labour side who are also inconvenienced—are subject to the published code, which the hon. Gentleman can find in the Library. There is no more difficulty on that subject now than in the past.

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): It was a jolly good statement, and the whole House is most grateful to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. We much enjoyed the statement, but one inherent danger was not mentioned —the likelihood that the civil servants who are left when others have been removed will become more over-zealous and officious. Will the rules and regulations be more over-zealously enforced by the remaining numbers? Surely the raison d'être—if my right hon. Friend will excuse the phrase—of the civil service is that civil servants must serve the public, that they must help to create jobs and that they must help to create wealth in the private sector. Is not that the test of the civil service today?

Mr. Waldegrave: The overwhelming raison d'être—the use of the phrase "raison d'être" by my hon. Friend is slightly surprising, now that I come to think of it—or duty of the civil service is to serve the system of ministerial accountability properly and to carry out the duties laid on it ultimately by the House. It is ultimately the House which should take the responsibility for over-regulation and which should take steps to diminish it. It should not blame over-regulation on the civil service. That is why it is a political matter, for us as the Conservative party, to lead the campaign against over-regulation which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister launched at our party conference.

Dr. Liam Fox (Woodspring): Can my right hon. Friend put the streamlining of the civil service into context by telling us what has happened to total civil service numbers since the Government came to power so that the House and the country can differentiate between the Government's love for less government and the bloated bureaucracy left and loved by the Labour party?

Mr. Waldegrave: The highest number the civil service achieved—if that is quite the right word—was under the previous Labour Government. We have brought the number down from 732,000 in 1979 by almost exactly 200,000. That is an achievement of which we should be proud. We should also be proud of the fact that the smaller civil service is carrying great burdens and doing great work with greater efficiency than was the case then.

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford): Does my right hon. Friend accept that one of the major achievements of our civil service over the past century has been its ability to evolve and to develop in response to changing circumstances and needs? Does he accept that the White Paper published today advances that fine tradition? It looks yet again at cutting out inefficiency and wasteful bureaucracy and it seeks to improve even more standards of efficiency and user-friendly services, both for those who receive them at the sharp end and for the civil servants themselves.

Mr. Waldegrave: I believe that my hon. Friend is right and I also believe that if one gives a clear task and a clear challenge to the civil service, it always shows itself willing to meet it. The gains in efficiency that we are seeing and the gains in service to the customer—the patient, the pupil and everyone who relies on the civil service—are genuine. The civil service should be congratulated on them. Civil servants understand as well as we do that the search for efficiency gains never ends.

Mr. Michael Bates (Langbaurgh): Does my right hon. Friend accept that the many thousands of my constituents who are employed in the private sector, who have often learnt at great personal cost of the need in the modern world for ever-increasing efficiency and productivity and who have realised that there is no such thing as a right to a job for life, will be pleased to learn that the rules that apply to them are about to apply to the people whose salaries they pay?

Mr. Waldegrave: What my hon. Friend says is right. We have a duty in the House to the taxpayer as well as to the public service. I believe that the balancing of those two has been achieved in the White Paper. We need to continue the drive for efficiency, but we also need to protect the apolitical, independent nature of our civil service. I believe that the White Paper achieves that.

Mr. John Garrett (Norwich, South): Surely the fact is that the right hon. Gentleman, nominally the Minister for the civil service, has simply copped out. Rather than produce a policy for the future of the civil service, he has signalled the start of a competition between Ministers to fire as many civil servants as possible. The results will be purely arbitrary, with the fast streamers and mandarins, like him, getting off exceptionally lightly and junior jobs going in their thousands. The right hon. Gentleman paid tribute to the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee, so why did he stop it carrying out a direct investigation of the civil service? Will he ask his successor to reconsider these thoroughly incompetent proposals?

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman achieves a new low. He always manages to go below the level of the subject, but today he has managed to get right under the carpet. As usual, the hon. Gentleman is factually wrong. In recent years, the proportion of those leaving has been higher from the senior civil service than from the civil service more widely. If the hon. Gentleman had listened to the wireless this morning, he would have heard the First Division Association pointing that out.

I have answered questions in the House before about the survey of the civil service. The issue is perfectly simple. As the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) demonstrate all the time, those matters, at least for the Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen, although not for all the Back Benchers, are of political dispute. If we involved the opinions of civil servants in that political knockabout and we identified those opinions, we would have done more at a stroke to damage the political impartiality of the civil service than if we had done anything else.

BILL PRESENTED

Data Protection

Mr. Harry Cohen presented a Bill to make further provision for the retention, registration, use and disclosure of automatically-processed information relating to individuals; to regulate the provision of services in respect of such information; to provide for a Data Protection Commissioner and a Data Protection Tribunal; to replace the Data Protection Act 1984; and for purposes connected therewith: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 21 October, and to be printed. [Bill 151.]

War Pensioners (Equal Rights)

4.25 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to review the effect of differential treatment of war disablement and war widow pensioners by local authorities; to bring forward means for equal treatment; and for connected purposes.

The Bill would correct one small but important injustice in the way in which we treat war pensioners in this country. Over the years, it has been accepted by Governments that war pensioners, by which I mean war widows and war disablement pensioners—people who were in active service or those who were injured in the war when they were at home—have been treated by the state as the recipients of a justified form of compensation for their injury or bereavement. Answers on that point have been given over the years—I am grateful for the presence of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security, the hon. Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Hague)—by Ministers from the Department of Social Security which have made that clear.

Over the past decade, or a little longer, the cost of that compensation has been assessed and there has been a change in the way that the legislation has treated those people. First, dating back a little more than 20 years, local authorities in Britain were obliged—it goes back to the Housing Finance Act 1972—to disregard a proportion of war widow and war disablement pensions when assessing the entitlement of people in that category to housing benefit. In 1986, under the general review of social security legislation, there was no change to the discretionary position of local authorities, above the obligatory minimum amount of disregard. We then had an uprating in 1990 when the disregard went from £5 to £10.

By the arbitrary nature of which local authority area one lives in, it may be that if one is a war disablement pensioner or a war widow, one's entire pension is disregarded, part of one's pension is disregarded or the statutory 10 quid only is disregarded. That is not in any way a party-political point, because local authorities of all political colours and, indeed, of none fall into each of the categories. For example, if a war pensioner lives in Bristol, the City of London, Croydon, Leeds, Oxford, Pendle, Restormel or Wear Valley—I have chosen, at random, a group of local authorities across the country—not more than £10 would be disregarded, whereas if a war pensioner lives in one of the authorities next door, everything would be disregarded. So the anomaly has arisen that certain people, in exactly the same predicament, are treated differently by virtue simply of their residence. For a pensioner on a limited income, that difference may be significant and it is certainly unfair. The other relevant aspect is that the disregard now applies also to council tax benefit, so it applies to the help that pensioners receive with housing costs and with council tax bills.

All I want to argue is that there should be an urgent review and the Government should be asked to look at their policy again to see whether they ought to change it to give equity of treatment across the land.

The latest available figures—they were given to me by Ministers in the past month—are that more than 290 local authorities offered a full disregard. A further 28 offered a full disregard for disablement pensioners only and another five offered a full disregard for widows' pensions only. About 150 local authorities did not operate a full disregard system. As a result, in 150 areas such pensioners were treated less fairly. Certainly they were less well off.

The full cost of my Bill would be very small. The Southwark local authority offers a full disregard and it costs every adult about 8p a year to do that. We are talking only of pence. It is also obvious that the problem is becoming less expensive to solve, because there are fewer war disablement pensioners and war widows left. In 1978, there were about 382,000 in those categories, and in 1992 there were only just over a quarter of a million. The bill to the Treasury is becoming smaller.

In the past financial year, the Government paid out—the figures were supplied by the Government—about £225 million in war widows' pensions. On the last day of last month, there were nearly 50,000 war widows' pensions and about 250,000 war disablement pensions.

This is the 50th anniversary year of D-day and next year will be the 50th anniversary year of VE-day. I am raising an issue which pensioners' organisations and ex-service people's organisations, such as the Royal British Legion, have been on about for a very long time, as Ministers will know.

I wish to put down a marker today so that between now and the Budget in the autumn the Treasury can seriously consider whether the very small additional cost in revenue terms of righting a social injustice for increasingly few people is something that it can now meet as a reward to a specific category of our fellow citizens during this year of all years.

The reality is that some people in the category that I am talking about are very old. They served, or were alive, in both world wars. The rest were alive during the second world war although not the first. They all deserve equity and I hope that the House will allow the issue to be examined. Above all, I hope that the Government will allow the Bill to be considered and that they will bring forward a proposal to put money into the kitty so that every local authority can treat every war pensioner in the same way from next year onwards.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Simon Hughes, Mr. Dafydd Wigley, Mr. Andrew Mackinlay, Mr. David Shaw and Mrs. Diana Maddock.

WAR PENSIONERS (EQUAL RIGHTS)

Mr. Simon Hughes accordingly presented a Bill to review the effect of differential treatment of war disablement and war widow pensioners by local authorities; to bring forward means for equal treatment; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 21 October, and to be printed. [Bill 152.]

Privilege

4.33 pm

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): I wish to call attention to a report in *The Sunday Times* of 10 July that Members of the House had been offered, and had accepted, payment for the tabling of parliamentary questions; and to move,

That the matter of the complaint, together with the issues referred to in the statement by the Speaker on 12th July, be referred to the Committee of Privileges.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Madam Speaker announces that she has not selected the amendment in the name of the hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton).

Mr. Brown: The motion is facilitated by the statement made yesterday by Madam Speaker. Its purpose is not to decide the matters of substance but to call the attention of the House to recent allegations and to refer them, and wider questions of principle, to the Committee of Privileges.

The specific allegation arises from a story in *The Sunday Times* of 10 July 1994. The allegation is:

"Two leading Tories were willing to table official questions in the House of Commons in return for £1,000."

Madam Speaker, you reminded us yesterday of the section of the report of the Select Committee on Members' Interests, which states:

"A financial inducement to take a particular course of action in Parliament may constitute a bribe and thus be an offence against the law of Parliament."—[*Official Report*, 12 July 1994; Vol. 246, c. 829.]

On page 119 of "Erskine May" we are told in a section headed "Corruption in the execution of a Member's duty":

"The acceptance by any Member of either House of a bribe to influence him in his conduct as such Member or of any fee, compensation or reward in connection with the promotion of, or opposition to any bill, resolution, matter or thing submitted or intended to be submitted to the House or any committee thereof, is a breach of privilege. Members of the Commons who have been found guilty of such an offence have been expelled or committed. It is also a contempt for a Member to enter into an agreement with another person to advocate the claims of such person in the House, for pecuniary reward."

The newspaper allegation is clearly that such a breach has been committed. The questions that were tabled relate to fictional matters—a drug called "Sigthin", and a company called "Githins". Both are anagrams of "Insight", and both are clearly bogus. It is therefore not open to anyone to claim a long-standing interest or alleged public interest in either the drug or the company. They are both clearly fictional.

It is also painfully clear that, if the drug and the company had been real entities, the only beneficiary of the parliamentary questions would have been the business men who procured the tabling of the questions. On the face of it, there is no public interest justification for tabling the questions.

The transcripts of conversations between Members of Parliament and the investigative reporters have been published. One Conservative Member is quoted as saying:

"The main point is the question you have asked will be answered . . . one way or another, so we will just have to wait and see."

The reporter then says:

"I will send you the £1,000 in the post now, then."

The Conservative Member of Parliament then says:

"That's very kind of you."

The reporter then says:

"And thank you again for your help."

A separate conversation with another Conservative Member of Parliament deals with the ethical issues involved. The reporter asks:

"Did you manage to have—you were going to talk to the Members' Interests people."

The Conservative Member of Parliament replies:

"Yes, yes. I do not see any problem."

The reporter then asks:

"There is no problem at all?"

The Conservative Member says:

"No. I would be quite happy to go ahead."

The reporter then says:

"What do you want to do about paying you the £1,000?"

The Conservative Member then says:

"I don't really mind. Why don't you just send it to me? Do you want my home address?"

On the face of it, the relationship between the money and the tabled questions seems overwhelming. In any event, it is my contention that it is strong enough to justify referral to the Privileges Committee.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Is my hon. Friend aware that I am no defender of many of the exploits of the tabloid press or the serious press when the press intrudes into people's private lives, be they Members of Parliament or anyone else? However, for the life of me, in this case I cannot understand why there should be any criticism of *The Sunday Times*. If *The Sunday Times* had not done what it did, we would not be debating, or referring to the Privileges Committee, the whole question whether parliamentary questions are being tabled for money. If anything, *The Sunday Times* is to be congratulated.

Mr. Brown: My hon. Friend has made his point. I will deal with precisely that point later, because my motion refers to that, just as it refers to the wider issues of principle —as, indeed, you did, Madam Speaker, yesterday. However, I would like to make my speech in my own way, because I want to persuade the whole House to support my motion.

The two hon. Members involved will want to tell their side of the story and should have the opportunity to do so. I understand that 20 Members of Parliament were approached—10 Labour and 10 Conservative. The 10 Labour Members and six Conservative Members who appear to have rejected the approach outright clearly have something of value to say.

Another Conservative Member allegedly offered to table a question about a fictional disease called "thising", which is another anagram of "Insight", and apparently wanted his cheque for £1,000 given to his favourite charity. That allegation should also be considered by the Committee of Privileges. It is the exchange of money specifically for the asking of parliamentary questions that I believe to be the breach of privilege. The use to which the money is put, no matter how noble or worth while, is wholly beside the point.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): I trust that the hon. Gentleman will note that I requested exactly what Madam Speaker has given us today: the opportunity to have this matter considered by the most senior Committee of the House. I was deeply concerned about the activities of the individual who approached me. Before the hon. Gentleman says too much about me, he should remember that, if there are recordings, they will all be on tape.

Mr. Brown: I have already said that I believe that all the hon. Members mentioned in the allegations should, of course, have the opportunity to explain what they have done before the Committee of Privileges. That is the very reason why I am moving my motion.

I hope that the House will have noted that I am carefully avoiding naming individual Members. I have to set out the allegations to make the case for referral to the Committee of Privileges. I am trying to do so in a way that does not spark off a debate on the matters that I am asking the Committee to consider and not asking the House to determine this afternoon. It is a difficult line to tread, and I hope that the House understands that I am doing my best.

It is not possible to consider the ethics of taking a payment without looking at the ethics of offering payment —the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick). "Erskine May" states on page 128, under the section on improper influence:

"Attempts by improper means to influence Members in their parliamentary conduct may be considered contempts. One of the methods by which such influence may be brought to bear is bribery and in 1695 the House of Commons resolved"

to deal with this issue. When my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) raised that point, hon. Members laughed, thinking that 1695 was a long time ago. The resolution carried then is still the law of Parliament on bribery, and it is worth repeating to the House. The resolution states:

"the offer of money, or other advantage, to any Member of Parliament for the promoting of any matter whatsoever, depending or to be transacted in Parliament is a high crime and misdemeanour and tends to the subversion of the English constitution".

That was before the Act of Union.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Brown: If the intervention is about the Act of Union, I am not sure how grateful I shall be for it.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: My hon. Friend has just quoted from the rule. Is not consultancy, in principle, above that? Is it not fair to argue, as have a number of my hon. Friends, that the entering into a consultancy agreement by a Member of Parliament in return for money, in the knowledge that that consultancy requires the promotion of an interest that benefits a Member, is in breach of the law?

Mr. Brown: That is the third issue that I want to raise. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North, my hon. Friend the Member for Workington anticipates me.

I shall first deal with the issue of contempt—the offering of the bribe rather than the acceptance of it, if bribe it was. *The Sunday Times* story made it perfectly clear, at least to me, that Members of Parliament had been entrapped. It was also perfectly clear that Members of Parliament had been subjected to attempted entrapment.

The investigative journalists involved will say that they were acting within the ethics of their profession— *[Interruption.]* I am not always sure whether hon. Members are listening properly. What I said was that the investigative journalists involved would say that they were acting within the ethics of their profession—quite.

The Press Complaints Commission has an excellent code of practice—it would be excellent, if anyone took any notice of it—and it has something to say on the topic. It has quite a long section on misrepresentation. Section 6(iii) states:

"Subterfuge can be justified only in the public interest and only when material cannot be obtained by any other means.

In all these clauses the public interest includes:

(a) Detecting or exposing crime or serious misdemeanour."

Ms Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): Given the nature of the rumours that we have heard about hon. Members tabling questions for money, it is clear that evidence of that would never become available, as those spending the money would not expose the action. Does my hon. Friend agree that *The Sunday Times* has done British democracy a favour through the investigation in exposing such gross behaviour, which must be scrutinised by the House of Commons?

Mr. Brown: I am trying to make the case for my motion in as neutral a way as I can, while still placing the facts in the public domain. It is clearly my duty to say what the issues are without trying to take sides in too partisan a way.

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): Is my hon. Friend aware that the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) has made a formal complaint to the Press Complaints Commission, which has now said that it will investigate his complaint? Would it be right for the PCC to investigate and pronounce judgment before the Committee of Privileges has had a chance to sit? It may not start sitting until October, and it may not produce anything until January or February. What would happen if the PCC came to a verdict before the Committee of Privileges?

Mr. Brown: I was not aware that the complaint had been made. We are trying to establish an organisation with authority, and there is already an established body that has the authority to make investigations in its own different arena. I am certain that it is not for me to tell it how to proceed or to conduct its affairs. It is clearly open to the "Insight" team to mount a defence of their actions on the grounds of public interest. I share what I think is the general prejudice against entrapment.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): I am interested in what the hon. Gentleman is saying, because surely there would be a defence if the "Insight" team had been trying to reveal an activity that it was suspected was happening in this place. I have been a Member only seven years, but I have spoken to a number of hon. Members from both sides of the House, and no one has ever heard of an instance of someone attempting to bribe a Member of Parliament to table a question in the House. Is not that the reason we are having this debate?

Mr. Brown: The reason that we are having this debate is that a number of hon. Members wrote to Madam Speaker following the publication of *The Sunday Times* article. You, Madam Speaker, made your statement to the House yesterday, which facilitated this motion. That is the reason we are having today's debate.

I am trying hard to introduce the motion in a neutral way, without denying the House the explanation of what lies behind it. I do not think that I am helped in that by interventions that invite me to go further than I should now into the matters of substance. I hope that, if the Committee of Privileges decides that it wishes to meet the "Insight" team, they will, if asked, willingly co-operate with its inquiry.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Brown: If it is on the issue of co-operation.

Mr. Nicholls: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for the way in which he is presenting his motion.

The "Insight" team have also said that they started their entrapment procedure because a business man had told them that he was in the business of giving Members of Parliament money to table questions. Will the "Insight" team be obliged to answer the questions that should be put to them: who is that business man, and what real evidence have the "Insight" team got?

Mr. Brown: That is exactly what I asked the House not to do in response to the last intervention. Clearly, that is a matter for the Committee of Privileges to consider. My motion seeks to get the issue—and, indeed, some wider issues—to the Committee of Privileges and to allow it to consider how best to proceed. Certainly it is not my place to tell it how to proceed.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Brown: Irresistible. Of course I give way.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: This is a serious debate, and not a matter for joking. Will the remit of the Committee include those Members of the House who engage an excessive number of research assistants, many from America, who obtain information from the Library to enable them to get their D.Phil, doctorate or whatever? That is a nuisance to every Member of the House.

Mr. Brown: Frankly, I had not given that matter the consideration that I perhaps should have done. Again, I feel that I am being drawn into the details of the matter, when I want to deal at this stage with the broader questions of principle.

Yesterday, Madam Speaker, you spoke of the
"urgent need to clarify the law of Parliament in that area."
You gave that as a specific reason for granting the motion today. You also said that the Committee would have
"power to inquire not only into the matter of the particular complaint, but into the facts surrounding and reasonably connected with it, and into the principles of the law and custom of privilege which are concerned. I hope that it will use that power for the assistance of the House in a difficult area."—[*Official Report*, 12 July 1994; Vol.246, c. 829.]
It is a difficult area.

An excellent research paper prepared by the home affairs section of the House of Commons Library sets out the background to the topic, and explores the problems. There is a widespread fear among many who originally supported the Register of Members' Interests that it acts more as a licence than as a safeguard.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): The hon. Gentleman has mentioned the Committee of Privileges investigating the allegations against individual Members. However, Madam Speaker referred specifically to *The Sunday Times*. Will the inquiry that the hon. Gentleman envisages include a thorough inquiry into *The Sunday Times*, and into why it makes wild allegations every time there is a meeting overseas, so that, whenever my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister comes back to report, it is eclipsed? Will it also make inquiries into the allegation that *The Sunday Times* has said that it intends to get rid of the Government by causing by-elections? Those are allegations that I have heard from *The Sunday Times* itself.

Mr. Brown: The motion invites the Committee of Privileges to examine the issues dealt with in *The Sunday Times* story—the cash-for-questions row. It invites it separately to consider the wider questions of principle that are involved in the relationship between Members of Parliament's public duty and their private business interests. That is what I seek to refer to the Committee of Privileges. I am closely paralleling the statement that you, Madam Speaker, made yesterday.

The hon. Gentleman asks that the Committee should investigate more widely. I am not sure that it will want to investigate quite so widely as he wants it to do. Nevertheless, I hope that it will examine the broad issues of principle, rather than merely the narrow issue that has given focus to the motion today.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): Does my hon. Friend agree that the public would find it utterly baffling, indeed incomprehensible, if we gave any impression that the House gave equal sense of seriousness to the activities of some journalists on *The Sunday Times* and to the alleged bribery of Members of Parliament? Those two issues are not of equal importance. [HON. MEMBERS: "Yes, they are."] Conservative Members say that they are of equal importance. They are certainly not of equal importance to the people we represent. It is vital that the Committee of Privileges acknowledges that, not least because it would be ludicrous if a decision was made in the end which condemned the activities of *The Sunday Times* and condemned the activities of the hon. Members. They would never have been found out if it had not been for *The Sunday Times*.

Mr. Brown: I am trying to get the Committee up and moving. I certainly do not intend to tell it what its decision should be. It is difficult for me to respond to hypothetical conclusions of the Committee of Privileges when it has not even been set up yet. The purpose of the motion is to set it up and give it the widest possible remit, including the broader issues of principle.

Mr. Den Dover (Chorley): Earlier, the hon. Gentleman said that he understood that 20 Members had been approached by *The Sunday Times*. Has the hon. Gentleman any evidence, since he tabled the motion, that 10 Labour Members were approached, or has he had no evidence at all?

Mr. Brown: Those matters are referred to in the story. Clearly it will be open to the Committee of Privileges to invite the "Insight" team to come before it and say whom it approached and what the responses were. The point that I was trying to make to the House was that 16 Members from both sides of the House rejected the approach outright, and that their reasons for so doing would clearly be of interest to the Committee of Privileges. That is the only point that I make in that matter.

I do not want to go through the recent well publicised causes for concern. It will suffice to say that there is widespread public disquiet about the relationship between the public duties of Members of Parliament and their private business interests. Our rules must ensure that there is no improper overlap between the two.

[Mr. Brown]

I know that, as the then Leader of the House, the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen), told the Committee which considered the matter a few years ago, there are profound problems of interpretation, enforcement and punishment. In my view, there is an even more profound problem in not tackling the issues. My motion enables the Committee of Privileges to try to do so.

An amendment has been tabled but not selected which suggests that, unless there are pressing reasons to the contrary, the Committee should follow its usual procedure in recent years and keep its proceedings in the public domain. I hope that the Committee will be able to do that, not merely because there is public interest in the issue but because, if Parliament looks at its own affairs and how we regulate the relationships between public and private interests, it is right that the public should see us doing it, and should understand the outcome.

4.56 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): I intervene simply and briefly to express the hope that the House will agree to the motion. As you said in your statement yesterday, which has given precedence to the motion today, Madam Speaker, the press report at the weekend which led to your receiving a number of complaints, including that from the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown), plainly raised serious and difficult issues.

I am not entirely sure that the hon. Gentleman achieved the neutrality that was his ambition. Perhaps that is what provoked so many interventions. Certainly I do not think that it would be right for me as Leader of the House to follow down his path of commentary. I have no doubt that the proper course is for the House now to remit those complaints to the Committee of Privileges for its consideration and advice.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Madam Speaker, will the Leader of the House tell us how he intends to implement that part of your statement which asked for urgency? I am sure that he is aware that, on occasions in the past when matters have been referred to the Committee of Privileges, it has taken a very long time to come to a decision—perhaps for good reasons. Does he agree that, on this occasion, it is important that consideration is urgent, and that he should use all his powers as Leader of the House to set up the Committee and let it get on with its work as quickly as possible?

Mr. Newton: I was about to come to that. It is obviously for the Committee, when it is set up, to decide how to proceed. If the motion is agreed, the Government will, of course, undertake appropriate consultation with a view to tabling a motion to nominate the Committee as soon as possible.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I beg to move, That the Question be now put.

Madam Speaker: I am not prepared to accept that motion.

4.59 pm

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): Very few hon. Members have ever been called before a Privileges Committee, and I wish to take a few minutes to explain exactly what can happen. That is why I tabled my amendment today.

The sad fact is that if the Committee decides that it wants to hand out a public spanking—for example, to a recalcitrant trade union leader such as Arthur Scargill—it will hold all its hearings in public, and its proceedings will gain a great deal of publicity.

On the other hand, there is a tendency for a Privileges Committee to say that it is there to protect the House rather than the public.When that happens, there is a feedback to the culprit which says, "Grovel, apologise, purge your contempt and say you will never do it again." Proceedings will drag on for three or four months, and then the Committee will quietly produce a report which says that the hon. Member concerned apologised for his bad behaviour and that, as far as it is concerned, no further action should be taken.

A Committee will sit in private to reach that conclusion, it will hear virtually no evidence and its report will not be debated in the House. The matter goes into limbo. And that is exactly what happened to me.

I was the whistleblower in 1974, when I wrote a piece in *Labour Weekly* which alleged that there were Members for hire. That was at the time of Poulson and T. Dan Smith, and allegations such as those about Harold Wilson and the slagheaps and Tony Crosland, the Foreign Secretary, being given a coffee pot. My piece in *Labour Weekly* said that those allegations were nonsense, and that the number of Members out of 650 in the House who were susceptible to a proposition could be counted on one hand. Immediately the tabloids splashed across their front pages, "Name the guilty five." On the day when the T. Dan Smith trial ended —when what had been sub judice was no longer sub judice —I was the subject of a terrific amount of investigation.

The hon. Member for Peterborough at that time, Sir Harmar Nicholls, stood in the House and moved that the matter be referred to a Privileges Committee. That was between the two elections of 1974, when we had a majority of 22. I might add that things were done differently in those days, because I had to leave the Chamber immediately. With respect to you, Madam Speaker, I think it was the rule at that time that the Members accused had to leave the Chamber.

Madam Speaker: That is no longer the case.

Mr. Ashton: Exactly, but I had to leave.

The matter went upstairs to the Committee, and word came back that I should apologise and that no further action would be taken. I refused, and I put up a defiant defence. I was helped in that by my hon. and learned Friend Arthur Davidson, then the Member for Accrington and now a leading libel lawyer in Fleet street. We said that we had the facts in a file which was about a foot thick and there were immediate panic stations around the place.

Members of Parliament were, at that time, very badly paid. There were even advertisements in the whip on Friday saying that, if a Member wanted a £10 trip to Iceland to study the cod war, and he wanted to take his wife and two kids, it could be arranged. It was as blatant as that. A man came to me at the time and said that he wanted to make a commercial which said that the man who wound up

Big Ben wore a Timex watch. "All we would have to do," he said, "is film a man walking across the bridge and down through the door into Big Ben." He asked if I could arrange it, and said that there would be a good fee for doing that.

I wrote to the Leader of House and asked whether that could be arranged. He wrote back, and hit the ceiling. But that was part of a specific campaign to get a Register of Members' Interests, which Eddie Milne, Phillip Whitehead and I and a few others were engaged in. We constantly wrote articles saying that the matter should be brought out into the open and that there should be a register—and eventually a register was brought out.

My point is that the Privileges Committee decided at that time that it would sit in private and would not publish any evidence. I alleged at the time that Members were renting out the banqueting rooms and staging receptions, and that fees of £300 had been paid for scotch whisky receptions on Budget days.

I asked for the catering booking forms so that I could produce them to the Committee, but the Catering Committee said no. I said to the Committee of Privileges that I wanted those booking forms, but I was told that I could not have them. I did not object to the fact that I could not have them, but I did object that the fact that I had asked for them was not even reported in *Hansard*. None of it was reported in *Hansard*, and all the report said was that the Committee had sat on several occasions and had had deliberations.

I was asked whether I wanted to go before the Committee—my hon. and learned Friend Arthur Davidson said that I should not go because the lawyers and the Attorney-General would tear me to shreds—or whether I wanted to write and ask questions. I wrote to them; they asked me questions; and we wrote back. It went on for months, which was what everybody wanted.

As the October election was coming up in 1974, there was a strange mood around the House. People were saying to me that they knew that I was right, but that we could not fight an election in October while all this was going on. The hon. Member for Slagthorpe, North would come up and say that the hon. Member for Slagthorpe, South might be a bit dodgy, but that the allegation rubbed off on him. "It rubs off on us all," I was told, "so for God's sake drop it."

There was constant pressure on me to drop the matter. I am afraid that I was not a popular person at that time, but the campaign ultimately resulted in the setting up of the Register of Members' Interests. That was not done until two years later when Poulson had gone bankrupt and had had to reveal the payments which he had made.

The Committee met again and recommended that three hon. Members—Reggie Maudling, Albert Roberts and John Cordle—should be suspended for six months. Michael Foot said—I do not think that Labour had a majority then—that there were two Members from one side and only one from the other. We could not have that, as we would be accused of rigging a majority for the Government of the day.

There was a tremendous kerfuffle. John Cordle did not wait for the House to decide on the matter, and handed in his resignation. The other two did wait and, I am sad to say, the House divided along political lines—perhaps because of the climate at that time. Reggie Maudling's suspension came up first, and the Conservatives voted solidly against the proposal. When it came to Albert Roberts, the Labour party voted solidly to keep him in as well.

We got the Register of Members' Interests set up, but because there was not a clear majority in the House we could not get the House's full agreement. That meant that the register was toothless in a way because, although it said that Members had to register their consultancies, it did not say that they had to register any offers or that the people who were making the offer had to register.

That is important because if the people making an offer had to register, nobody would make an offer. It is as simple as that. If it were against the law to make an offer to a Member—which it should be—nobody would make an offer. But we could not get that through the House at the time, and that very important part had to be left out.

What we are debating today has a different dimension, and a very important one. The question—with respect to my hon. Friends who were talking about *The Sunday Times*—is one of bugging. I do not object to newspaper investigations at all. I object to the growth in the use of tape recorders which we have seen in the past two years. I sat on the Select Committee on National Heritage which looked at the matter.

Within the past 18 months, a tape recorder has been placed under a Cabinet Minister's bed, the results of which were then splashed in the papers. In another example an offer of £2,000 was made by a prominent politician at a railway station, and one of the people involved in the incident was wearing a mike. We now have an instance where a conversation has been taped and where telephones have been bugged. The royal family's telephone conversations have been bugged, and then printed. I hope that the Committee will look at the growth of technology which did not exist 20 years ago when the House was not televised and was not even on the radio.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): I concur with virtually everything that the hon. Gentleman has said. He has been in the Chamber and may not be aware that this afternoon the editor in charge of *The Sunday Times* Insight team—he is in the Gallery this afternoon and is hearing what I am saying—admitted on the record that his team had been researching this story and trying to stand it up since January. They had investigated a number of Members, and had been unable to pin the story on any particular Member at any time, and they had to resort to subterfuge to set up the story.

Mr. Ashton: I do not want to comment on what the hon. Gentleman has said. As my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) said at the beginning of the debate, we should not produce evidence which might be prejudicial to any inquiry. We are talking about the general merits of the matter.

The Committee must certainly take a look at electronic surveillance. That problem has been compared with the banning of journalists from the Terrace because of allegations that they were harassing Members. A long tradition of trust with the journalists' lobby has been built up, but we can no longer talk to journalists without fearing that they may have microphones or tape recorders in their pockets. We can no longer use the telephone without wondering whether we are speaking on lobby terms or whether we are being recorded. The Committee must look into that too, because all this technology is a new dimension of privilege, and the House has never before examined the matter.

[Mr. Ashton]

I tabled my amendment just to make sure that members of the Committee know that everything said in it must be subject to full public scrutiny—perhaps not all the deliberations, but certainly all the evidence given to the Committee.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that it is essential that there be a public record? If there is not, for the next few months there will be nothing but speculation in the newspapers to the effect that the Privileges Committee has heard this or that, or recommended this or that, or probed this or that. We need an open record of what goes on, so that we can all judge on the basis of fact, not hearsay.

Mr. Ashton: My hon. Friend is of course right. I believe that the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) made a mistake by going to the Press Complaints Commission. That will only result in a verdict being given by a body before this House gives its verdict, thereby pre-empting it.

I hope that the Committee will adhere to my hon. Friend's suggestion and insist that every scrap of evidence be published.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Madam Speaker: May I draw to the attention of the House the fact that a number of hon. Members want to speak in this debate? I ask them to exercise voluntary restraint in respect of the length of their speeches. Secondly, I draw their attention to the fact that the motion is a very narrow one, and I hope that they will read it before speaking.

5.11 pm

Sir John Gorst (Hendon, North): Madam Speaker, the day before yesterday I made a complaint to you about bribery and the surreptitious use of bugging devices within the precincts of the Palace of Westminster. I begin by setting out the facts on which that complaint was based.

On Wednesday 29 June a Mr. Jonathan Calvert came to see me at the House of Commons by appointment. Several days earlier he had left telephone messages, saying that he wished to discuss a consultancy matter with John Gorst and Associates Ltd., a consultancy that I formed six years before I was elected to this House. It is also registered as a business and public relations consultancy in the Register of Members' Interests.

I took Mr. Calvert, a young man in his late twenties or early thirties, to a bench seat off the Central Lobby, and he immediately explained that he had been left some money which he wished to invest in a drugs company that was unable to establish the facts about an uncommon disease. He spelt it out as an unpronounceable illness called "thising aphonitus infeston". Before deciding whether to proceed with an investment, Mr. Calvert explained that he needed information from the Department of Health about the incidence of this disease. He asked whether I would table a parliamentary question for which he was prepared to pay £1,000. He did not require any regular consultancy; it was just that one-off question to which he sought an answer.

I explained to him that it was not proper for a Member of Parliament to accept money for tabling questions. He seemed to think that that was either pedantic or unhelpful, so I explained, as *The Sunday Times* reported, that although it might not be illegal it was certainly not very nice if Members of Parliament asked questions in return for money.

I did not comment, although the thought crossed my mind, that his request was more than somewhat improper. I am used to certain types of business people, unfamiliar with the ways of Parliament, thinking that money can buy whatever they want. So I was inclined to put his request down to ignorance or naivety.

I therefore confined myself to suggesting that if Mr. Calvert set out on paper what he wanted to know and sent it to me I would consider tabling the question for nothing. I could see no objection at that time to asking a question about the incidence of an unusual disease. As Mr. Calvert had ostensibly come to see me about the possibility of my company undertaking consultancy work, I concluded the 10 or 15-minute meeting by saying that, if in the future he felt the need for consultancy, I would be perfectly willing to discuss some sort of arrangement.

I hope that the House will take the view, irrespective of Members' views on the desirability or otherwise of Members having outside interests, that this was a perfectly correct response to both the letter and the spirit of our regulations. Certainly it was a dubious approach, and I hope that I responded correctly.

After Mr. Calvert's departure I consulted a medical dictionary in the Library. There was no reference to the so-called disease he had mentioned. Meanwhile I also decided that there was something that did not quite ring true about Mr. Calvert. At the same time, I was inclined to suspect that he was a slightly cranky individual of a type not unfamiliar to Members of Parliament from their surgeries. Indeed, on checking his telephone number, which was in the Richmond area, I could not understand why he had not consulted his own Member of Parliament. Even though it appeared that his Member was a Minister, there was no good reason why the information that Mr. Calvert sought could not have been obtained by a Minister through normal correspondence.

Thereafter I gave no further thought to Mr. Calvert—or rather, not until Saturday 9 July—10 days later—when I returned a call from *The Sunday Times*, in the course of which I was informed that the paper intended publishing a report to the effect that two Members of Parliament had accepted money in return for tabling parliamentary questions. It was also revealed to me that the Mr. Calvert who had come to see me in the House of Commons was in fact a member of the paper's staff.

I was indignant at this subterfuge, but more to the point, I recognised that a deliberate, seemingly criminal attempt had been made to bribe me, and that there had been nothing naive or unknowing about the proposition put to me by Mr. Jonathan Calvert.

When, later that evening, I obtained an early edition of *The Sunday Times*, I also took exception to what I took to be a libellous innuendo. I rang the paper and remonstrated with the editor of the column. During our conversation he revealed to me that he had a transcript of what I had said, thereby making it perfectly clear that Mr. Calvert had been using a concealed recording device throughout our conversation.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The hon. Gentleman has referred to bribery. What is the difference between

payment for a one-off service under the heading of consultancy and payment for a consultancy that lasts for a period?

Sir John Gorst: If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I am trying to deploy a case. I do not wish to dodge the question, but I hope that he will understand from my subsequent remarks that I am discussing the two points in this motion about which I have personal knowledge.

Hon. Members will be well aware that "Erskine May" states on page 128, as the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) has already said:

"Attempts by improper means to influence Members in their parliamentary conduct may be considered contempts."

I contend that offering money for tabling a question constitutes such a contempt. Before I reach that point, I hope that the House will allow me to finish what I was saying about Mr. Calvert.

It was only because I believed that I was being offered money out of ignorance or naivety rather than duplicity that I did not report the conversation I have outlined sooner. I have explained to the House why I now think differently.

I wish to go further, however, and argue that those who from the start seek in the precincts of the House to cause a Member to commit a contempt by accepting bribes, are themselves guilty of committing a contempt and should be dealt with accordingly. Their motives are irrelevant. They should operate within the laws of Parliament and not above them. Should they seek to justify their conduct on the grounds of public interest, I would submit that they are abusing and usurping powers that properly belong either to Madam Speaker or to the House.

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir John Gorst: No. I shall not give way as I realise that many other hon. Members wish to speak.

Who are these members of the fourth estate anyway? Who are these so-called guardians of the public interest who are arrogating to themselves exceptional powers and rights: the right to break the law; the right to offer felonious bribes; the right to invade the precincts and privileges of the mother of Parliaments? Such contemptuous arrogance has not been seen since the days of the robber barons.

The power of the press has grown, is growing and needs to be diminished. As a voice for the grievances of the nation it is essential, invaluable and must not be fettered, but as a power above the law, without accountability, it has no rights, no role and no function in our parliamentary democracy.

There are those who plead eloquently against the erosion of the sovereignty of Parliament in Europe. What price that sovereignty if it is to be subservient to the Murdoch empire, an empire in the ascendant that has a higher budget than the British Empire ever had in its decline? Against such mighty and overweening assertiveness, what is the value of the ancient, jealously guarded privileges accorded to the elected representatives of the people? What is their value if they are to be subordinated to the news editor of *The Sunday Times*, who places his concept of the public interest as superior to that of the constitution?

Finally, I turn to the use of clandestine bugging devices. Although there is no explicit reference to their use in the Palace of Westminster, I would draw the attention of hon. Members to page 115 of "Erskine May":

"Generally speaking, any act . . . which . . . impedes either House in the performance of its functions, or which . . . has a tendency, directly or indirectly, to produce such results may be treated as a contempt even though there is no precedent of the offence.".

In this case, such recording devices were used without my knowledge within the precincts of the Palace of Westminster.

The use of bugging devices in any circumstances in the Palace of Westminster could impede uninhibited discussion between Members and Ministers, constituents, or accredited members of the lobby, or between Government and Opposition parties.

As that is a practice not permitted to such authorities as the police, the security forces or indeed any official acting under the authority of you, Madam Speaker, it would be wrong in my view to permit it to journalists. Moreover, the use of recording devices in such circumstances places improper influence and pressure on Members of the House and therefore ought to be treated as a serious contempt.

Bribery and bugging by any section of the media are a gross abuse of Parliament. To censure and outlaw it inside the privileged precincts of the House is not an infringement of the liberty of the press. Those practices are a violation of freedom, not a protection of it.

Corrupt means to expose corruption are a corruption in themselves. We do not sanction corrupt methods in the fight against terrorism in Northern Ireland, nor should we tolerate them in this place. Deception and trickery are the tools of a totalitarian state; they have no place in this country.

Across the span of our public life we have a variety of properly constituted inspectorates. Are we now to tolerate a secret self-appointed journalistic police answerable only to the commercial imperatives of the transatlantic Rupert Murdoch?

If something is to be done—and I support the motion wholeheartedly—if censure or penalties are to be imposed, I hope that the Committee of Privileges will ensure that *The Sunday Times* is denied access to any privileged facilities of the Palace of Westminster and that it will not be allowed to return until it has purged its contempt and given assurances that there will be no repetition of this disreputable conduct.

5.26 pm

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): I support the motion before the House and, as a former member of the Committee of Privileges, I do not wish to comment on the individual cases. The matter of the next Committee will be for the House to determine. However, it is sensible to set the framework against which these issues have come into the public domain.

Without regard to the individual details that have been given, if people observing Parliament, which is widely reported in the press and on television, were to be persuaded that the transactions that we present to them as being a conflict of ideas and interests were really just a cover for financial arrangements which were concealed from them, their confidence in the House would rightly disappear.

I have long thought—and I hinted at it in the debate when you were elected to the Chair, Madam Speaker—that the threats to democracy in Britain come from quite

[Mr. Tony Benn]

surprising places, not least from those who seek to replace our work by moving it to other places at Millbank and elsewhere.

It is important that this House, which has a very long history—I think it is 700 years next year since the model Parliament was called—should recognise that in a sense the whole development of Parliament has been a struggle by the common people to prevent the country from being run by rich people.

It was the King who conquered—William the Conqueror came to Westminster abbey on Christmas day 1066—and his power was power by conquest. He owned the country, so he ran it. Similarly, when the barons went to Runnymede—an activity sometimes misunderstood as having played a significant part in the development of democracy—the feudal landlords told the King that they were not prepared to have him run the country because they were landlords and they owned the land. The serfs who suffered under the landlords never really benefited from Magna Carta.

I shall not take the House through any more history—we all take school children round this place—but it is worth remembering that in 1832, which is not so very long ago, only 2 per cent. of the population had the vote and they were all rich white men. The Chartists and the suffragettes wanted the vote. Why was that? It was because they wanted to use the ballot box to countervail the power of money.

That is what the whole parliamentary story is about. People did not want the vote because they had done an A-level in government; they wanted it in order to buy collectively what they could not afford individually. That is what the history of the labour movement means. People said, "Many of us cannot afford houses or proper education, health care or pensions. We will band together and campaign for the vote. We will then campaign for candidates who, when elected, will be able to use the power of Parliament to countervail the power of money." If we allow that idea to be put in question by giving the impression that money—by means of subterfuge—still runs the proceedings of the House of Commons, we destroy the whole thing at a stroke.

Then there is the question of privilege. There are two views of privilege, one of which is that its purpose is to protect Members of Parliament from being criticised outside. I have never taken that view. Clearly, if a Member of Parliament receives a death threat—"If you vote for such and such a Bill, we will kill you"—that is a breach of privilege. Why is that? It is because it prevents that Member of Parliament from performing the function for which he or she was elected. Privilege is there to protect the electors, so that the Parliament that they have elected can perform the functions for which they elected it.

The Committee of Privileges recently dealt with an interesting case raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms Short). It concerned an employee of Birmingham city council. When that council promoted a Bill to allow a road race in Birmingham, that employee—in his personal capacity—petitioned against it. The council then tried to move him from his job as a punishment for petitioning against his employer.

I am proud to have played some part in what followed. The Committee of Privileges ruled that Birmingham city council was guilty of a breach of privilege by threatening a citizen, thus preventing him from coming to Parliament. I hope that when the Committee meets on this occasion it will bear in mind that view of privilege—that it is there to protect those who elect us so that Parliament can work for them against those who will always seek to get their results by means of money.

Some Members of Parliament are already governed by very strict rules. I take it that the Leader of the House and other Front Benchers are governed by the same rules that governed me when I was a Secretary of State. They are contained in "Questions of Procedure for Ministers", a copy of which I have kept. The document will vary from Government to Government, but it is sent to every Minister by the Prime Minister of the day. My copy is copy No. 21, dated 23 April 1976; Jim Callaghan, who was then Prime Minister, sent the memorandum to all of us. I will quote two of the rules.

The first of those rules states:

"It is a well-established and recognised rule that no Minister or public servant should accept gifts, hospitality or services from anyone which would, or might appear to, place him under an obligation."

The second passage, which is equally short, states:

"It is a principle of public life that Ministers must so order their affairs that no conflict arises, or appears to arise, between their private interests and their public duties."

My opinion—which I submitted, unsuccessfully, to the Select Committee on Members' Interests—is that every Member of Parliament should be covered by those rules. What is so special about Ministers that they are public servants? Are we not public servants? Do we not table questions? I table many questions for business men who come to me and say, "I have an invention" or "I have an export problem", but I would not dream of either expecting or receiving money for doing that, either in a personal capacity or by setting myself up as a consultant. I do not put myself in any position above that, but Members of Parliament are elected to act as consultants to the British people: that is what we are here for.

Why do people write to Members of Parliament and visit their surgeries? It is because they want our advice: they want to consult us about how their problems might be resolved. That argument, I think, is both powerful and easy to advance, because the rules are already there for Ministers. I presume that the current wording is very similar to what I read out, although it may vary slightly—indeed, the present Government published the rules.

When I put the matter to the Select Committee on Members' Interests, it would not allow the document to be published. It was frightened, because the document was marked "confidential". Ministers were governed by rules that were secret, while the rest of us were not.

We often boast that we are a high court of Parliament. If that is so, Members taking the oath should swear to "tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth." Rather than being an oath of allegiance to the Crown—I shall not go into that now—the oath that we take in the House should have some bearing on the duties that we perform. I drafted such an oath and submitted a Bill that dealt with it. It read:

"I . . . Solemnly declare and affirm

That I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to the peoples of the United Kingdom, according to their respective laws and customs"—

that is from the coronation oath—

"preserving inviolably their civil liberties and democratic rights . . . through their elected representatives in the House of

Commons, and will faithfully and truly declare my mind and opinion on all matters that come before me without fear or favour."

That is from the Privy Councillor's oath, which the Lord President has declined to publish. Happily, I did it for him some time ago.

If Parliament is to be credible, people must know that when we come here we are public servants. No one would argue that we do not bring our experience to the House or that we may not do other things in parallel—some Members of Parliament write, for instance—but that is quite different from being paid to perform an aspect of one's parliamentary duties.

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Benn: I am trying to make a serious point, but I will give way.

Mr. Bottomley: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman. His speech is interesting, but I seem to recall his saying on the radio that he had failed to persuade members of his own party of various things that he thought were right, and then saying that he had best explain or put forward what he disagreed with. If the point of view in the second part of his speech includes his diary form, I think that many people will find points to criticise; the first part was rather better.

Mr. Benn: I will conclude by putting to the House some proposals that I believe the Committee should consider. First, I propose that every Member of Parliament should be required to list the sources, though not the amounts, of all his or her financial interests. Secondly, the procedure for Ministers should apply to all of us. Thirdly, certain financial interests should be held to disqualify a person from serving in the House of Commons. As you know, Madam Speaker, an office of profit under the Crown disqualifies: it is not possible to serve the Executive and be a member of the legislature. That is an old principle and is the reason why Members of Parliament wishing to retire apply for the Chiltern Hundreds. But are there not other offices which should disqualify? I think that at one stage people working for contractors to Government Departments were included. If people are engaged in making money as a result of being in Parliament, is that not a disqualifying office? I believe that the rules, whatever they are, should be embodied in statute and not just in the "old boy" regulations of the House.

I also believe that every candidate should publish his or her interests with the nominations papers, and that all organisations making payments of any kind to any Member of Parliament should be required to make a declaration to that effect in a separate register. If an organisation pays a Member of Parliament, it should be under a statutory responsibility to declare, "We paid that Member for that purpose." All lobbyists should declare the names of all persons whom they employ for that purpose, and the list should be published. When a Member declares an interest when speaking or voting—as he should—that interest should be printed in *Hansard*, having been picked up from the Register. The oath should oblige us to do all those things.

No doubt the Committee of Privileges will examine the question of the Members concerned and what happened in the current instance in detail, some of which has been touched on today. However, I urge the House not to allow this opportunity to deal with the wider question to pass. If people at home not only hear what is happening in the House but wonder whether the newspapers pay for things to be done which they subsequently report independently, as part of the democratic process, the House will do itself a disservice and will richly merit criticism.

5.39 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): I welcome the opportunity to speak in the debate. First, however, I should like to thank you personally, Madam Speaker, for responding to my letter and to those of many others giving us an opportunity to have this debate. As a result, I hope that the Privileges Committee will be able to look into the matter.

I want to make it clear to Opposition Members that I have no objection to the Privileges Committee sitting in public or to everything being recorded. In fact, I look forward to the tape recordings of my conversations being heard in full. I welcome that. I believe that they would have the same effect as the Richard Nixon tapes had on Richard Nixon and on the individual who obtained those recordings. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. There are some rather loud conversations taking place. I am sure that we all want to hear what the hon. Gentleman has to say.

Mr. Walker: From time to time *The Sunday Times* gives us titbits of news which it thinks will titillate the interest of the public at large and help the newspaper's circulation. I am concerned that from now on the newspapers should not use edited versions of recordings in order to increase their circulation. I have made my view clear: I am happy to have the tapes involving me heard and printed in full in the Committee report. I welcome the fact that the Privileges Committee has the powers that it has and I trust that it will use them.

The Sunday Times claims that the methods used were justified and in the public interest. Consequently, I believe that it could not object if I were to tell the House the name and address of the business man, the potential investor and job creator, who told me that he had given up being a haulage contractor because he had come into a substantial inheritance which he wished to invest in a company manufacturing a new drug that would be a cure for a particular type of serious throat problem. The House will recollect that last year I was off ill for quite some time with just such a health problem. Was I not the right chap to approach with that sort of instant cure? I should certainly have thought so. The idea of a cure together with the prospect of jobs was what made me interested in the gentleman—or rather the agent provocateur, con man, liar and cheat—who tried to get me to accept a cheque, which I refused, and who recorded all our conversations on the telephone and all the conversations held in my room in the House without my knowledge.

If Jonathan Calvert of 35 Cambridge Cottages, Kew, Richmond, Surrey, TW9 3AY is listening, I hope that he will recollect that I also have his telephone number—0181 940 2534—on which I have spoken to his wife. I obtained the clear impression that he was genuine.

I ask hon. Members to think carefully. The right to ask questions and to have questions answered is the

[Mr. Walker]

cornerstone of our unwritten constitution. Anyone tampering with that for whatever motive—or ulterior motive—should be dealt with severely by Parliament.

I am prepared—I imagine that I have no choice—to appear before the Committee of Privileges. If I have erred, as I often do—I live in a house full of women who constantly remind me of that—the Committee will quite properly point out my erring ways. If *The Sunday Times* has erred—I believe that it has erred in a ghastly way—the Committee should treat it properly as well.

5.44 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I hope that the House will vote for the motion, and that the Leader of the House will ensure that the Committee is set up speedily, which I know he will want to do. I am sure that that is the mood of the House.

At this stage, I do not intend to dwell on the behaviour of the press. It is right that that should be investigated and, like the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown), I am certainly not convinced that the press complaints procedure is an effective guardian of the public interest. It may be that the behaviour of the press in this context needs to come back to us in the House.

I hope that your statement, Madam Speaker, was so clear that the Committee of Privileges will be under no misapprehension. I believe that both halves of the motion should be followed comprehensively. The Committee should look not only into the specific matter of the complaints relating to two colleagues, but consider all the matters that flow from that and are related to it. That means that three separate matters need to be examined by the Committee.

The first is that there may well be contempt of Parliament by colleagues, because one of the allegations clearly implies that hon. Members might be in contempt. I should add that we are all and always prospectively at risk of that, and I do not want to suggest that at different times any of us might not be. It is clear from the wording on page 119 of "Erskine May" that

> "The acceptance by any Member of either House of a bribe to influence him in his conduct as such Member or of any fee, compensation or reward in connection with the promotion of, or opposition to any bill, resolution, matter or thing submitted"

is a breach of privilege and puts the Member in contempt.

Two types of effort are made to influence us here. My right hon. Friend the Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel) gave me a specific example of a type of effort made by many. When he ceased to be the leader of our party, he was approached by a consultancy firm offering him a five-figure sum for one year simply to book rooms for entertaining and to look after clients of a consultancy. That is entirely inappropriate. My right hon. Friend declined that offer clearly, having, in his own words, been "astounded" that it had been made. That is one level of activity which involves using the building and facilitating contacts.

Another level of activity is attempting to influence the business in the Chamber—speaking, voting and tabling motions and questions. The matters raised in the motion and in *The Sunday Times* relate to that much more central matter of the business of Parliament. Attempts were made to influence the business of Parliament, with money as the reward.

Those of us who have been taught the criminal law are taught about the legal difference between attempting to do something which can actually be done, such as stealing something, or attempting to do something illegal that one cannot do, for example because there is nothing to steal. I hope that the Committee will not find on a technicality that, because there was no real company and because people were pretending something, there was not an offence. I hope that the Committee will exclude that, because the issue is as serious as if it were a real company and a real individual seeking to influence us in some way.

Secondly, there may be contempt—on the face of it, it looks as if there is—by those who attempted to bribe 20 hon. Members. I do not know whether other people have done that before, but your statement, Madam Speaker, made it clear that you wanted the wide rather than the narrow set of issues to be considered.

It is also clear that the Committee can find such action to be in breach of privilege, and that it can deal with it. On both of those matters, you rightly made the point yesterday, Madam Speaker, that the law of the land was not clear. There is ambiguity as to whether, in ordinary criminal law, such action could also land anyone before the courts—when would contempt in this place also be illegal outside? That matter should be sorted out.

We must know whether any person who approached our 20 colleagues was guilty of a criminal offence, and whether hon. Members who respond to such an approach and accept and pocket money are also guilty of a criminal offence. The matter should be made clear, and the public should know what the position is. If the law needs to be amended, it should be. The Committee should deal with the matter.

The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) alluded to the third issue, which is a subsidiary one but linked to the main issues, as your statement, Madam Speaker, made clear. It relates to whether the Register of Members' Interests is sufficient to achieve the purposes for which it was intended.

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley): It is.

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Member for Worsley (Mr. Lewis) makes the point from a sedentary position—it is not, and there are several reasons for that.

First, hon. Members do not have to declare an interest until a month afterwards. Secondly, the Register, although it is published annually, updated periodically in a loose form and can be inspected, is by definition not up to date in a public form. The relevance of an interest may be past by the time it is in the public domain. It may be no good, for example, for people to discover only a year afterwards that an hon. Member was given money for an air ticket to North Korea. The relevance may be when the payment was made, not later.

Thirdly, and perhaps most important, currently we do not have to declare the value of the interest. The register is almost useless unless the actual amount of money that passes hands appears in it. There is all the difference in the world between being paid tuppence and being paid £1 million to do something. The amounts that people receive for their non-parliamentary duties should be explicitly included in the register for everyone to see. *[Interruption.]* The register should include everyone, and all the money that hon. Members receive other than as a result of their parliamentary duties.

Another issue may also be debated later tonight—an appropriate amendment has been tabled, although I do not know yet whether it has been accepted. I have argued my case on the issue, and I have previously forced votes on it. In my view, all the money that we receive from elsewhere should be deducted from what we earn as a Member of Parliament. *[Interruption.]* I should add that that view is not shared by every one of my parliamentary colleagues, let alone other hon. Members. A significant number of people share my view, and it has been placed on the record before. Many hon. Members resist such a view. It would embarrass them publicly if their constituents knew how much money they earn as a result of being elected to this place which they would not have earned if they had not been elected.

In any event, however, it cannot be right that the taxpayer foots the bill for answers to questions from which hon. Members can gain private financial reward, because, by this means, the taxpayer is lining the pockets of hon. Members who accept money.

When hon. Members go to the Table Office and table an early-day motion, they are required to say whether they have a relevant interest to declare. There is no reason why there should not be the same requirement when we table a question. We should declare an interest. If we are in breach, at least we have been alerted, and have failed to declare the interest knowingly.

It may be argued that it is also nonsense for the taxpayer to pay, through the licence fee, the British Broadcasting Corporation, which then pays hon. Members to appear on television. We are elected to represent different views. *[Interruption.]* It does on certain occasions. Television and radio payments should also be in the public domain.

When we visit our constituents, a common view is that Members of Parliament are here for their own advancement and interest. A common view is that we are here to make a profit for ourselves. A common view is that we do financially very well and that we have our snouts in the trough.

If we are to enhance democracy, the Committee should consider that issue as widely as possible; otherwise, we will be regarded as open to the same form of corruption as some other democracies around the world. Your statement, Madam Speaker, made it clear that you would find that unacceptable. I hope that the Committee will be as tough as possible, to ensure that the system is clearly organised to be protection against any risk of corruption of this sort again.

5.56 pm

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): I think that the hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) and others raised some interesting points about the Press Complaints Commission, and, in particular, my complaint to it, and I intend to consider what they have said.

Madam Speaker, I am thoroughly relieved that you have proposed the setting up of the Committee of Privileges. It means that I will have my peers from this House, and not the press, sitting in judgment over me. I too, therefore, support the motion.

I very much regret what I hope the House will accept was a lack of judgment on my part rather than anything worse, and I apologise to you, Madam Speaker, and the House that it is in part actions by me which have made it necessary for you to initiate the debate.

I feel that the House will agree that now is not the time to go through in detail the sequence of events that took place. I will, of course, be talking to the Committee. But as the House, I think, knows, I was approached by a Mr. Jonathan Calvert—that name again. He claimed to be a business man, but he turned out later to be a *Sunday Times* journalist.

I recognise that I was unwise to have even considered doing what he asked me to do. Consultancy was mentioned. He told me that he had been advised by a former constituent of mine that I was always prepared to help small business men. He talked about his Yorkshire connections, but I accept that I made an error of judgment in agreeing to table a question and in agreeing initially to accept a fee.

I can tell the House that soon after I started to reflect on what I had agreed. I came to my own conclusion that I could not justify accepting a fee, and I decided that I would not accept the payment. This was before the Department of Social Security had told me that it did not know anything about the fictitious company and before I knew that I was the victim of an elaborate *Sunday Times* scam.

I returned to my Yorkshire home last Thursday. The cheque arrived on Friday morning. I sent the cheque back by return of post on that Friday.

Madam Speaker, I am grateful for your decision to refer the behaviour of *The Sunday Times* to the Committee of Privileges. It does seem to me to be somewhat dubious, to say the least, that a journalist from a national newspaper should masquerade as a business man and tell a Member of Parliament a tissue of lies to manufacture a story.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Riddick: No, I am not going to give way.

Beyond the challenge to my own integrity, which I deeply regret, the thing that has mortified me the most is that my judgment may have undermined the general standing of Members of Parliament, and even perhaps have damaged the reputation of this Parliament. I regard it as an enormous honour and privilege to serve in the House of Commons and to be able to help my constituents as their Member of Parliament. I am sure that that is the view of most—if not all—hon. Members.

I apologise for the trouble that I have created for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, for whom I have so enjoyed working, and for my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister at the very time when he was fighting for Britain's interests in Naples. But most of all —*[Interruption.]*

Sir John Gorst: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. My hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) is virtually making an apology to the House. On such occasions, the House usually hears hon. Members in silence and toleration. I wonder whether you could encourage such conduct on this occasion.

Madam Speaker: When any hon. Member is speaking, irrespective of what he is saying, he should be heard with courtesy and in silence. I hope that that will be so throughout this debate.

Mr. Riddick: Most of all, for undermining—to whatever degree—the standing of the House, I wish to apologise to you, Madam Speaker and to every hon.

[Mr. Riddick]

Member. I look forward to giving evidence to the Select Committee on Privileges, in which I have complete faith and confidence.

6.1 pm

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): I want to make a short contribution on a narrow point but to take a little further the contribution by my hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) and that by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn).

To the best of my knowledge, the motion provides an opportunity, which the House should seize, for us to attend in detail for the first time in some 15 years to the immunities granted to Members of Parliament. They are immunities—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. I have just asked for order for one hon. Member, and other hon. Members are equally entitled to it. Will those who are having meetings do so outside the Chamber? May I have the doors closed? Will hon. Members either come in or leave? I do not want any more meetings in the Chamber. An hon. Member is on his feet and I want to hear him.

Mr. Rooker: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

This debate provides the House with an opportunity that should be grasped. Many hon. Members in the Chamber today—perhaps the majority—were probably elected after 1979, after some turbulent Sessions during which one hon. Member resigned and three were called to book, after the Select Committee that investigated the conduct of Members reported and after various other events in the late 1970s which, of course, brought into being the Register of Members' Interests.

In many ways, we have been here before. When we examined the immunity of Members of Parliament in the past, we were found wanting—we cannot fail this time. Although we have to ask the Privileges Committee to examine the immunities from the law of the land which are granted to Members of Parliament and which set us apart from our fellow citizens, it is not generally appreciated that our immunities go beyond free speech.

I often hear it said on the radio in the morning that Members of Parliament in Italy or Russia are voting to grant or remove immunity from prosecution for some malfeasance, and I think that at least that does not happen here. However, the fact is that we have certain immunities that go beyond that of free speech. Free speech is the crucial immunity; it is very narrow but sets us apart from our constituents. It is a specific immunity in respect of our duties in the House. It therefore elevates our duties in this House above everything else and separates us from our fellow citizens. That is where we should draw the line.

We hear about "the law of Parliament" or "the High Court of Parliament"—indeed, we heard such language in your statement yesterday, Madam Speaker—but I submit that there is no such thing. I think that we should all be equal before the common and criminal law. It is a matter that we, as a House, have been asked to deal with in the past but which the House has refused to address. I remind the House why that was so.

In respect of our parliamentary duties and our actions in Parliament, we, as Members of Parliament, have an immunity in the criminal law from charges of corruption, bribery and attempted bribery. Outside we are equal; inside we are not. I do not think that that should be the case. I want the Select Committee to widen its remit, as the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) has suggested.

We govern ourselves essentially by self-regulation, but we have to ask ourselves whether the Committee of Privileges and the Register of Members' Interests are good enough. Do our constituents believe that we all receive equal treatment? The Register of Members' Interests is of fairly recent origin—it did not exist when I was elected just over 20 years ago. To some extent, it has been strengthened, but is it good enough? It has already been called into question today. I wonder whether the ultimate sanction of an inquiry by the Committee of Privileges is sufficient but, fortunately, we do not have to reinvent the wheel.

I should like the Committee of Privileges to revisit the report of the Royal Commission on standards of conduct in public life, which has never been debated in the House. It was published in July 1976 after an inquiry that commenced in December 1974. It has never been the subject of debate. I asked my colleagues in the Labour Government and I have asked this Government by means of parliamentary questions in the early 1980s to allow the House to debate the report.

I do not deny that many of the report's recommendations, in so far as they affect our fellow citizens in business and local government, have been implemented over the years, but some of its recommendations relating to this place have not been dealt with. The report was published under the guidance of the commission's chairman, Lord Salmon, in July 1976, 18 years ago. It is Cmnd. 6524. Let us consider dates for a moment. The Register of Members' Interests was set up by resolution in June 1975; and the Royal Commission on standards of conduct in public life was sitting at that time and taking evidence from various people.

I draw the House's attention to the report's conclusions. Chapter 17 is entitled "The law affecting Members of Parliament" and runs to only 12 paragraphs. The conclusions and recommendations are worth putting on record. The final paragraph-311-states:

> "Membership of Parliament is a great honour and carries with it a special duty to maintain the highest standards of probity, and this duty has almost invariably been strictly observed. Nevertheless in view of our report as a whole, and especially in the light of the points set out in the foregoing paragraph, we recommend that Parliament should consider bringing corruption, bribery and attempted bribery of a Member of Parliament acting in his Parliamentary capacity within the ambit of the criminal law. Our recommendation is limited to this single point, and we do not raise any questions about other aspects of Parliamentary privilege and related matters."

That recommendation has never been debated by the House or by any Select Committee. Part of the background to that recommendation is the fact that the commission felt strongly that Parliament is not a public body for the purposes of the Public Bodies Corrupt Practices Act 1889; Members of Parliament are not agents for the purposes of the Prevention of Corruption Act 1906; and, in fact, membership of this House is not a public office for the purposes of the common law. Of course Ministers, in their capacity as Ministers, are public officials, so they are separate. But our status is unique. In this country we are immune; we are the prosecutors, the jury and the judge. That is wrong. Now the Privileges Committee has the opportunity to address that issue. I make no comment

whatever on the merits of the arguments. I know that some hon. Members have done so, but I think that they have been unwise, bearing in mind the fact that the Select Committee on Privileges is not yet constituted.

I finish by reminding the House that during my exchanges with the Government concerning the lack of serious attention to the report, I once asked the Home Secretary

"what proposal he has in mind to improve the standards of conduct in public life."

The answer that I received was:

"To set a good example to others."—[*Official Report*, 15 June 1979; Vol. 968, c. *343*.]

That was in the days when we had a gent as Home Secretary; he is now Lord Whitelaw. His answer was not a Willieism; it was actually true. We are here to set a good example to others.

The lack of attention that the House has given over the years to the royal commission report as it affects our vested interests means that we have failed in our duty to our constituents. I look upon the motion as an opportunity for us to make amends for our negligence in the 18 years since the report was published.

6.10 pm

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): I shall make two brief points. First, I had a telephone call last week; I believe that it was from a Mr. Calvert, but unfortunately I threw away the pink slip. I gave the name to my secretary and said, "I have never heard of this guy, and I have never heard of the company. Could you please ring him?" That was the end of it.

I do not want to comment on the position of my two hon. Friends. One of them has explained his position, and the matter will go to the Committee. However, one or two aspects involving *The Sunday Times* need examining. In connection with entrapment and other such ensnaring schemes, the press code mentions suspicion of a misdemeanour, and the general public interest. The only suspicion that the newspaper could have had of me derives from the fact that, like most of the other Tory Members who were contacted, I am a member of Lloyd's. So I do not think that *The Sunday Times* could claim that what it did was in the public interest.

The Committee must examine that matter, because that was the newspaper's only possible excuse for bribing Members of Parliament, for coming on the premises of the House with recording equipment and for encouraging Members of Parliament to table questions, knowing full well that those questions would cost the taxpayer money. Perhaps for a start *The Sunday Times* could reimburse the two Departments for the cost of answering them. I hope that the Committee investigates carefully the role of *The Sunday Times* in the saga.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) said that when one signs an early-day motion and has an interest in a company, trade association or whatever, one's interest must be marked as having been registered. I do not see why that cannot apply to questions, too.

In any case, I think that questions are a hugely overrated technique. Why should one want to table a question, unless one wanted information quickly? Surely if one wants information one can write to a Minister, ask for a meeting with a Minister or ring him up. Only in extreme cases would one want to table a question. I have not had the answers that I wanted to the questions that I have tabled during the past year. I have always found it far more helpful to write to a Minister. Perhaps one consequence of this unhappy saga will be that less taxpayers' money will be wasted in answering questions—apart, that is, from questions for oral answer.

The subject of Members' outside interests has been touched on, and the inquiry may consider that subject in some detail. I declare an interest as a paid director of a company, or a paid consultant to a trade association. I do not hide such connections. I am proud of the role that I play. However, if the Committee is to examine interests it must also consider Members who are sponsored by trade unions, and Opposition Members who are paid by airlines from other countries to visit them. If Members will be influenced by directorships, surely they will be equally influenced by unions sponsoring them in their constituencies and paying for their offices and other expenses. On that note, I feel that the matter should be committed, and that is why I support the motion.

6.14 pm

Mr. George Galloway (Glasgow, Hillhead): At least two thoughts occurred to me while I was listening to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) telling us about the banqueter who offered a five-figure sum as an inducement to the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel). First, I hoped that the right hon. Gentleman had reported the improper approach to the House authorities. Secondly, I wondered who got the job after he had turned it down.

I do not think that this has been an especially edifying parliamentary occasion. Conservative Members, for the most part, have not approached the debate with the seriousness and humility that I had imagined they would display. It has not been a pretty sight to watch them braying at the Murdoch newspaper empire—that was not a sound that we heard when on polling day *The Sun* ran pictures of the former Leader of the Opposition on its front page, headlined:

"Will the last person to leave Britain please turn out the lights?"

Nor did we hear it the next day, when *The Sun* trumpeted:

"It's *The Sun* wot won it".

It seemed then that the devil Murdoch could be supped with using the shortest of spoons. So it is not convincing when Conservative Members now claim that the Murdoch empire is engaged in a profoundly anti-Conservative crusade.

I have no animus against the two individuals involved in the story. Indeed, with one of them, the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick), I have a friendly relationship. I simply wish, as I suppose he now wishes, that he had not been quite so zealous in his unsubstantiated denunciations of the activities of Monklands district councillors in the very week when he was making what he now concedes were errors of judgment. Certainly if a Monklands district councillor had accepted £1,000 from anyone for doing anything in the council he would now be behind bars. That may be a lesson to Members of Parliament to avoid casually imputing dishonesty to others, especially people who cannot answer back.

I am no zealot about work outside Parliament. I do not agree with those of my hon. Friends who say that we should not have other jobs, nor with the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey, who says that we should hand the money back. I occasionally write for money, for

[Mr. George Galloway]

newspapers and magazines including occasionally, in years gone by, *The Sunday Times* under a previous editor. However, there is all the difference in the world between work of that nature, and registered consultancies with companies—again, I disagree with some of my hon. Friends here—and the acceptance of money for one-off parliamentary acts such as tabling a question.

Somebody asked me today what the moral difference was between a consultancy and a one-off question. I put it to him with what I hope is not too colourful a metaphor to use in the presence of ladies, including yourself, Madam Speaker. At least a consultancy is transparent, rather like a declaration of marriage between the company and the Member of Parliament. Everyone can see that the Member has that relationship, and knows that the marriage will involve the invoking of conjugal rights by one party or the other from time to time. But the act of tabling a question for a big one-off fee is more akin to a five-minute knee-trembler down by the railway line in exchange for a quick cheque. The difference between the two kinds of commerce is like the difference between such rampant commercial promiscuity and open transparent marriage.

It will not do for Conservative Members to think that the public regard whatever sin has been committed by *The Sunday Times* in the same light as whatever sin has been committed by Members of Parliament who have accepted money in that way. In fact, most members of the public will regard *The Sunday Times* as having carried out a signal public duty in exposing transactions that ought not to have taken place, as at least one hon. Member has had the grace to concede this evening. In exposing that, the newspaper has done a public duty.

I hope that what *The Sunday Times* has done is not used as an excuse for the introduction of new curbs against the press or new privacy laws, as has been attempted in the recent past in the House. Such legislation would build high walls and dig deep moats around the lives of Members of Parliament and powerful and rich people so that they might repel all would-be boarders who wanted to see what those rich, powerful and important people—people like us, business people and others—were actually doing.

The tossing around of the word "bribery" in respect of what *The Sunday Times* did is ill advised because bribery is a criminal offence and, as a criminal offence, requires criminal intent. My dear friend the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling), who is a barrister, has told me that the Latin phrase used is "mens rea", which I take to mean the question of the intention behind the money being offered. There cannot be criminal intent in offering money to expose malfeasance or to expose an abuse in public life; that cannot be true. It is simply a contradiction in terms. If the money was offered for the noble purpose of exposing a wrongdoing, it should not be condemned with the ignoble use of the word "bribery".

I wish the Committee godspeed. I hope that it goes about its work diligently, I hope that it does so publicly and I hope that it does so with the view of improving the standing of this House in the public eye, compared with the rather parlous state it is in, I fear, at the minute.

6.21 pm

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): Your statement yesterday, Madam Speaker, which was the catalyst for this evening's debate, will be remembered in the House as a wise adjudication and as a timely opportunity to examine the relationship between the media and this House. I have worked—I declare an interest—for *The Sunday Times*. I believe that *The Sunday Times* "Insight" team has had a long and honourable tradition of exposing corruption and treachery. When I worked for *The Sunday Times*, we were able to expose two hitherto unknown traitors and I believe that that was in the public interest. In the 1960s, the "Insight" team gained considerable admiration for its work in exposing the Whitehall cover-up of Kim Philby. Bruce Page and Philip Knightley were primarily responsible for the investigation and exposure of that episode.

I fear that since those days, investigative journalism has changed. I fear that since the days of Watergate, the journalistic school of Woodward and Bernstein has encouraged journalists to target people in public life. It has made it the acme of journalists' ambition to bring down somebody in public life. In the case of Woodward and Bernstein, it was, of course, the late Richard Nixon.

The reality is that, in this case, clandestine recordings have been made. Conversations have been taped illicitly in the Palace of Westminster. That raises important issues which, I hope, the Committee will investigate. If *The Sunday Times* can demonstrate a legitimate complaint from an authentic source—the Privileges Committee will need to take evidence on that topic—I well recognise the newspaper's right to pursue its investigations. Investigative journalism is not, however, a licence to invade privacy. According to the terms of the code of practice published by the Press Complaints Commission, clandestine methods, such as recording, are justifiable only when there is no other method of obtaining the information.

If there was widespread corruption or, indeed, any corruption in the House, and if there had been rumours, hon. Members on both sides would have heard those rumours. We now know that, since January, *The Sunday Times* has been on a quest to ferret out corruption. If the journalists were in pursuit of a single legitimate, authentic complaint, they could, of course, have targeted the person or persons who were the subject of the complaint. However, we now know that hon. Members who, in my judgment, are of considerable probity were approached and offered money. They are individuals whose previous reputation is completely untarnished, even by rumour. The journalists who undertook the investigation will have to answer some very severe questions. Was this, for example, the only way in which they could obtain the evidence? Was there any supporting evidence that justified their actions?

The fact is that the relationship between Members of Parliament and the media will now be investigated by the Committee and I welcome that. I recall making allegations in the House about Robert Maxwell. Soon afterwards, I was interviewed in the Lobby by a journalist in the pay of Robert Maxwell who manufactured a completely bogus story alleging that I had a pecuniary interest in making my remarks and complaints. In fact—

Mr. Galloway: The journalist is sitting in the Gallery.

Mr. Allason: Is he? Well, Alistair, I regret to say that you cost your newspaper a great deal of money.

What is more remarkable is that a few days after an apology had been made in the High Court, the same journalist went round many Opposition Members attempting to create an early-day motion that was critical of my conduct. I have many friends among Opposition Members and I was alerted to what was happening. Again, that matter became the subject of litigation.

The conduct of the press has now got completely out of control in this House. Although there is always the justification of public interest, I hope that the Committee will look carefully at the way in which journalists behave, not just in the Palace, but elsewhere.

Mr. John Butcher (Coventry, South-West): My hon. Friend will know that *The Sunday Times* has asserted that 20 names were chosen at random. The newspaper drew a blank on 16 of them. Does he agree that the Committee should brook no refusal by *The Sunday Times* to supply the names of all those approached so that we may know either the scale of the operation that was mounted or whether a truly random sample was put together?

Mr. Allason: My hon. Friend makes an important point. You will have noticed during the afternoon, Madam Speaker, that several hon. Members have declared that they were the subject of approaches from *The Sunday Times*. What is curious is that as far as am aware—I have sat through the debate from the beginning—no Opposition Member has declared that he was approached by *The Sunday Times*. It is important that *The Sunday Times* declares the matter fully to the Committee; there should be no excuses.

If the excuse is used that the newspaper has to protect its sources, I remind you, Madam Speaker, and the Committee that on the previous occasion that that defence was deployed—during the Vassall tribunal when two journalists went to prison for refusing to reveal their sources—the reason why the journalists went to prison was that they did not have any sources. They had made up the story and it was on that occasion that the two journalists were exposed and Fleet street itself was exposed for the most disgraceful hypocrisy.

I carry no brief to prevent journalists from investigating issues in the public interest. I have seen no evidence at all so far that anything that has taken place in the past few days, which has tarnished the reputation of hon. Members whom I count among my friends, has been in the public interest.

6.29 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): When we bring visitors around this place and they attempt to sit down on the green Benches, they are shouted at by the policemen. I have often wondered why that happened. I found out—I do not know whether the story is true—that it is not allowed on the ground that it could just be that someone sat in the place where their Member of Parliament sat and pushed a bribe down the back of the seat. I must say that, religiously, for the last 11 years I have looked down the back of my seat and I have never found any used fivers, indeed, not even a 50p piece. So bribery has affected and has interested the House over many years. Since I was elected, I notice that I have tabled 6,919 questions. If I had received £1,000 a throw for each of those, I would have netted a cool £7 million, which would have meant I could have faxed this speech from Mustique or some other exotic place.

Criticism of *The Sunday Times* is simply out of place. If not one hon. Member had accepted the £1,000, we would have had a strong case for referring *The Sunday Times* to the Committee of Privileges, if, indeed, we had ever found out about it, which somehow I doubt. However, two hon. Members did accept the bait and they have done themselves and the rest of the House a grave disservice. I listened carefully to the speech made by the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick). It was a difficult speech for him to make and we were right to listen to it very carefully. With respect, I would have had more sympathy with him if I had not heard him recently attacking members of the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers for trying to get a decent return for their services in operating the railway—£1,000 would have gone down very well there.

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): None of us, of course, is conducting a trial. We are trying to establish the ground rules for the Committee, which will look into the matter. Since the matter has implications for the whole House, because, as several hon. Members have pointed out, the perception of people outside is affected by it, may I ask my hon. Friend a fairly straight question? If *The Sunday Times* had asked 20 hon. Members to take money and no one had taken it, would the paper have run that as a major story?

Mr. Banks: My hon. Friend obviously missed the point, but I said that I doubted very much that we would have heard of the story. But the fact is that we have heard of it and, of course, we now have to deal with it. I do not think that we should turn it into a general attack on *The Sunday Times* or the press, although we can all feel disquiet about the way in which it went about getting its information. Regrettably, it did get some evidence and we must address that and not attack *The Sunday Times*.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) was right. There is a view among people outside that we are all in this place for ourselves. It is not true, we know that it is not true, but, unfortunately, incidents such as this do not help.

I am very worried about the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), which is the reason why I am making this speech. He began by suggesting that consultancies were, in many respects, no different from the one-off payment. That worries me because I have a number of consultancies and I must consider that. I act as a parliamentary adviser to three trade unions, for which I receive intermittent payments, which go to my constituency. I also receive money from the International Fund for Animal Welfare to pay a full-time worker because I do much work in that area. I table a lot of questions connected with animal welfare. They are not specifically requested and they are not paid for on a question-by-question basis. However, the sort of things that are being said place worries in my mind and make me feel that we should look carefully at the issue. I may add, I also act as the parliamentary adviser to the London Association of Beekeepers, for which I receive 12 pots of honey and I would pleased to give you one, Madam Speaker, if you were to need it.

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): Another sting.

Mr. Banks: That is a very sweet point.

At the end of last year, I gave a cheque to the Fees Office for £8,000: the excess of my office costs. Those consultancies paid for that, in effect. I am putting those points on the record because one needs to consider them as well.

It is quite clear that the Register of Members' Interests is deficient, which our good friend, our dear, departed colleague Bob Cryer was always saying. First, if we are to declare interests, we must declare how much we receive. Secondly, we must declare from whom that money comes and, thirdly, for what was that money given, what services were provided in exchange for that money. Interests must either be transparent so that everyone can see them, or we must stop them completely and say that Members of Parliament cannot serve any outside interest whatever for which they receive payments. That may be the way in which to go forward, but the Committee of Privileges must consider it.

Whatever emerges from this highly unfortunate matter, it is clear that we cannot continue in the way in which we currently operate. If we bring about a change which restores us in the eyes of those we serve, *The Sunday Times* should be thanked for doing us a great service.

6.35 pm

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): I was grateful to be given the chance to intervene during the speech of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) but my intervention did not quite come out in the way that I intended.

I agree that many people think that we should not have a continuous line of people ruling the country without letting ordinary people come in for one generation or for five years or 10 years. That was one of the reasons why on a previous occasion I argued with the right hon. Gentleman that there was good reason for having the House of Lords, so that some families who are continually represented in Parliament may have a seat without keeping the rest of us out.

The other point about which I feel strongly is that the greatest power over Members of Parliament, the way in which they vote and what they do is the Whips, the party system, which I expressed inelegantly in my intervention.

However, the right hon. Member for Chesterfield has said that, both in opposition and in government, hon. Members may find themselves losing an argument and then being asked in public to say things that they cannot say whole-heartedly, to put it gently, and merely do the best that they can. I suspect that there is far more of that behaviour than there is of hon. Members who may be bought or induced to do something for money.

I hope that the Committee, if it is the right one, will quickly say that, for tabled written and oral questions, there should be a distinguishing mark to indicate areas in which hon. Members have an interest in the same way that the first hon. Member listed on an early-day motion is marked. I do not understand why the first hon. Member only is marked as having an interest and not every other hon. Member who has signed it. There may be logistical problems, but I think that only the first name of the six is marked. I apologise if I have got that wrong, but I believe that I have described the situation accurately.

We ought to have a system which induces the best to happen and reduces the worst. There are fewer bought Members of Parliament now than there were in the 1930s. I am not saying that all those who were subsidised from outside in the 1930s were bad Members of Parliament. The House has good reason to be grateful to some who were supported, even by newspaper editors, during their times in the wilderness. I declare that I once received £200 from *The Sunday Times* for writing an article.

Mr. Tony Banks: He was overpaid.

Mr. Bottomley: I may have been overpaid. We also ought to avoid being too sanctimonious.

When I was in Government at a junior level for a time, someone asked me if I kept a diary. I said no. They said that, if I kept a diary, I would be able to earn more money, have more accurate and more interesting reflections and that the details which might be a blur six years later would be down in black and white, with who said what to whom. They said that that would make a good living afterwards or would help to illuminate the process of government. It is difficult to be clear about what is right and what is wrong, but having a discussion about it is a good idea.

I disagree with those who think that we ought to apply the same standards for the press and for Members of Parliament. Members of Parliament should set what we expect to be our minimum standards and the press in general should set what it expects to be its minimum standards. Our standards should be higher than those of the press.

There are parallels between the activities of a Back-Bench Member of Parliament and an editor of a newspaper. It is not the written rules which basically control what we say on the Floor of the House, but what people around us are willing to tolerate. It is fair to say that people around journalism are willing to tolerate more, on a consistent basis, that is wrong than we are in the House. There is as much ambition and competition to be the writer of a front-page story in *The Sunday Times* as there is to be elected to this House and to serve as a Member of Parliament. I am not saying that that ambition and competition always produces bad people. It does not. Indeed, it produces some of the very best. On the way, however, there are casualties. The way in which newspapers proceed and the habits that they adopt deserve examination, preferably by them.

I hope that the Committee of Privileges will be able to bring in special advisers on the press. I hope, for example, that it will consult someone like Professor Stephenson from City university, who runs a journalism course. I hope also that it will take advice from someone like Ray Snoddy of the *Financial Times*, who is one of the more respected of those who comment on the media. It would be appropriate to ask someone like that who could provide advice to the Committee of Privileges on the elements of the reference that relate to the conduct of the press.

I hope also that the Committee will produce separate reports on the parliamentary side and the press side. To bundle everything in one report would be wrong and would help to distract attention from initiatives that might properly be taken that would be useful, effective and proportionate.

As the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) said, it is to be hoped that the Committee will pay attention to the Salmon committee's recommendation,

which reflects, probably, the most pointed contribution that has been made to the debate. That could make a difference. It would allow whistle blowers throughout the country to say, "I have some knowledge of a payment. Was it declared by the person who made the payment?" That might lead to a self-checking system.

I have the feeling that the press makes a significant contribution to our country because most of us want to try to do things that the press will not be able to nail us for.

My personal test—I do not pretend to be especially good at all this—is that of the local newspaper. I ask myself whether I am doing something that I am prepared to read about in my local newspaper. If the answer is yes, I ask myself whether I have sent it a press notice. I know, of course, that it will ignore it.

Let us suppose that I am going to the middle east with the Israeli Government or the Palestine Liberation Organisation, or both, or to another area of the world. Am I willing to say it out loud? If I am, have I done it? That is guidance that I have found useful.

We should have the courage to say almost anything in public. If it is said on the Floor of the House, it can be virtually guaranteed that the press will ignore it. If it is taken up, however, it will come as no surprise and it will appear somewhere on the record.

My first parliamentary question was tabled two years before I was elected to this place. The late Sir Brandon Rhys Williams kindly agreed to table a question on family allowance for the first child. Many people want questions answered in Parliament for many different reasons. It is not a new concept and it is not a bad one. I hope that we shall not give those outside the idea that it is bad to contact a Member and ask for information or help.

Yesterday, at my surgery, I dealt with many different cases. I hope that constituents will never feel shy or embarrassed—the issues may involve business or personal matters, immigration, tax problems or criminal proceedings—in approaching their Member because any of us has been put off, as it were, from the job that we were elected to do.

I regret that which has caused the debate. I believe that the reference to the Committee of Privileges is the right response. The procedure is the best way of getting these issues off the Floor of the House after a short debate. There can be a better debate when we have received the considered views of those who have taken evidence.

There can be no secret sources in this story with the exception of the person who originally said to journalists, "I think that people are taking money that they should not be taking." I look forward to knowing that the Committee of Privileges has had all the tape recordings, all the journalists' notes and all the electronic records in the newspaper's files. On the one occasion that I had seriously to go to law with a newspaper it transpired that most of the things that some of the staff had been saying after I had first made my complaint were falsehoods.

We should follow the audit trail. I understand the problems that may ensue when stories change, but in this instance there should be no secret sources. All the information should be available to the Committee.

6.43 pm

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): I shall be specific and extremely brief.

I remain concerned that there may be a stitch-up by the Committee of Privileges over its report. I am concerned about the Committee's composition. I refer my hon. Friends to your ruling yesterday, Madam Speaker. You said:

"Of course all the rules of the House will be respected."—[*Official Report*, 12 July 1994; Vol. 246, c. 831.]

I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to the resolution in paragraph 24 of the first report of the Select Committee on Members' Interests in 1991, which I referred to yesterday, which deals with conflict of interest. I believe that the right hon. Gentleman, when replying to the debate, should give us an assurance that no Members who are consultants to any organisation will be a member of the Committee of Privileges to be appointed.

Furthermore, no Members should be appointed to it who are directors of companies which have lobbied, are lobbying or could in future lobby Ministers on behalf of those companies, or ask questions or table motions. I believe—[HON. MEMBERS: "And trade unions?"] Yes, trade unions as well.

We need specific assurances on these matters. If they are not forthcoming, the public will accuse the Committee of Privileges of stitching up a bad report.

6.44 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): I do not take the view that is taken by some outside this place, that the House of Commons is more or less corrupt and that every Member can be bribed to table questions or to act for commercial lobbyists. If a comparison were to be made with other Parliaments, I believe it likely that the House would be found to be relatively clean. It does no service to the cause of parliamentary democracy to give a different impression.

For a considerable time, however, as my right hon. and hon. Friends know, there has been anxiety about the way in which parliamentary facilities, such as questions, early-day motions and letters to Ministers, can be used for commercial purposes.

I remember the controversy before the Register of Members' Interests was introduced. It was argued that we were all honourable Members, and that there was no need for a register. Those who took that view said that the register would impugn our motives even in tabling a question. Now that Enoch Powell is no longer a Member, no one, as far as I am aware, disputes the need for a register. It is accepted.

I see little value in a register that does not give real information about the value of an outside interest. I have written to the Chairman of the Select Committee on Members' Interests—the hon. Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith)—on several occasions, and my point was pursued. My view is simple and clear. Why not give the value of the outside interest? Is it small or large? Why should we not be told? Why should the public not be given that information? Why should a Member feel that the interest is so secretive that in no circumstances should it be revealed?

We all know that there is little or no effective control over lobbyists and the manner in which they use the House.

[Mr. David Winnick]

There is a film—many of us want to see it—that sets out the way in which certain lobbyists go about their business. That is the sort of film that we should see.

I can remember the various occasions when our late colleague, Bob Cryer, raised these matters. He did so not to undermine or discredit Parliament but to ensure that we had a clean Parliament. He wanted to ensure that, where there were outside interests, lobbyists, and payments being made to Members, that information should be available and that everything should be above board. He took that view in the name of parliamentary democracy. In my view, he was right. Incidentally, we much miss him and the work that he undertook day after day in the House.

It is understandable that criticism has been made about *The Sunday Times*. As I said in an intervention in the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown), I think that on the whole *The Sunday Times* did a job that needed to be done. It is almost inevitable that in future, if we table a question and we have an interest, we shall be expected to declare that interest. That reform will almost certainly come about. The debate is taking place in the light of what *The Sunday Times* did.

I am always willing to criticise newspapers, but in trying to spotlight a weakness in our parliamentary procedure—outside interests and commercial interests—*The Sunday Times* did no harm. It will be for the Committee of Privileges to tell me that I am wrong. My view is that *The Sunday Times* acted in the public interest. If anything, it should be congratulated.

There is a cynical attitude outside this place. Perhaps some Conservative Members will disagree with me, but it is felt by some that we are all in politics for our own good, that more or less all of us can be bought, and all the rest of it. We must dispel that view. We must make the point clearly that we are not in it for our own interests. We must make it clear that Parliament and parliamentary democracy are of the greatest value to the British people and that all our civil liberties would not last five minutes without this place. That is the historical value of the House of Commons.

It is unfortunate that people have a cynical attitude to Parliament. It is essential that we dispel that attitude, not only in our interests as individual Members, but in the interests of parliamentary democracy and our successors in the years, and hopefully centuries, during which this place will continue. It is essential that we do that in the interests of what we are trying to establish and maintain.

There is, perhaps linked to the cynical view, a great deal of concern over what has occurred and what the two hon. Members are accused of. After our debate today, the matter will go to a Committee and it could then be more or less buried. The summer recess is coming up and, by the time the Committee meets, other matters will be on the agenda and public and parliamentary interest in this matter might have faded away.

I hope that we will have a report by the end of the year. These are matters of crucial importance. However much hon. Members may have criticised *The Sunday Times*, I do not believe any hon. Member has disputed the fact that these matters are important. If the matters are important and if they are to go to the Privileges Committee, we should have a report as quickly as possible. I hope that the Leader of the House will bear that point in mind because that view is shared by many hon. Members. Obviously the report will be debated and it may be disputed. However, we should not leave it in abeyance for a year or so. The sooner we have that report, the better for this House and for our reputation.

6.51 pm

Mr. Michael Connarty (Falkirk, East): May I first apologise fervently to you, Madam Speaker, for attempting on 11 July to raise a point of order which you ruled out of order because I was trying to suggest that more issues should be considered than just the behaviour of individual Members? I should, of course, have realised that you would have considered the issue more widely and the statement that you made yesterday showed that.

Madam Speaker: Order. Points of order are concerned with our Standing Orders or breaches of procedure. I caution Members not to raise points of order just because they want to make a point or a comment, which is what so often happens.

Mr. Connarty: I thought that I was in order then, but you ruled me out of order because you knew better than I did.

The point that I was trying to make is very salient to today's debate. I wish to suggest, like many other hon. Members, that the remit of the Privileges Committee should be to look seriously at the inadequacies of the register that we hold at this moment. I tried to make the point that the value of the interest is important.

Sadly, I disagree with my good friend and someone I have admired for some time, my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), who suggested, rather weakly, that value should not be included in the register. That undermined the very splendid case that he made. I also disagree with the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway). He is another good friend of mine and someone I admire. He said that a consultancy was in some way different from taking an individual payment for a particular issue. He said that it was all about a marriage.

I suggest that all hon. Members are already married. To take a consultancy is an infidelity, because we are married to our constituents and to the people we represent. It is actually a bit on the side, when one is so good that one is paid for the service one renders. That is totally inappropriate to this House.

Anything that anyone does in this House which is directly related to influencing the business of the Houses of Parliament or clearly designed by action or inaction to do that should be done only because of someone's beliefs or judgment and not because there is any question of influence by the taking of money for anything that connects us to a party outside which can profit from our actions in this House. We are here to represent our constituents and their interests in a broader frame.

I have stated in the House, and have put it on the record, that I receive money, or my constituency party receives money, from the Union of Communication Workers. It is entirely consistent with the wishes of my constituency party that I defend the Post Office and post office workers. If there were ever a difference, I would suggest to my constituency party that it should let that money go by, so that I could represent my constituents properly and honestly.

I attempted to raise the question of the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie), who asked a question about power in Scottish Question Time on 6 July. That hon. Member is a consultant to Scottish Power. He admits that he has a car from Scottish Power. He has not, in fact, declared how much he has in the register. It was interesting that my hon. Friend the Member for Hillhead, whose entry is next to that of the hon. Member for Ayr, has entered the fact that he is an unpaid political consultant for an organisation.

Mr. Bill Walker: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Is it not the convention of the House that, if an hon. Member is going to make points about another hon. Member, courtesy requires that that hon. Member should be notified about that in advance?

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is quite right. I had assumed that, in this debate, Members would be very circumspect, and that that is what happened. Has the hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Connarty) notified the hon. Member concerned?

Mr. Connarty: The hon. Gentleman has, in fact, been informed. We have discussed the matter at some length. He is aware of the points that I am trying to make and continue to make.

Madam Speaker: Order. May I make myself clear? Has the hon. Member for Falkirk, East informed the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie), not simply had a conversation with him at some time?

Mr. Connarty: I formally informed the hon. Gentleman of this, yes.

As a result of what I have described, articles appeared in the *Daily Record*. In my opinion, and in the opinion of other hon. Members who have spoken, someone who receives a consultancy fee should enter it so that people know the value that is placed on the services.

The question that occurred to me was, what is a consultancy for? The hon. Member for Ayr has said that he has not asked any questions on behalf of Scottish Power in the time that he has been a member of this place and has been a consultant. It appears to me that, if a company is willing to pay a large sum of money, as yet unspecified as it is not declared in the Register of Members' Interests, and someone does nothing on that company's behalf for two years, that company is getting a very bad deal.

No one in the public domain outside this House believes for a minute that, if someone takes a consultancy fee, something is not being done for it to advantage those who pay the fee.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Connarty: In a moment.

As an hon. Member who pays Scottish Power for his electricity, I am concerned that it is paying a sum of money to an hon. Member to do nothing for the company or for me as one of its customers. That does not make sense. It does not stack up.

Mr. Foulkes: Does my hon. Friend accept that it is always possible to pay someone to keep quiet? The fact that Scottish Power is planning to build a huge interconnector through my constituency, about which the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) has kept completely quiet despite the fact that many of his constituents are up in arms about it, may have some connection with that.

Mr. Connarty: The point has been well made, and I do not need to repeat it. It seems to me that silence can be bought as much as speech. That is a matter of judgment for the electors in the constituency of Ayr.

Mr. Nicholls: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Connarty: I have no intention of giving way further in this very brief contribution to the debate.

My point is that there is a question about immunity and privilege in the House in respect of what people can say in the House about members of the public outside, who may be entirely and utterly innocent. When I took up a case in the medical field, I was threatened on occasions by an organisation called the Medical Protection Association. It said that it would take litigation against me. I squared it with the association by telling it that, if it thought that I would be silenced by that threat, it was not on. We have that privilege to protect us in speaking on behalf of our constituents.

When that privilege is abused, and when someone consistently gets up and accuses, on the record, council officials, councillors, or a council of being corrupt and of using dubious practices, such people sully the names of many hard-working officials in local authorities up and down the country. That happened in respect of the hon. Members for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) and for Dover (Mr. Shaw) in respect of Monklands. They did that continually and without justification. I sat in this place at 2 am to defend those officials, whom I know to be honest, upright citizens. The Privileges Committee should consider how we can curtail that kind of thing.

I repeat the words of Lord Whitelaw, which were quoted earlier. The point of this House is to set a good example. It should be part of the Committee's remit to see how we can better set a good example. My father used to say: "Civility costs nothing, and honesty earns admiration." That should be the aim of the Privileges Committee.

6.59 pm

Mr. Nicholas Brown: In moving my motion, I sought to do two things: to refer to the Privileges Committee the allegations contained in *The Sunday Times* article, and the circumstances in which they were made, and separately, to refer to the Privileges Committee the wider questions of the public duties and private interests of Members of Parliament. All hon. Members who have spoken in the debate have emphasised different aspects, but no one has spoken against the motion. Therefore, I assume that the motion commands a consensus in the House, and I hope that it will be agreed without a Division.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the matter of the complaint, together with the issues referred to in the statement by the Speaker on 12th July, be referred to the Committee of Privileges.

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. My understanding is that my name was raised in the Chamber a short time ago, and the individual who raised it suggested that I had been informed that that was his intention. That is not the case; I have had no

[Mr. Phil Gallie]

information about it. I accept that, last Monday, I was informed belatedly that my name was to be raised, but today I have received no such notification.

I understand that the comments made on Monday referred to the question that I asked at Scottish Question Time about nuclear generation. I want to make it quite clear that nuclear generation has nothing to do with Scottish Power—with which, I openly acknowledge, I have an association.

Madam Speaker: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has made that quite clear. I went out of my way only a few moments ago to ask twice very clearly whether the hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Connarty) had informed the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) that he was to refer to him in this debate. I accepted the word of the hon. Member for Falkirk, East, as an honourable Member of the House, that he had informed the hon. Member for Ayr beforehand. I seem to have been mistaken in that—perhaps I might now have an explanation.

Mr. Connarty: If you, Madam Speaker, did say, "in this debate" I apologise. I do not recall you saying that. I did, quite timeously, inform the hon. Gentleman, and phoned his office on Monday. I said that I would be raising the issue of his connection with the consultancy, and that—

Madam Speaker: Order. Let me make it quite clear: I twice during this debate referred to the matter. I deprecate the answer that the hon. Gentleman has given me. We shall now move on with our business.

Orders of the Day

European Union (Accessions) Bill

Considered in Committee.

[MR. MICHAEL MORRIS *in the Chair*]

Clause 1

EXTENDED MEANING OF "THE TREATIES" AND "THE COMMUNITY TREATIES"

Question proposed, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

7.2 pm

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Clause 1 is important. It provides an opportunity for several countries to join the European Community. If we do not approve the clause, that opportunity will not arise. I wish to make three points that I hope the Committee will consider in relation to clause 1 only.

First, I hope that the Committee will bear it in mind that the countries of the European Economic Area have had one of the most shameful and scandalous tricks played on them about the EEA. They were approached in 1989 by Mr. Jacques Delors about the idea of an EEA, which was presented as an attractive half-way house that would give its members the advantages of the single European market without giving away their sovereignty and neutrality.

Now that we know the details of the EEA, it is abundantly clear that all those countries have to accept about 60 per cent. of every EC law, whether or not they are a member. I hope that we shall bear it in mind when considering the clause that when we offer those countries an opportunity, it is not nearly as significant as some people think. It is not a choice between liberty and abandoning liberty, but a political decision. The countries have to obey the majority of EC laws, but they play no part in their drafting.

Secondly, while Ministers gave us assurances in the earlier stages of the discussions when we were considering the merits of the Bill, I hope that our friends in Norway and Sweden will bear it in mind that all the assurances given to other applicants many years ago have been shown to be virtually bogus. That still happens. Hon. Members will remember that when Britain was joining the EC, we were told that it would lead to a dramatic improvement in trade with the EC. We always had a positive trade with Europe before we joined, but we now have a cumulative deficit of £100,000 million, which has done grave damage to our economy. We were also told that membership would provide a great boost to jobs. The continent is awash with unemployment and the EC faces a more serious economic problem than most other parts of the world where there are no wars.

Thirdly, I hope that Norway will consider the assurances that we have given to our fishermen. I represented a Scottish constituency at the time and was astonished at the extent to which fishermen in Scotland and England voted for the EC because they were in no doubt that a clear assurance had been given that all would be well with the fishing industry. We have seen for ourselves that

the value of the catch of North sea fish achieved by the British fishing industry has declined by more than three quarters since we joined.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I have been listening carefully to the hon. Gentleman, especially to what he has to say about the fishing industry which, as he knows, is close to my heart. When the Foreign Secretary presented the Bill on Second Reading, he said that the accession of Norway would provide British fishermen with great opportunities from 1997 onwards. Is the hon. Gentleman a little sceptical about that promise?

Sir Teddy Taylor: Frankly, I do not believe one word of what was said. That is not because I regard Ministers as disreputable or as a bunch of liars, but because pledges are made to please everyone. I would ask the Norwegians to look at the declarations, which apparently guarantee everything. I hope that Norwegians will realise that the declarations are of no value; they have no legal binding and contain nothing one could refer to in a court. They are simply statements of intent with no validity. The Norwegians should not worry about the British, but think about the Spaniards, the assurances that they have already been given, and the promises and pledges that they have already made to their fishermen.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Is not one of the problems with the declarations that we do not know their status? It is part of the difficulty in understanding the way in which the European Court of Justice works. It is not a court of justice in the sense that our House of Lords is. It is a quasi-political body that constantly takes into account political gestures such as a declaration or the general mood of the Community at any one time.

Sir Teddy Taylor: My hon. Friend, who is wiser than me and knows far more about such matters, will know that declarations have no validity. They are shoved in to pacify and please people and give them assurances, but they are worth nothing. My hon. Friend knows that well, which is why, with his usual professionalism, he interrupted me to allow me to underline that point. The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office is one of the honest Ministers—

Mr. Budgen: He was.

Sir Teddy Taylor: He certainly is. I think that the Minister is a decent chap. He is someone whom I have always regarded as truthful and honourable, and he would not intentionally tell a lie.

I hope that hon. Members will appreciate that we are being misled day after day. Only yesterday I had word —this will shock hon. Members—that a massive new job involving a Government office that was being carried out in Southend had been put off because there was a panic about spending. It coincided with the publication of a statement by the Paymaster General that, to our astonishment and horror, and despite all the assurances given by Ministers, in 1995 our gross contribution would increase by £2,000 million. That is £3 per week per British family. That came out of the blue. It was not expected.

We also found out from a paper produced by the Commission last week that, even though Ministers had been telling us that agricultural spending would fall as a result of all these wonderful reforms, agricultural spending would exceed the legal limit agreed in Edinburgh by more than £1,000 million.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): My hon. Friend said that the budget and our contribution to it will increase by a massive amount. I do not think that anyone anticipated that that would happen. Certainly, at the Edinburgh summit when the financial conditions were agreed, there was no indication that our budget would soar to those heights. Does my hon. Friend agree that the House would be well advised to throw out the financial mechanisms agreed at the Edinburgh summit to increase our contribution, if they come to the House?

Sir Teddy Taylor: As my hon. Friend knows, the House has no power. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will appreciate—I say this sincerely—that under the clause, in which we give the people of Norway and Sweden the opportunity to join the Community, what he is being told is basically utter nonsense.

If one asks Ministers about the legal limits, they say, "It was agreed in Edinburgh. The legal limits will be adhered to. Nothing can stop it." Here is how they intend to do it. I have the papers here from the EC. I also have something from the Treasury, although it is not meant to be generally available. The Government will have to draw on the monetary reserves. Remember what happened the last time we had strict budget controls under our wonderful previous Prime Minister. The Government used the metric year, with which financial journalists, financiers and rich people are familiar. One had 10 months of spending and 12 months of income. That is how they kept to the legal limit then. Now they will keep it by drawing on monetary reserves. They will keep the limits agreed at Edinburgh by doing a fiddle and a fraud.

I hope that hon. Members will appreciate when they pass the clause, first, that there is the clearest of evidence that the poor unfortunate people of Norway and Sweden will pay more per head in net contributions than people in the United Kingdom. I feel thoroughly ashamed, as I am sure that all hon. Members do, that the poor families in Southend-on-Sea have to pay—according to our Foreign Secretary—£28 a week extra in taxes and higher food prices simply because of the repulsive CAP. Next year they will have to pay £5 a week for their net contribution. That is £33 a week which the poor families of Southend and England, Scotland and Wales will pay unnecessarily.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): I am sure that the hon. Gentleman has heard Front-Bench Members argue strongly that to widen rather than deepen the Community would make the United Kingdom's financial position easier. Surely now, even with the widening, we shall have to pay even more than we pay today.

Sir Teddy Taylor: My hon. Friend is so right. I know that people in Northern Ireland are suffering from poverty. I hope that the Labour party will highlight the position. I know that it fights for poor and neglected people. Are Labour Members aware, unlike some of the former silly twits in our Foreign Office, that poor families will pay £33 a week that they do not need to pay?

I hope that in passing the clause we appreciate that we are telling the people of Norway and Sweden not to be misled by the assurances. Happily, we are well aware that the people of Sweden and Norway are great people. The

[Sir Teddy Taylor]

opinion polls show that 52 per cent. of the people of Norway want nothing to do with the EC. Only 28 per cent. are in favour. We know that the good people of Sweden are of the same democratic mind: 43 per cent. oppose it and only 31 per cent. are in favour. I hope that they will appreciate that they should not believe a word of what they are told about the future.

The Foreign Office is inherently optimistic. Ministers say, "Do not worry. It will be all right. Things will get better. The CAP will be reformed. Expenditure will be controlled. Budget limits will be imposed." People should not bother about that stuff. They should think about all the assurances that have been given about trade and jobs. They should appreciate that western Europe is awash with unemployment, that the position is appalling and that borrowing is getting out of control.

I hope that by passing the clause we shall tell the good people of Norway and Sweden that if they say yes they will do great damage to their country and to the poor people of their country, who have suffered appallingly, particularly from filthy EC taxes such as VAT, which are simply a tax on the poor. More importantly, they will take themselves into an economy that is protectionist, bad, awash with unemployment and in great misery.

I hope that we shall give a simple message to the people of Norway and Sweden: do not be conned, do not be fooled and remember that democracy should matter to every one of us.

7.15 pm

Mr. Marlow: A subject which, rightly, has exercised the House deeply when we have considered enlargement of the Community, is qualified majority voting—for the very good reason that it affects the powers of the House. No one would argue, whether he is in favour of extending qualified majority voting or takes the opposite view, that qualified majority voting is not an important issue for the House. When something is decided by qualified majority voting, our Government and, therefore, the House of Commons can be cut out. Therefore, the higher the threshold and the smaller the blocking minority, the greater the remaining powers that we have.

I hope that the House will excuse a certain amount of simple mathematics. The treaty states that if all four countries join the Community, we shall require a blocking minority of 27. That is 27 votes out of 90—precisely 30 per cent. Let us go through a few what ifs. We know that Finland will join. It wants Europe to protect it from a resurgence of the Soviet Union and wants to be part of the European Union. One can understand why. But what if Norway votes no? It has three votes. Let us say that it decided to reduce the blocking minority by one. Then a blocking minority of 26 out of 87 votes would be required. That is a blocking minority of less than 30 per cent. So the powers of Her Majesty's Government and the House would be sustained and reinforced, albeit marginally.

Let us suppose that Sweden alone decides not to join. It has four votes. Let us suppose that the blocking minority is reduced by about one. We should then require a blocking minority of 26 out of 86 votes. That is greater than 30 per cent. If Norway and Sweden dropped out together and two votes were taken off the blocking minority, the effect would be the same.

The second and third options would make it more difficult for Her Majesty's Government to block. Therefore, it would reduce the powers of the House. That is for general, run-of-the-mill qualified majority voting. On some issues such as a proposal that does not come from the Commission, a decision is not dependent only on qualified majority voting. A threshold of member states has to agree. Put another way, a threshold of member states has to disagree.

At present, if five out of 12 do not want it, it does not happen. Under the proposals, if all four countries join, if six out of 16 do not want, we also have a block. Suppose that Norway and Sweden do not join. Will five out of 14 or six out of 14 be able to block? It makes a lot of difference.

We raised the question of qualified majority voting on Monday. My hon. Friend the Minister was helpful and referred us for guidance to article 2.2. So what happens if there is an unfortunate hitch, things do not go as the Euro-elite—the witch doctors of Brussels—would wish and some of these good countries decide in their wisdom that they do not want to join the EC? I am pleased to be able to tell the House that it is very straightforward. All one has to do is look at article 2.2, which states:

"The Council of the European Union acting unanimously shall decide immediately upon such adjustments as have become indispensable".

That is one for the lawyers, isn't it? Who decides whether something is indispensable? Does it have to be a unanimous decision that a change is indispensable? If there is no unanimity, there can be no immediacy.

Let us suppose that Norway and Sweden do not join. At the moment, a blocking minority of 27 is required. If the Council is not unanimous, and my hon. Friend on the Council says that he does not agree immediately—and it has to be immediately—with the views of everybody else, what happens? The treaty says that 64 votes will be needed for a qualified majority vote. If the Government do not agree, and if some of the countries concerned do not join the Community, the powers of Britain and of the House are increased.

If one looks at the text of the treaty and the words unanimously, immediately and indispensable, one sees that the Government could actually strengthen our protection with regard to qualified majority voting if one or more of the four applicant countries does not join the Community. It is important that the House should know today—before we agree to the clause—what action the Government will take and what the Government's interpretation will be of those facts.

The treaty is a legal text, and I am sure that the Government totally understand its implications. I am sure that the Government and my hon. Friend the Minister understand how important the matter is with regard to the powers of Government and of the House. I am sure that he will be able to tell the House clearly and unambiguously what the Government will do in the circumstances that I have set out, and what the Government believe to be the meaning of that text within the treaty.

Mr. Michael Bates (Langbaurgh): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. I seek your clarification on a matter of guidance given to Members on page 119 of "Erskine May". My point of order relates to the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), to whom I have given notice of my intention to raise the matter. I had hoped that the right hon. Gentleman would be in his place to respond,

given that this is the Committee following the Second Reading of the Bill. The comments to which I shall refer were made on Second Reading. The right hon. Gentleman said:

"How dare the Foreign Secretary conclude that hon. Members have such short memories and that the people of this country forget so quickly the promises and commitments solemnly given in the House of Commons and in European summits about their approach to the European Union. In a desperate attempt to cling on to votes at any price, the Foreign Secretary abandoned all his long-held principles on Europe, whereas I never have."—[*Official Report*, 11 July 1994; Vol. 246, c. 700.]

I seek your guidance on how that statement relates to page 119 of "Erskine May". Earlier in the debate, the right hon. Gentleman said that he had voted yes in the 1975 referendum, although he did not refer to the fact that he—

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman may continue in a second. I hope that he will relate this to clause 1 stand part, because that is the issue before us. If he does not, he will have to find a different occasion on which to raise the matter.

Mr. Bates: May I seek your guidance—

The Chairman: Order. I have given guidance, which I hope will be taken.

Mr. Bates: It will be taken, Mr. Morris. When will I have an opportunity to raise the matter, because my point of order relates to the Second Reading of the European Communities (Accessions) Bill?

The Chairman: The hon. Gentleman might like to see me later, and I shall be very happy to give any assistance that I can. But as of this moment, I am solely concerned with clause 1 stand part. The hon. Gentleman's point of order clearly does not relate to that.

Mr. Mike Gapes (Ilford, South): This debate is important for the four applicant countries. If the four countries are successful—as I hope they will be—in joining the European Union, the Union will be enlarged in an interesting way. Three of those countries are neutral, and the fourth is a member of NATO.

Under the treaty of European Union, the Western European Union will become an increasingly important part of the European Union. Article J.4, paragraph 2, of the treaty states:

"The Union requests the Western European Union, which is an integral part of the development of the Union, to elaborate and implement decisions and actions of the Union which have defence implications. The Council shall, in agreement with institutions of the WEU, adopt the necessary practical arrangements."

It is clear that the "necessary practical arrangements" referred to will have big implications for the European Union. There may be new members coming into the European Union to add to the existing members which are not members of WEU—at present, the Irish Republic, which is neutral, Denmark, which has so far made it clear that it does not wish to be a member of WEU, and Greece, which is in the process of joining.

As the European Union enlarges; as we approach the intergovernmental conference in 1996; as the reflection committee is established in 1995 to prepare for that conference—and given that it is clear that the future of Europe's defence and security will be an integral part of the discussions in the IGC and in the preparatory meetings for it—we will be in a complex position. There may be members coming into the Union and taking part in the preparatory process of that IGC which have not so far been either in NATO or in the WEU. What will be the implications of that for the future of European defence and security?

We must look at what the Maastricht treaty says and at the direction in which things may be moving over the next few years. I am very concerned that not enough attention is given in this country to the defence and security aspects of the European Union. In the past, all of us have taken NATO for granted. The foolish decisions taken by the United States Congress about the situation in Bosnia and the lifting of the arms embargo have meant that there is a growing tension in the relationship between the two sides of the Atlantic. Fortunately, we have seen more positive and Atlanticist approaches coming from France in recent months. In February this year, the French Government adopted a new defence White Paper which made the most positive statements ever made by France about NATO and the transatlantic relationship.

President Clinton recently addressed the French National Assembly. It may have been coincidence that his visit to Europe took place when our Parliament was not sitting; in any event, he did not come and speak to us. We know that he has been in Germany in the past few days, talking about the special relationship between the United States and Germany—[Hon. Members: "Unique."] It is unique, but it is also important to recognise that our historic relationship with the United States cannot be taken for granted.

Because of the attempts by the Conservative party to interfere in the last American presidential election, the relationship faces some difficulties that need to be dealt with. I hope that we will use all available channels to try to build up that relationship again.

The French Government's White Paper makes it clear that they want a continuing American presence in Europe. When President Clinton spoke to the French National Assembly, he said that the United States would remain committed to a defence policy involving keeping American troops in Europe. It is quite probable, however, that the American Congress will not go along with the President's commitment to keeping 100,000 troops on European soil indefinitely. Budgetary pressures and pork barrel politics are likely to mean that the Americans are more in favour of closing bases in Europe than they are of closing bases in the United States.

We must be careful about our approach to European defence and security; we do not want to send the wrong signals across the Atlantic to the American public and legislatures. The French White Paper was welcome in that respect, but we must go further. As the European Union grows bigger and as the Visegrad countries join in the next wave of enlargement after the Nordic countries and Austria, I hope that Europeans collectively will begin to do far more about our defence and security. If we do not, we may find a dangerous vacuum that we might rely on the Americans to fill—but the American commitment to fill it may not be as great as we might suppose.

7.30 pm

Mr. Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford): The hon. Gentleman has said that Britain should not take the special relationship with America for granted; and that the French seem to have made a pitch at improving that relationship;

[Mr. Iain Duncan Smith]

and that the Germans have too, if I extrapolate correctly. He strongly suggests building up that relationship—but then goes on to say that we must have a separate European defence strategy. The two ideas do not exactly go hand in hand.

Mr. Gapes: I did not use the word "separate". I am not in favour of separating west European NATO countries or WEU countries from the relationship with the United States. If the hon. Gentleman will allow me to develop my argument—

The Chairman: Order. I am rather hoping that the hon. Gentleman will develop his argument about the four countries joining, instead of sticking to his brief, which covers transatlantic matters.

Mr. Gapes: I will indeed, Mr. Morris. Sweden, Austria, Finland and Norway already make a significant contribution to the United Nations defence effort. We must try to persuade them to come closer to WEU and hence to NATO's collective security role in Europe and the world. If the United Nations Security Council asks NATO for help in some regional conflict, or if NATO asks WEU for such help, or if the two work side by side, a difficulty may arise. Member states of the European Union that are not in NATO or WEU may also want to contribute to such security efforts, but they are not institutionally integrated with the other Western European Union countries—Britain, France and, following the Karlsruhe judgment, Germany.

There may be a way around this problem. NATO has developed a concept of joint task forces that might provide a practical solution. It will be far easier, however, if, having joined the European Union, the applicant countries at the time of the IGC in 1996 consider their relationship with European defence and security structures.

After all, the IGC will have to consider the future of the Western European Union. Its treaty, based on the 1948 treaty of Brussels, has a 50-year life. The issue will therefore be central to the debate in 1996 and beyond.

I believe that the Government should be doing far more to educate the public and Conservative Back Benchers about the importance of this issue. It is not enough to see the European Union as being merely about free markets or deregulation. We have to discuss the political and security aspects of Europe, including its defence policy and its defence relationships both with the United States and within the United Nations. It is high time we began a public debate about that.

Some ambiguities remain. The Maastricht treaty seems to face both ways. Article J.4, paragraph 1, states:

"The common foreign and security policy shall include all questions related to the security of the Union, including the eventual framing of a common defence policy, which might in time lead to a common defence."

Paragraph 4 of the same article, however, qualifies that statement:

"The policy of the Union in accordance with this Article shall not prejudice the specific character of the security and defence policy of certain Member States and shall respect the obligations of certain Member States under the North Atlantic Treaty and be compatible with the common security and defence policy established within that framework."

The reasons for the differing paragraphs are clear. During preparations for the Maastricht treaty, in 1990-91, there was a great deal of tension among the British, the Dutch and, later, the Italian Governments, which had a more Atlanticist approach and, on the other side, the Franco-Belgian approach which favoured building a separate west European defence identity. The choice was fudged, and the ambiguity remains.

The fact is that WEU does not have an integrated military command structure or control over armed forces. It is still a shadow organisation which lacks the defence structures that NATO possesses. Still, the French Government, and some other Governments, have long pursued the ambition of a European defence policy without the United States.

The Chairman: Order. This is an absolutely fascinating lecture, but the hon. Gentleman really must relate it to the four applicant countries, which he has not mentioned in the past five minutes. I shall have to be very firm with the hon. Gentleman. He must relate his speech specifically to accession of the four applicant countries.

Mr. Gapes: When Sweden, for example, joins the European Union, how will it relate to the defence debate? Will the Swedes, who have been neutral since 1812, be prepared to engage in a debate about the future of European defence and security? Will they take the attitude that they would rather not discuss the issue, or—as I suspect—will they decide, even though they are not members of WEU or NATO, that it is extremely important? Given the ending of the cold war, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the fact that the Swedes need to have security in the Baltic and a close relationship with their neighbours, particularly the Norwegians, will they decide to take a role in that discussion? We should be doing all that we can to encourage Sweden, and likewise Finland, to become involved in that debate and, in doing that, influence Denmark towards joining the Western European Union.

The position of Norway is more difficult. As was said on Second Reading and earlier today, it is not clear whether Norway will vote for membership of the European Union. I very much hope that it will, but I understand from my friends in the north of Norway that the problem of the rural and fishing communities is very serious. Oslo may vote in favour, but outside Oslo people may vote against. There is serious danger of a repeat of what happened in 1972. That would be a serious setback, not just to the future of European co-operation, but to European defence and security.

If Norway stays out of the European Union and, therefore, stays out of the emerging, growing western European defence structures of the WEU, it will be more difficult to get Sweden and Denmark to play a more positive role. I very much hope that the Norwegian people will see the sense and logic of that future position, but I fear that they may not, in which case the architecture of European defence and security will become even more complicated than it could be if the four countries join the WEU.

I should like to say something about Austria and its neutrality.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Before the hon. Gentleman moves on to Austria, has he the slightest evidence of any sort from anywhere for his ridiculous statement that Oslo is likely to vote yes? Does he agree that there is not the slightest sign of that from any opinion poll? Why did he say that and where is the proof?

Mr. Gapes: I have no more evidence than the hon. Gentleman does about what will happen in future, but it is clear that the urban populations have been more positive about European integration, as have the young and educated populations, and that people living in rural areas—

Sir Teddy Taylor: That is not proof.

Mr. Gapes: If the hon. Gentleman will allow me, I will answer his point.

People in rural and fishing communities have justifiable fears about the impact of Spanish trawlers and fishing quotas, but the people in urban areas are dependent upon manufacturing industry and international trade. They know that the future of Norway as a wealthy west European country depends on access to markets and trade and co-operation with its Nordic neighbours. That is something from which Norway outside the European Union would not benefit indefinitely. For those reasons I believe that the urban populations, particularly in Oslo, are more positive than those in rural areas, but it is impossible to say whether or not that would represent a majority. I hope that it will.

Dr. Godman: On the basis of my experience of Norway and Norwegian communities, which extends over many years, I am not so sure that there is such a gap and distance between the urban and rural communities. May I also point out that many people in Oslo and its conurbation have strong family links with Bodo, Vardö, Hammerfest and other northern communities?

Mr. Gapes: People who live in Tromso, Kirkenes, Narvik or the Lofoten islands will undoubtedly be worried about the impact of membership, just as the people who live in northern areas such as Lulea and Norrbotten in Sweden and the Nordkallotten in the Arctic circle will feel more peripheral to the European Union. They may well be more negative than those living in Stockholm, Malmo or other places in the south of the country. Nevertheless, I stand by my point and will now move on to talk about Austria.

7.45 pm

Austrian neutrality has to be considered differently from that of Finland or Sweden. After all, Austria was neutral because, after the second world war, the Russian troops withdrew voluntarily from Austria and a deal was struck whereby Austria became a neutral country when the Russians withdrew. Austria considers itself part of the main western European economic system, but it also sees itself as a bridge to Hungary and other central and eastern European countries.

I believe strongly that Austria will have fewer difficulties in terms of integration with the Western European Union and the European defence and security structure than Sweden and Finland, but we also have to be sensitive to the fact that Austria borders on Yugoslavia. The political and economic problems in that relationship will be negligible compared with those of dealing with the continuing war and conflict on those borders.

No doubt this is outside the terms of the debate and I shall not pursue the point, but it is imperative that the European Union does far more to get the warring parties in Bosnia together to bring about a peace settlement and put pressure not just on the Serbs but on the Government in Sarajevo, who are as much opposed to an indefinite peace treaty and compromise as the other side. All sides in that conflict bear responsibility, and we should be putting pressure on them all for agreement at this stage.

The future of the Western European Union and the European Union will be greatly strengthened if there is a positive vote in the referendums in Sweden, Finland and, it is to be hoped, Norway.

I am confident that, if the general election in Sweden results—as I expect it to—in the return to power of Ingvar Carlsson and the Social Democratic party, that will lead to a positive result in the referendum. I am worried that, if by some freak, the present Prime Minister, Mr. Bildt, remains in power, the voters will be less likely to support accession to the European Union. On that basis, it is in the interests of Europe, Britain and certainly Sweden and its neighbours if we get a Social Democrat Government in Sweden this year, as I hope, and am confident, that we will.

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): We have heard a most interesting analysis of the effects of the new applicant nations joining the European Union and the effect that that is likely to have on the emerging security policy.

It is curious that the hon. Gentleman's useful and perceptive analysis seemed to reach absolutely the wrong conclusions. I congratulate him on spotting that article J.4 of the Maastricht treaty is a complete fudge that will be worsened by the admission of more neutral countries. The prime concern, however, should be the coherence of NATO, which the legislation undermines.

For a few moments the hon. Gentleman sounded like an Atlanticist. To conclude that we are sending the wrong signals to the United States and that, to redress that, we need to develop the security policy of the European Union even faster is to get the wrong end of the stick. We need to explain to the United States and to Bill Clinton that European politics is not quite so simple as Mr. Clinton apparently thinks it is, and that we can construct a sensible defence and security policy in Europe only with the American relationship as its linchpin, as it has always been. NATO, not the European Union, has kept the peace in Europe for 50 years since the end of the second world war.

The European Union has demonstrated the "efficiency" of its common foreign security policy through the conduct of its policy in Yugoslavia. God forbid that that should be translated to the security of the European Union as a whole. It will not work—it cannot work. An enforced consensus among countries with such diverse perspectives and views of the world—different Weltanschauungen, one might say —will never produce a coherent policy. NATO's effectiveness was built on the fact that only some of the European nations were involved with it and able to give it a coherent policy.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): I do not disagree with the hon. Gentleman's view of the importance of the American part of Europe's defence. Is it not possible, however, that Europe had become so excessively dependent on America that when it was left alone to intervene in an attempt to establish peace in the former Yugoslavia it could produce only a farce rather than any meaningful contribution with a chance of success?

The Chairman: Order. Before we go any further, let me point out that all references to Yugoslavia are way outside the terms of the clause stand part debate. I hope that

[The Chairman]

hon. Members will recognise that, and return to the subject of the four specific countries mentioned in the Bill and their relationship.

Mr. Jenkin: Clause 1 is at the heart of the Bill, and at the heart of the accession of the four applicant states. What does that accession mean, and what sort of Europe will it bring us to? Listening to the comments of my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary on Monday, I was struck by how differently each of us assesses the latest developments in Europe; having read the same evidence, we reach opposite conclusions. Most interestingly, in Monday's debate my right hon. Friend's optimism about the efficacy of current policy was confounded not just by Euro-sceptic critics but by Euro-enthusiasts: we agree on what is happening in Europe, but it does not seem to be the official Foreign Office line.

The paradox of the enlargement, to which clause 1 is vital, is that while enlargement represents a step towards a new Europe—a wider, more free-trading Europe—the old Europe of Delors, Kohl and Mitterrand is still trying to reassert itself. I welcome the Bill and the clause, but I question whether we are seeing the dawn of the new Europe that we British Conservatives now envisage. Is the old Europe—the western Europe of the cold war—perhaps merely adapting its grip?

The Europe of Monnet, Schuman and Adenauer, of Delors, Kohl and Mitterrand, was founded on the stability provided by the cold war. Those people's views and policies were forged by the aftermath of the second world war. They were and are among those who founded and promoted the western European Christian Democrat-Social Democrat consensus which built the western Europe that we know today.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer confessed to being an enthusiast of that tradition in his recent speech to the German Christian Democrat Union Konrad Adenauer Stiftung in Bonn. He explained how he had seen the Berlin wall go up 30 years ago, and described the impression that it had made on him. It should be added that the British political tradition never truly embraced that consensus, preoccupied as we were —and remain—with our changing global role in international politics. The cold war, however, created a certainty and stability in which the consensus provided comfort for a divided continent. Western Europe was divided from the east, overshadowed by the communist bloc and held in the US embrace of NATO.

The subject of the clause is, most directly, Austria, Finland, Sweden and Norway. Three of those countries excluded themselves from NATO, and they all excluded themselves from one or more of the formal international structures. Nevertheless, they were all firmly embedded in the free west. In particular, the neutral nations were able to benefit from the effect of NATO's protection, but without the expense of commitment.Today, the Berlin wall which so shaped political opinions and created consensus in western Europe is down, the communist bloc has disintegrated, the cold war has ended and Germany is reunited; all of that certainty has gone. All over the world the post-war ground rules have been ripped up and we must radically alter our basic assumptions about that world.

Much is better. In the middle east, there is more promise of a mutually agreed settlement of the Arab-Israeli dispute; in South Africa, apartheid has been ended in a way for which none had dared to hope; and capitalism is newly confident, especially in the far east. Much is ominous, however. There is a new multitude of feuds, flashpoints and wars across the globe—

The Chairman: Order. I am sure that there are all sorts of flashpoints around the world, but not many are relevant to clause 1 stand part.

Mr. Jenkin: My point, Mr. Morris, is that European politics and the enlargement with which we are dealing cannot be immune to all those changes around the world.

On the contrary, Christian democracy has been swept aside in Italy, is being subsumed into Gaullism in France and, even in Germany, is adopting a more overtly nationalist hue. Nor can British politics be immune; the question is, what should be our response?

When Lady Thatcher first suggested at Bruges that the EC should be extended to include national capitals such as Prague, Warsaw and Budapest—and, by implication, Austria, Finland, Norway and Sweden—she was regarded with hostility and derision. Now the enlargement of the European Union appears to be orthodox. Why has Germany, at first apparently hostile, so changed its view? The fact is that it has not. Whereas Lady Thatcher advocated EC expansion to break down the barriers which divided Europe and to promote the widening of free trade, this enlargement will have the opposite effect. As has been pointed out, although we no longer have a Berlin wall, there is a new wall across Europe—a wealth wall, erected by the west. We in the United Kingdom do not set limits to EU expansion. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister often speaks of his desire to see a free trade Europe stretching from the Atlantic to the Urals, but others' enlargement ambitions are much more cautious because they are trying to maintain the old certainties of cold war Europe.

This enlargement is only a very small first step towards the kind of Europe that will match the agenda set out by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in an article in *The Economist* on 24 September last year. There is no sign in this accession treaty of the multi-layer, multi-speed, multi-track Europe that he advocated in his Ellesmere Port address.

The Chairman: Order. I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman spoke on Second Reading, but these are Second Reading points. We are discussing whether clause 1 should stand part of the Bill; that clause relates to just four countries. The hon. Gentleman is now talking about other countries, other speeds and other articles which have nothing to do with clause 1. I suggest that he think again about continuing to read out a speech that he has written. In any event, he really must relate his speech to clause 1 stand part.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. In fact, this treaty is aggregated with others, including the Maastricht treaty, and therefore automatically—through the acquis communautaire—includes reference to all matters relating to Austria, Finland, Sweden and Norway. If I may say so, it would be out of order to rule such matters out of order on the ground that they are irrelevant.

The Chairman: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman and I recognise that his knowledge of the subject is deep.

However, he is wrong again. *[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) wishes to challenge the Chair, I shall have to take appropriate action. This is not a Second Reading debate; it is a Committee stage and we are debating clause 1 stand part. There are four countries involved. If the hon. Member for Stafford thinks that this is a great joke, perhaps he will share it with me afterwards. We are dealing with four countries: we are not dealing with other countries that may wish to join the European Community at some time in the future. I make that point to the hon. Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) and I hope that he will return to relevant matters.

8 pm

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): On a point of order, Mr. Morris.

The Chairman: I do not think that we want another point of order.

Mr. Dykes: It is a different point of order. May I seek your guidance? The House will be grateful for your ruling on the previous matter. In a clause 1 stand part debate, it is normal for people to make speeches which are relevant to the clause and which are spontaneous in the sense of an intrinsic debate rather than reading a closely typewritten script somewhat akin to Kim Il-sung's final speeches.

The Chairman: The House recognises that the hon. Member for Colchester, North has done an assiduous amount of research and preparation. Unfortunately, his research has gone beyond the clause under discussion. Perhaps he will amend his notes accordingly.

Mr. Jenkin: Thank you for your guidance, Mr. Morris. I apologise if I have been leading the Committee astray.

My speech principally concerns clause 1, which refers to the accession treaty involving the four countries. If we approve the clause, it will take Europe in one direction or another; I wish to discuss which direction the Community is taking in approving the clause.

In the accession treaty there is no sign of the development of a multi-track Community. The central pillar of the Union remains inviolate. None of the applicant states sought so much as an opt-out from the social chapter or from monetary union or from any other aspect of the European Community. By the accession they become obliged to accept every jot and tittle of the acquis communautaire and to accept its ever-widening reach and scope. The enlargement is likely to strengthen the centralising tendencies of the Community. It gives a wider field of national protagonists for the central institutions of the Community to play off one against the other. Even our vain efforts to achieve a minor concession on the arrangements for qualified majority voting in the Council of Ministers was ruthlessly brushed aside and condemned as obstructive.

Ms Joyce Quin (Gateshead, East): Is the hon. Gentleman saying that he is against the enlargement because of the fears about centralism that he has suddenly expressed?

Mr. Jenkin: If the hon. Lady had been paying attention to my speech, she would know that I have already said that I am in favour of the Bill, the clause and the enlargement.

There are two conclusions to be drawn from this. First, the enlargement will serve to maintain the federalist agenda in the European Community. After all, that is what the applicant Governments want and it can be explained easily. The countries had no need overtly to join western Europe when they were held to us by the iron curtain. Today, particularly as small states, they fear exclusion from a bloc which is no longer defined by super-power politics but which defines itself by its supra-national institutions, its laws, policies and interests. Article B of the Maastricht treaty specifically establishes the objective of the Union

"to assert its identity on the international scene".

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): I have been listening with great interest to the hon. Gentleman's remarks and I acknowledge the consistency that he and many of his colleagues sitting around him have adopted on these matters. If the Bill and the proposed accession of the four countries, to use his phrase, serves only to maintain the federalist momentum of the European Union, how can the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues fail to vote against it since they are opposed in principle to any federalist momentum?

Mr. Jenkin: It does not accelerate the process that is already under way. It reinforces it. It does not reverse it in the way that the Government have declared. I shall deal with the only way to reverse the centralising tendencies of the European Community later in my comments.

With communism no longer the defining threat, with NATO unsure of its ongoing role, with increasing emphasis upon Europe organising its own security—however unrealistic that may be—and against the background of endemic European protectionism towards the east, the applicant states feel safer in the embrace of the Franco-German axis than outside it. That is despite their superior economic performance over the past 20 years. Although I welcome their accession and their net contributions to the burgeoning EC budget, I wonder whether they will find that accession helps them to adapt more quickly to the ever more competitive world in which we live. Do they believe, vainly, that federalism will obviate the need to become competitive?

The second conclusion is that the Government must continue to adapt new policies and a new coherent anti-federalist approach to Europe in time for the intergovernmental conferences in 1996. That is not helped by the present and rather laughable ambiguity on the single currency.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on the fresh impetus that he has brought to our thinking with his writings and speeches. He is right to place emphasis on free trade and the wider enlargement needed to stabilise the new democracies in eastern Europe. He is right to labour the need to end the requirement for uniformity across Europe. The nation states of Europe are not regions to be absorbed into a superstate—they are Europe itself. By his Corfu veto, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is right to practise the tactics that he will need to employ to avoid the United Kingdom's absorption into a federal Europe in 1996. I congratulate my right hon. Friend because this is not retrospection or reaction. It is the sort of modernisation of the Conservative party that we must have if we are to remain in government, having already held office for such a long period. Neither Europe nor the world has stood still in the past 15 years, and nor must we.

Mr. Hardy: I shall not follow the remarks of the hon. Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) as I want to make a few important points without detaining the Committee too long.

On Monday the Foreign Secretary said that our task was to understand the need for change. It is because of that comment that I feel it necessary to intervene now. I believe that we must pass the Bill, but if we pass the Bill and do not follow it with other similar developments it will be an example of further unwisdom.

The hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) may remember that when I first came to the House in the 1970s I spoke against entry into the Common Market. I had advanced a similar view for some years before then and I did so because I was convinced that a Common Market built on and almost exclusively concerned with the common agricultural policy was not necessarily in the interests of Britain or of a wider Europe. I spoke against it in the House and I voted against it. When the referendum debates took place I was the most junior and humble member of the Foreign Office team and I campaigned and voted against it. However, as a democrat I had to accept that the referendum decision was significant. When the Government saw the Single European Act through Parliament, that development had a considerable effect on those of us who had taken a different view.

The logic now is that the widening of Europe is a process which must be continued. As the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) pointed out on Monday, there are serious implications because, as Europe widens, the pressure upon the common agricultural policy becomes even more acute and I believe that that is a highly desirable end. It might also be desirable if, as my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Gapes) pointed out, Europe becomes more intelligent in its approach to defence and security. That would be welcome. As you will be aware, Mr. Morris, I have probably served longer on the Council of Europe and the Western European Union than is good for me—certainly longer than any Labour Member or, I think, any Conservative Member. I have been closely involved in the developments there for a long time. In April, a planeload of Russian parliamentarians, led by Mr. Zhirinovsky, came to Strasbourg. He was clearly opposed to the European developments of which hon. Members on both sides of the House approve. In a serious speech, he called for the restoration of the Baltic states as Russian provinces. He also made a number of other serious comments. The worrying thing was that not one of the substantial number of Russian parliamentarians, most of whom were supposed to be strongly opposed to his policy, would publicly dissent from his outrageous comments.

Last week in Austria, Mr. Zhirinovsky paraded his views at the conference on security and co-operation in Europe. He attacked the west for rearming and planning to invade Russia. As history changes rapidly, the House should consider his other comment that there would soon need to be an eastern European economic bloc. He did not say a new eastern European military alliance—even Mr. Zhirinovsky recognises economic weakness when it stares him in the face. He could perceive the possibility of two Europes developing, which would be hostile to each other. Such a development would not in the best interests of our sub-continent. For that reason, the Bill should be passed, but it must be succeeded by further Bills which will widen Europe in an intelligent way or it will be of little value.

We should pass the Bill, even at the cost of treading on those countries which value and benefit from the common agricultural policy a great deal more than we do, with only 2 per cent. of our population dependent on agriculture. The political health of Europe in the 21st century requires this measure.

I welcome the accession of Norway, Sweden, Finland and Austria because they are more natural allies of the British than some other member states. As Europe widens to the south, it may bring in countries warmer than Britain normally is, but less notable for their political probity than we normally are. They may be more excitable or less efficient than we normally are. We need Sweden, Norway and Finland to be with us.

I am less enthusiastic about Austria. I, and those who study Europe carefully, perceive the possible development of a German hegemony, with Germany, Hungary, the Czechs, the Slovaks and the Slovenians forming a tighter economic accord than may be good for member states, even the more recently amiable French. That development must be balanced by the addition of the Baltic countries at the earliest possible date, which would provide a balance in the European Community. Those countries would inject not merely probity, but a closer attachment to efficient administration than some people have become accustomed to in Brussels in the past 20 or 30 years. For that reason, I welcome the Bill and the clause. The Minister should understand, however, that if the Government do not seek to establish good relationships with those countries and to ensure that the Community's boundaries continue to be changed quickly, we shall not gain any advantage.

There is another anxiety. You may have been present, Mr. Morris, on the historic occasion in Strasbourg when Mr. Gorbachev spoke about the need to build the common house of Europe. I listened with passionate approval to that speech. Unlike some Conservative Members, I was on my feet when Mr. Gorbachev walked in. I was delighted, however, that everyone was on his feet when Mr. Gorbachev walked out at the end of his important speech, which was entirely consistent with the aims of the Bill.

8.15 pm

Unfortunately, both the British Government and the American Government issued statements on Mr. Gorbachev's speech earlier than they should have done —even before he had sat down. He started his speech an hour late because his journey from Paris was delayed. The comments of the British Government and the American Government after that important, visionary speech were aimed at pouring cold water on and dampening the implications of Mr. Gorbachev's speech. We treated him badly that day and the summit treated him badly when it left him exposed and vulnerable and allowed him to be overthrown.

The fact remains that Mr. Gorbachev's vision was correct. If we are to achieve the common house of Europe and, therefore, a peaceful Europe, we must ensure that the momentum created by the Bill is maintained. If it is not maintained, the Bill merely causes further difficulty and an internal hotch-potch of bureaucratic incompetence. I remain critical of the administration and the limited vision which still exist in Brussels; only through the pursuit of a wider vision shall we achieve peace in the sub-continent, which has eluded us for so long.

Mr. Dykes: I am grateful to be called and I apologise for not being here at the beginning of the debate. I wish to

speak briefly, despite the encouragement of my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow)—I shall resist that temptation, but, as always, I am grateful for his support. I welcome his heckling because it means that at least one is being listened to.

I did not wish to be unkind and mean to my distinguished colleague, my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin), who spoke earlier. It was just that I share the informal, personal view of my other colleagues that it is bad practice—I hope that this will not annoy him—for hon. Members to speak from typescript in the House. Obviously, Ministers have to do it because they make official statements and sometimes one has to have a lot of typescript on an important speech if it involves a complex matter. Some typescripts are read word for word —although that was not the case with my hon. Friends the Members for Colchester, North and for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson)—and are written by a public relations man or the anti-Europe group, whose well-funded office is located over the road, and which can provide ample material for the young fogeys to make their—

Mr. Cash: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. Is it possible that the hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) is incapable of reading and that jealousy is prompting his remarks?

The Chairman: I think that the occupant of the Chair deprecates personal remarks in the Chamber and in Committee. I would have hoped that the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) had been here long enough to recognise that courtesy is the basis of good debate.

Mr. Cash: Further to that point of order, Mr. Morris.

The Chairman: Order. I repeat that courtesy is the basis of proper debate.

Mr. Dykes: I was referring to the reality of the extremely well-funded organisation across the road that provides material to the anti-European parliamentarians.

Mr. Cash: Further to that point of order, Mr. Morris. Madam Speaker has ruled that it is inappropriate for my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) to refer to us as anti-European. It is not true, and I wish him to withdraw his remark.

The Chairman: The hon. Gentleman is getting a little excited. I know that it is hot outside, but it need not be that hot inside. The hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) has the Floor.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): On a point of order, Mr. Morris.

The Chairman: Order.

Mr. Wilkinson: It is a genuine point of order.

The Chairman: Order. I hoped that it would be genuine.

Mr. Wilkinson *rose—*

The Chairman: Order. I have the Floor at the moment. I hope that the hon. Member would always make genuine points of order. I am asking the hon. Member for Harrow, East to debate clause 1 stand part. Perhaps we can proceed on that basis.

Mr. Wilkinson: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) referred to me by name. May I say that no public relations firm has ever written any part of my speeches?

The Chairman: I am not sure that the hon. Member for Ruislip-Northwood was accused of not having written any of his speeches. I have listened to him many times and I know that he makes very good, short, poignant speeches.

Mr. Dykes: That is exactly what I said. I was paying tribute to my hon. Friend for his wonderfully spontaneous and moving speeches, which he makes without notes. That is the best method of all, but there is always a half-way house that involves a little bit of writing, as my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North may prove if he catches your eye, Mr. Morris.

I think that the House will welcome not only the Bill as a whole but the clause, especially in view of the agreement of one of the new member countries. We had a very thorough Second Reading debate on Monday. We can speak only according to our own suppositions and speculation and the evidence accumulated on our visits if we get a chance to go to those countries or talk to their citizens, but I think that the other three will vote in their referendums to join. I think that I am right in saying—

Sir Teddy Taylor: They will not have ecus.

Mr. Duncan Smith: A bribe.

Mr. Dykes: In ecus, or £1,000 perhaps? I think that I am right in saying that referendums are constitutionally compulsory in all four countries. There is a great campaign in the remaining three to get a significant yes vote. I concede that the biggest question mark is over Norway. Some hon. Members may have agreed with me on Monday when I said that it is not compulsory for those countries to join. They can simply go away—no one is insisting that they join the European Union. However, I think that they would be sad about that on reflection because it would be a great opportunity missed. The European Union will gain in strength with this enlargement, as it did from the recent enlargements which brought in the southern countries. There is a great accretion of collective strength in the south and the north of Europe coming together.

I do not want to alarm my hon. Friends, but they have to accept the reality, which is that we are one member state among 12 at the moment and, I hope, 16 when this constitutional process is completed in the existing and putative member states. I have the impression that the new member states are interested not only in widening but in deepening the process as a result of their accession.

Mr. Duncan Smith: This issue has arisen many times. My hon. Friend is always prepared to elucidate, so perhaps he could clarify what he means by "deepening".

Mr. Dykes: I shall do so, subject to my not irritating the Chair by going on too long because we risk having another general Second Reading debate. I therefore relate my comments to the clause stand part debate.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) made the most open, straightforward and honest speech on Monday in which he outlined what he thought was the future direction of the European Union. I agreed with him, although he, of course, deplores and disagrees with it. However, he was right, and I welcome it. I am delighted to be able to remind the

[Mr. Dykes]

House, with great emphasis but without being pompous —which I hope that I never am—*[Interruption.]* I see that my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood is—

Mr. Duncan Smith: Boring but not pompous.

Mr. Dykes: The distinction between the two is a matter of ontological debate.

Colleagues must accept the reality that the European Union wants to proceed in this direction. I know that a small number of parliamentarians—unfortunately mostly gathered on the Conservative Benches—who want to halt the process and feel that they can perhaps do so in this country. I doubt that they can in view of the inexorable reality, but they cannot halt it in the other countries—not in the existing 11 member countries or in the four new members countries.

On Monday, I cited the definitive and unequivocal adherence to deeper integration evidenced in all four new member states.

Mr. Cash *rose—*

Mr. Jenkin *rose—*

Mr. Dykes: I shall give way in a moment, but not for long. What I have to say is relevant to the clause stand part debate, I think.

In column 688 of Monday's *Hansard*, I asked my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary whether he agreed with that proposition and was rather depressed to find that he did not. He did not answer my question directly. The four new members have all expressed a wish for deeper integration, and we should acknowledge that deepening and widening go together.

Mr. Budgen: My hon. Friend will have noted the Foreign Secretary's remarks as reported at columns 685 and 687 of *Hansard* on Monday. He referred to

"the old-fashioned idea that European construction came only by the steady centralisation of power in Brussels."

He had previously said:

"Old certainties are changing; unthinking centralism is a theme of the past."—[*Official Report*, 11 July 1994; Vol. 246, c. 685-7.]

My hon. Friend has been a consistent supporter of the European vision for 30-odd years—

Mr. Duncan Smith: Forty years.

Mr. Budgen: Perhaps it is 40 years. Will he tell us over what period he has seen any change in what the Foreign Secretary describes as "unthinking centralism"? Is that just another bland description of Europe to sell to those who wish to accept a particular view? Is there any objective evidence to prove that the "unthinking centralism" has been abandoned?

Mr. Dykes: My hon. Friend will have to put that question to the Foreign Secretary—it is up to him to answer it personally. I have never accepted that particular description of the way in which the Community has developed. It has always been decentralised in the sense that sovereign member states work together, with majority voting becoming more frequent as a result of the Maastricht arrangements—something that was long overdue and about which we were enthusiastic in terms of the single market. The only manifestation of centralism is the fact that there is one body in Brussels—the Commission—deploying the new legislation on behalf of the member Governments, more and more at their request. There is no danger of the Commission becoming an overweening, powerful bureaucracy, unaccountable to anyone. That is merely black propaganda—the myths and nonsense that we hear about the development of the European Community.

Mr. Budgen *rose—*

Mr. Dykes: No, I shall not give way. If I did, the debate would become too long. In addition, I am planning to give way briefly to my hon. Friends the Members for Colchester, North and for Stafford if they still wish to intervene.

I was asked what "deepening" means. Simply and straightforwardly, it means following the prescriptions and procedures laid down in the Maastricht treaty. I can think of no greater sublime nonsense than that we work hard —and far too long, in fact, over a ridiculously attenuated Committee stage dealing with the ratification of Maastricht —and then proceed to denounce it.

The hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) referred to Mr. Gorbachev. I remember his last visit when he came to an Inter-Parliamentary Union reception. He has a delicious sense of humour and said that it was marvellous to revisit the most robust democracy in Europe, but that he recognised the same faces from his previous visit in 1980, despite the intervening elections. That was an interesting reflection on our Parliament. In this mother of Parliaments —apparently the most mature of all Parliaments—we have to bear in mind that we are talking about sovereign countries working together and that they suffer no loss of sovereignty from the collective arrangements. That is the way that they want to go. In a European Union of such strength and collective maturity, which has the wisdom of many years of constitutional and political development, we cannot say that we disagree, without leaving. In the end, the other member states will say that if we disagree so fundamentally and whinge and moan so much, we should pull out. What would our reaction be, then? I see a wonderful smile on the face of my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor).

The Chairman: Order. The hon. Member for Harrow, East has also got rather carried away. We are debating clause 1 stand part, which deals with four new member countries.

8.30 pm

Mr. Dykes: I was merely referring to that, Mr. Morris, because there are some people in those four countries who were asked, "Do you think Britain should leave?" They all said, "No, we want Britain to stay."

Sir Teddy Taylor: They want our money.

Mr. Dykes: They are all contributors to the budget. That was the original motive of the founding countries when they pleaded and begged us to join, and that process continues with the arrival of the one plus the three.

Again, it must be said that my hon. Friends have a duty to the public. They mislead the public if they misrepresent and mix up fantasy and propaganda, and pretend that it is reality and fact. Let us look at what the malevolent British newspapers, from the tabloids to the broadsheets, said about the Austrian referendum. Austria was definitely going to vote no—that is what the papers said. If there were

time, and if you were patient, Mr. Morris, I could produce the bits and pieces from the newspapers with the relevant quotations. But look what happened in the event. That is why I do not think that Norway will necessarily be such a disappointment. I hope that it will not—but that is the biggest question mark.

In the other two countries there is great enthusiasm for deepening, and for going all the way with the acquis communautaire, which they all accept solemnly. I am sorry that that feeling is not shared by my colleagues here—that phalanx of distinguished fogeys, young and old. I mean that in the most praiseworthy sense of the word; it is a colloquial description, now used by the press, of our anti-European colleagues.

Mr. Cash: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Dykes: My colleagues do not want to accept—

Mr. Cash: My hon. Friend said that he would give way to me.

Mr. Dykes: I shall not give way now.

My hon. Friends do not want to accept that that all includes the single currency. I have never heard of any more absurd suggestion—it produces real mirth in the four new countries that are about to enter—than the idea that in the single market we shall harmonise every piece of instrumentation, all physical equipment, all the financial instruments of one kind and another, the dimensions of bricks, nuts and bolts, and all measurements and dimensions, but that there is to be one exception—the most important lubricant of all, the currency. Apparently we are to say, "No, no. Sorry, there are 16 of those." A man or woman from Mars would ask, "Have they gone crazy? Have they gone mad?" It is an absurd notion.

The four new countries accept all those things. Their opt-outs are non-existent, with the possible exception that the ability of foreigners to buy houses in one of those countries—Austria, I believe—will be limited. The Austrians may be worried about the purchasing power of the citizens of a neighbouring country. But there are no other exceptions. There are no opt-outs or hesitations of any kind. Those countries are joining enthusiastically, despite the fact that there may be geographical and agricultural difficulties in the Nordic countries, and Austria had some hesitation in respect of some of its industrial—

Mr. Jenkin: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Dykes: I shall in a second, very briefly.

Austria had some hesitation in respect of some of its industrial and commercial sectors.

My hon. Friends really must accept all that. The tragedy of the European election campaign for the Conservative party was the fact that fantasy, propaganda and self-induced sublime nonsense of the worst kind took over from reality when we were talking to the public.

Mr. Budgen: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Dykes: I have given way to my hon. Friend once already, and I am just about to give way again, so I hope that my hon. Friend will restrain himself. I hope that he will catch your eye, Dame Janet, and make his own speech in a moment. I give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North.

Mr. Jenkin: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way, and grateful, too, for his advice on how I should conduct myself in the House. He has always been generous with his advice. However, the implications of what he is saying constitute a criticism not of those of us who criticise the centralising process, but of the Government for enunciating that the centralising process has been stopped. My hon. Friend agrees with me that the centralising process has not been stopped; the only difference between him and me is that I support the Government's objective, which is to try to stop it. Does he support the Government's objective of avoiding a federal Europe, which was the original aim before we set off to negotiate the Maastricht treaty?

Mr. Dykes: I knew that it was a mistake to allow my hon. Friend to intervene because again he misunderstands.

I shall finish by expressing briefly a couple of descriptions of what I believe is the understanding of subsidiarity as it is perceived in operation in the modern world in the four new countries. It means that they too recognise the nonsense of the extended and continuing unfair attacks on the Commission in Brussels, which has had more and more to do in recent years. That has happened partly because of that pernicious institution, the ad hoc development of the European summit, which has done much harm by loading the Commission with more and more tasks.

One of the worst features of the summit was the Saturday night dinner. At least we have done away with that now, and the meetings tend to end on a Saturday afternoon, which is a great improvement. The Saturday night dinner, armed as it was with delicious clarets and other wonderful wines, induced the leaders of Governments to say to the Commission, "Do a study on that," "Do a report on this," "Let's ask the Commission to look into this or that." And away went the Commission from the summit with yet another load of work.

One of the best examples of all was a result of the intergovernmental process, not of the overweening tyrannical European Commission foisting its views on a hapless unwilling public in all the member states and on all the member Governments. That was the plan for monetary union itself, which came from an intergovernmental committee of central bank governors chaired by Jacques Delors, who was originally rather an unwilling chairman. That should be put on the record. He said, "Thank you very much for asking me, but I am rather busy. Could you find someone else?" But eventually he agreed to do it. That is the reality that we never have the chance to hear about in the British media.

My understanding of what the four countries mean by subsidiarity has been helped by the fact that I have had the opportunity of discussing such matters with various people in those countries. The modern concept goes into the three strands of effective practical subsidiarity.

First there is a whole panoply of domestic politics and legislation that does not come under the European Union at all. We all have our favourite examples. I think of domestic education policy as one of the classic examples, and the national health service is another. None of that is anything to do with the European Community. That is one sense of subsidiarity, whereby the nation states have plenty in their own terrain and territory that does not come into the European panoply of legislation or directives.

The second strand is that which was originally designed at the request of the member Governments. I emphasise the fact that that is the basis on which all such things are done.

[Mr. Dykes]

The sovereign member Governments constantly ask the Commission to produce more legislation on this, that and the other—

The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. What has that to do with clause 1?

Mr. Dykes: I am just about to explain to you, Dame Janet, to your satisfaction I hope, that that is directly relevant to clause 1, concerning how the Swedes and the other countries that will enter have recently thought about such matters.

We have the Brussels-produced legislation on behalf of the sovereign member Governments. In the four countries that will operate in the same way. According to the treaty of accession they accept all those procedures, whereby there is then a devolution back to the member state on how that legislation is to be constructed.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Will my hon. Friend give way very briefly?

Mr. Dykes: No, I shall not give way now, because I do not want speak for too long.

We see already that the stream of legislative instruments coming from the Commission week by week—we deal with them in our European Select Committee—is now about one third of the size that it was a while ago. That is because the single market legislation is all finished. That is why there is a sudden drop, even apart from the Commission's willingness to say that it would legislate only in important areas in future, so long as the member Governments did not load it with additional tasks found within the treaties—the nearest thing that the European Union has to a constitution.

The third area is when Commission legislation is withdrawn and left completely to the member state. If there were a project on the table the Commission would drop it, or it would not proceed with a new one if one had not yet been devised.

Everybody would welcome those three strands and say that that was the modern expression of subsidiarity for the four new member states. We do not have the chance to read the media of those countries in great detail—by definition, we are too busy—but I have not noticed in any of the debates on accession in any of the countries any hesitation about the concept of practical subsidiarity.

So what is the propaganda and the anxiety in this country, other than self-induced, self-imagined fantasy of the worst kind, which I think is grossly misleading and unhelpful to the British public? It causes a vacuum of enthusiasm and great hesitation about our membership of the European Union, which is not found in other countries—

Mr. Jenkin: So it is just us?

Mr. Dykes: —except, of course, the manifestations of the recession—

Mr. Wilkinson *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Dykes: If people are unemployed, how can they be enthusiastic about the development of any union, let alone a European Union, which is too vast and too great to grasp —*[Interruption.]* The fact that I am being heckled by some of my colleagues shows that what I am saying is perfectly correct, and acceptable in other forums. Otherwise my hon. Friends would not be heckling me.

My conclusion is that when those four countries are in the Union, which I hope will have happened by the end of this year, we shall see—

Sir Teddy Taylor *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Dykes: I am sorry that my hon. Friend is so unhappy about that. We shall see an intensification of the deepening which strikes such terror into his heart and alarms him, because he knows that that is the reality, as my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary rightly said on Monday. *[Interruption]*

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. This is not a private conversation; it is a debate.

Dr. Godman: There is considerable substance in the argument of the hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) that the processes of widening and deepening are not mutually exclusive.

In response to an earlier intervention by the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen), the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) made disparaging comments about the European Court of Justice. I should have thought that, with the accession of the four countries, if all four join—I have much greater concerns about the anxieties felt by many Norwegian people than the hon. Member for Harrow, East has—the European Court of Justice, despite the disparaging remarks of the hon. Member for Southend, East, will be the supreme court, in which 17 legal systems will be concerned. There will be the Scottish legal system, the English and Welsh legal system, and others. The court's decision-making almost inevitably ensures a deeper degree of integration of the 16.

We can see what power the court has in terms of domestic legislation. At this very moment, the Government have a case at the European Court of Justice which relates to the payment of invalidity benefit. I have no doubt that if Norway becomes a member, the Norwegian Government and perhaps the others too will one day find themselves at that court in Luxembourg. There is a great deal of substance in what the hon. Member for Harrow, East says.

The Minister has been something of a bystander in this debate. I should like to ask him a couple of questions. It is surely the case that the countries coming into the European Union have to honour certain obligations. My question for the Minister will, I am sure, be picked up by my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) if he catches your eye, Dame Janet.

What is the position concerning the activities of the Norwegian whaling industry once Norway becomes a fully integrated member of the European Union? I believe that Norway has some flexibility in terms of its membership of the European Economic Area. Is it the case that the rules concerning that maritime activity are much tougher? Can the Minister state that, when Norway becomes a member, it will have to cease forthwith this disgraceful maritime activity?

That question was put to me by a group of schoolchildren in my constituency. I awarded them 10 out of 10 for their perceptiveness in asking such a question. One of them said, "Ah, Dr. Godman. The Norwegians will have to stop hunting these whales when they become

members of the European Economic Community." It is a little old-fashioned for a 14-year-old to refer to the European Union as the European Economic Community. However, the question is important. As a member of the European Union, Norway may have to honour certain obligations. I should like the Minister to tell us whether that is one of them.

I return to the speech by the hon. Member for Harrow, East. Along with my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy), he seems to be utterly confident that the Norwegian people will say yes in the referendum. My hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth said that the people living in and around Oslo will out-vote the people living in the northern Norwegian fishing communities. I am not so sure that that can be safely predicted.

My family have long experience of working with Norwegian fishermen and their communities. When my father was injured while fishing off northern Norway, he received hospital treatment in Vardoe. More recently, when a brother of mine was injured on his trawler, he was taken by helicopter to a hospital in Bodo. Our links with the Norwegian fishing communities are fairly strong.

8.45 pm

There is no point in dismissing these people's anxieties. They have deep-seated fears that their communities could be fatally harmed by the imposition of the common fisheries policy. Those communities are part and parcel of the Norwegian culture, as acknowledged by the metropolitan types down in Oslo. There is concern, and the Norwegian Government will have to pay heed to it. In Norway, there may well be another vote—perhaps by a narrow margin—against joining the Union, largely because this important industry and its communities are threatened.

Some people say that they do not trust the Norwegians. The ones I do not trust are the Spanish fishing operators. As was the case with the fishermen from the former USSR, the Spanish fishermen will sweep the seas clean. They will clean out grounds and then move away. The Norwegians cannot afford to clean out their grounds; that is why they have such tough policing regulations for those who fish in their waters.

I have a question for the Minister about the obligations that the Norwegians will have to honour. I refer to what the Foreign Secretary said on Monday, when I was unable to persuade him to give way:

"Our fishermen will have new opportunities in Norwegian waters from 1997 onwards."—[*Official Report*, 11 July 1994; Vol. 246, c. 694.]

What are the new opportunities? If the Minister cannot give me an answer this evening, I hope that he will be his usual courteous self and will write to me. If new opportunities will be offered to fishermen from United Kingdom fishing ports, presumably they will have to be offered to the Spanish as well, although their history of fishing in Norwegian waters is much more sparse than our long tradition of fishing in Norwegian fishing grounds.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): My hon. Friend referred in relation to whaling to my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks). If the whaling matter is resolved by a reduction or an elimination of whaling, which it could be, and if the threat of Spanish fishing becomes a reality, is it not true that a recourse to agriculture, which may be the alternative in the northern parts of Norway, would be limited by the imposition of the common agricultural policy? The threat may be threefold, even if one course of action may gain some sympathy from the British public.

Dr. Godman: What my hon. Friend says makes sound sense. I am not a lawyer, but, in my view, the whaling question will finish up in Luxembourg. I believe that it will go to the European Court of Justice. I hope that, if the Norwegian Government refuse to stop whaling on accession—if the Norwegian people agree to accession—the European Commission will take the Norwegian Government to the European Court of Justice.

Mr. Hardy: Is my hon. Friend aware that, when the Council of Europe considered the matter a few months ago, Norwegian whaling policy met with the approval of the assembly? Labour Members voted against it, but, unfortunately, the Liberal and Conservative votes were cast in favour of Norway's whaling policy. That may well have some influence to bear on the diplomatic direction pursued by the British Government, and possibly that of other member states.

Dr. Godman: I can only agree with my hon. Friend. However, the European Commission—another powerful, centralising institution—will have its power enhanced by a wider membership.

There is another point to consider about fishing and the Norwegians with regard to their tough policing regime, which I mentioned earlier. We shall see some fun and games when the Spanish try their tricks in Norwegian waters—the kind of tricks that we are used to on the west coast of Scotland and that the fishermen are used to in Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic, because the Norwegians will hit the Spanish for six if they try their tricks. I hope that the Norwegians will be supported by the European Commission in that regard.

Sir Teddy Taylor: As the hon. Gentleman well knows, under directive 92/43, appendix v, I think, whaling will be totally illegal if Norway joins the European Community. Does not the hon. Gentleman think that the appropriate question to ask the Government is whether they would go for a derogation in the event of Norway joining? The law is abundantly clear: the directive could not be clearer. The only question is whether the British Government or others will or will not agree to a derogation.

Dr. Godman: I am grateful to be aided and abetted by the hon. Gentleman. Incidentally, when my wife was a social worker in his constituency in deepest Glasgow, she thought that he was a first-class constituency Member of Parliament. I am sure that he does the same job in Southend.

He is absolutely right. What is the Government's position if those circumstances arise? For what it is worth, my view is that the European Commission will intervene correctly by taking the Norwegian Government to the European Court of Justice. However, given the backlog of cases from which that court suffers, a decision would not be reached for at least two years. Nevertheless, that institution, that supreme court, will be the final arbiter and not the Council of Ministers—not derogation, but that remarkable supreme court, which is aiding and abetting the deepening of the Community.

May I ask the Minister another question, which also relates to the Norwegians' obligations when they take on membership of the Community. We in Scotland are deeply

[Dr. Godman]

concerned about the harm inflicted on our salmon farming industry by the deliberate dumping of farmed salmon into markets in what we now call the European Union. The Minister knows about the issue, as I think that I have mentioned it to him before, and I have certainly mentioned it to his right hon. and hon. Friends.

I believe that, under the terms of the treaty, certain restrictions are placed on Norway concerning the European Economic Area, but am I right in thinking that, once Norway becomes a fully fledged member of the European Union, the regulations governing such exports, sold at such low prices, will be much tougher, and that the Norwegians will find that it is a much stricter regime once they are completely through the gate and are a full member of the European Union?

I return to the Foreign Secretary's promise of more opportunities for our fishermen in Norwegian waters following the accession of Norway. What does that mean? Does it mean that access restrictions will be eased, and that more of our fishing vessels from the east coasts of England and Scotland will be able to fish Norwegian waters, or does it simply mean that a certain number of vessels will be allowed to continue to fish in those waters?

I was struck by what the hon. Member for Harrow, East said about the deepening and the widening of the Community. Those processes are combined. We are moving, if not towards a federal Europe in the next few years, certainly towards one which is increasingly centralised.

I deeply regret the Government's interpretation of article 3b of the Maastricht treaty, which deals with the application of subsidiarity. I should like to see a much greater devolution of political decision-making to a Parliament in Scotland—and, indeed, to local authorities throughout the whole of the so-called United Kingdom.

The scrutiny of European legislation by the four countries' elected representatives in Strasbourg and in their own national Parliaments will bring added democracy to what is at the moment something of a ramshackle edifice, especially when we think of all the fiddling which goes on in some countries and of the misappropriation of structural and other funds, which occurs on a daily basis elsewhere in the so-called European Union.

Mr. Wilkinson: In opening the debate, my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor), as so often on European affairs, was a veritable Valiant for Truth. He has sought to look behind the seven short lines of the clause and to come to the heart of matter. It is, as he explained, essentially financial; I shall return to it later.

My hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) proved himself, as in his youth, a good sapper and miner, inasmuch as he undermined the Government's position on the question of qualified majority voting after the putative accession of the four applicant countries—particularly as we do not, of course, know whether they will all join. One wonders whether we ought to be passing this legislation in advance of their Parliaments' ratification and the affirmative resolution of their people in a referendum, but that is by the by.

The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) referred to fishing and whaling, which are so important to Norway. That would take us into tempestuous waters and I shall not take such a course, except to say that it has been our experience in the United Kingdom—I hope that our Norwegian friends will examine our experience closely—that, since we joined the European Community, there has been a severe depradation of fishing resources around our coasts. Entire fishing communities have gone to the wall. I trust that the people of Norway will think extremely carefully about it. I am sure they will.

9 pm

I return to the financial matter to which I alluded earlier. On Second Reading, my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary talked about the "practical consequences of enlargement". He said:

> "The fact that four relatively well-off countries will be coming into the European Union will reduce the amount that other countries, including Britain, will need to contribute to the budget. We expect our British contribution to be some £300 million sterling less over the first six years of accession than it would otherwise have been."—[*Official Report*, 11 July 1994; Vol. 246, c. 691.]

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East later sought clarification of that hoped-for reduction in our expenditure which would be consequent upon the accession of the four applicant countries.

My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary should have been much more open with the House, but we cannot really expect that from Foreign Secretaries. Obfuscation is the name of the game when it comes to matters European, and all Foreign Secretaries play it the same.

My right hon. Friend said that he would disclose to my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell), in response to the inquiry of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs, the likely increase of the budget for the United Kingdom for 1995. My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East is rightly smiling, and I applaud him for his researches into these matters. He said that an extra £2,000 million of additional expenditure was likely to be incurred by the United Kingdom in 1995.

Against that background, a saving of £300 million over six years is pretty small beer. I hope and ask that my right hon. and hon. Friends will not take for granted everything that is said about the consequences of enlargement. Our experience has consistently been that of being duped over the process of European integration.

With the accession of the four applicant countries, if four join, the Community will certainly be wider, but I cannot see that it will be a more harmonious Community. Existing tensions will almost certainly run deeper, especially the tension between the relatively rich and prosperous north and the poorer south.

I doubt whether countries such as Norway, Austria, Sweden and Finland will be glad to continue to pay huge sums—Austria, Sweden and Norway will, like ourselves, be net contributors—to meet the cost of the objective of economic convergence. Will they be happy with that for very long?

The objective of economic convergence will itself be made less realisable when four additional, disparate and different economies come into the Community. They have their own particularities. After the accession of the four applicant countries, the idea of bringing in the Visegrad three—Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary—will almost certainly be unrealisable. Perhaps that should be made clear now.

I hope that we do not welcome the accession without comprehending that, even with friendly countries which

have long been well disposed towards the United Kingdom, such as the applicant four, not all will be well in the European Union.

I remind the Committee that it was the run on the Finnish currency, strangely enough, which presaged the ultimate break-up of the exchange rate mechanism and our withdrawal from it. Let us take note of the difficulties we experienced when we joined the Community. I am sure that the four applicant countries will experience difficulties at least as great. I suspect that, before long, tensions within the Community as currently designed will be too great for it to remain a union for very long.

Mr. Charles Kennedy: I will follow the example of the hon. Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) and be extremely brief. I acknowledge from the outset that my hon. Friend the Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston), who contributed on behalf of the Liberal Democrats to the Second Reading debate on Monday, made clear our unambiguous support for the accession—as we hope—of the four new countries to the extended or expanded European Union in due course.

After observing the continuing debate or, should I say, constructive discussions in the Conservative party, it is clear that the Bill is part of a triumvirate of important European measures which will come before the House in the remainder of this Parliament—assuming that it goes something like its full length. After Maastricht and this Bill, there will be the own resources Bill which promises to be more electorally divisive in the House in terms of the Division Lobbies. The third part of the triumvirate will be the outcome of the intergovernmental conference in 1996.

Having listened to the ongoing debate between the Conservative Member representing the European Movement and his colleague representing some other kind of movement, not in itself unconnected with Europe, but not connected to it in the way that the European Movement is, it is interesting to note that if that represents unanimity in terms of everyone supporting the accession, one hates to think what it will be like when the Conservative party returns to genuine and authentic division when it comes to voting in the House on own resources and perhaps, who knows, on the outcome of the IGC.

While I want to refer to the comments of the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) who, like me, speaks from a Scottish perspective on one aspect of the Bill, I share the general welcome to the four countries. In many ways, they are potential allies in the decision making that lies ahead. They are also economically potential allies.

I hope that the course of the remaining referendums has not been too badly blown to one side or undermined from the outset by what I consider to be the quite farcical "Grand old Duke of York" performance over qualified majority voting and the signals that sent to the electorates and the difficulties it created for some parties in the other member states.

I listened with interest to a Labour Member who referred earlier to his optimism that there would be a Social Democratic Government in Sweden after the general election there towards the end of the year. On the day that the qualified majority voting row was going on, it was my pleasure to join a Conservative Member at lunch with a visiting Swedish politician who would certainly have Cabinet rank in that Government if it were to come to power.

That Swedish politician was aghast because the Swedish Social Democrats were having to take a difficult decision in opposition, similar to what happened on occasions in this House in respect of Maastricht, when an unpopular incumbent Government were trying to put through an important measure. The Opposition party in Sweden had to play off what it believed to be the right decision for Sweden's overall benefit against what was perhaps the easier, tactical electoral decision for its benefit in the forthcoming period. It felt disappointed and disheartened that the British Government's actions over QMV were making its dilemma more acute. That may not cause angst among those who would welcome Sweden saying no to accession, but we must note that what we say and what is done in one member state inevitably has a knock-on effect in others.

The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow rightly referred to salmon dumping. I have raised that subject before with the Minister and, following one of our exchanges, he wrote to me about it. I want to stress that, as and when Norwegian accession is achieved, I hope that the European Commission will be able to take a more active policing role under the terms of the single market which, hitherto, it has been unwilling or unable to take, in respect of the imbalance in the market price which Norwegian over-production and the loading of that over-production on other member states within the European single market has thus far created. I hope that the Minister can give some sign that, if the Norwegian accession goes ahead, we as a nation state within the European Union will press for that improvement at Commission level.

Secondly, there is a happier side of the existing market relations between our country and Norway: the oil sector —not least the oil-related fabrication sector where significant progress has been made by United Kingdom firms. Of particular importance to the Scottish economy, but also elsewhere in the United Kingdom economy, is the fact that, in a fallow period in the UK market, we have been winning contracts that have been available from the Norwegian sector. We welcome that—the issue of the single market and the level playing field is equally applicable in this sector.

I hope that if Norwegian accession is achieved, the Government will seek to use the good will that exists between Norway and Britain to form an axis to ensure that other member states over which we harbour continuing doubts about the level state of their playing fields—Italy and Spain are two countries that come to mind immediately —present us with genuine, fair competition with no hidden subsidies. Those are two practical points.

I think that all of us who welcome the accessions do so in the right frame of mind. That is not to say that the accessions will solve all the problems. Every opportunity that comes before the European Union opens up new problems. These accessions will be exactly the same. I hope that the Minister will comment on the two specific points that another Opposition Member and I have raised or will write in more detail later.

Mr. Duncan Smith: Like the previous two speakers, I shall keep my comments brief. Before I speak about clause 1, I shall give the House a reminder of the long-held links between Norway and Denmark. I have a personal link as, during the last war, my father commanded the Norwegian and Danish wing in 1942. That should stand as a significant reminder to hon. Members of our long and significant

[Mr. Duncan Smith]

connection with those two countries, many of whose citizens died to ensure that Britain stayed free of the oppression threatening us and Norway and Denmark.

Clause 1 winds in the whole of the European Communities Act 1972 with the accession treaty. Like all foreign treaties, it is a curate's egg—good in parts. The good parts may just outweigh the bad. The treaty and the clause get my support. It is important to discuss some of the issues and problems that will arise from the clause, which is the Bill's main clause.

In his opening remarks on Second Reading, my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary said that Europe had been juddering in the past few years as a result of the ending of the cold war. He used the analogy of geographic plates sliding against each other and moving constantly in the process. I understand that analogy and partly accept it, but I take slight issue with it. We need to take a much broader historical perspective.

In Europe, we are seeing a return to instincts and traditions that we thought had, in many senses, long since died. The accession treaty that brings in those countries of Scandinavia could never have happened before the cold war, which has been the key. For 40 years, that blanket of oppression, which defined two sides so clearly, also split Scandinavia. Finland was locked into a position with Russia. That was reasonable—big brother sitting next to it. Sweden was neutral for the same reason, although that neutrality went far further back.

9.15 pm

But that 40 years was not part of a natural process. It was an historical abberation. With the cold war lifted, we are now seeing a range of changes taking place across Europe which perhaps relate much more to the period before the second world war than to the period of the cold war. The unification of Germany has taken place. Germany is growing logically in strength and power to a dominant economic position at the heart of Europe. The position of the worried eastern nations as they look towards Germany and Russia is similar historically to their pre-second world war position. The position of the countries that we believe will come into the European Union is changing. They are having to look in different directions as a result of the collapse of the cold war.

Underneath all that, the Europe of the European Communities Act 1972, to which the clause refers, developed under the blanket of the cold war. Many views were allowed to develop in isolation from the real world. Thoughts and ideas about the drive to ever-closer union, leading logically to some form of central government or federal state, might have seemed logical to states that had come out of the fear of the second world war under the oppression of the cold war, but, with the end of the cold war, it is time to reconsider the way in which these things will develop.

The treaty of accession is the first act of the European Community since the cold war. Maastricht was a treaty of the cold war. It was about the cold war and the fears of the cold war. It was not about the changes post the cold war —the new national instincts that are re-emerging and the views of different countries, not least the four referred to in the treaty of accession.

Looking forward, the accession treaty is the first opportunity that we have to hold a magnifying glass to the Community and the Union that we have created, which is very much a product of the cold war, and to try to understand how best it can change and what is going to happen. We should not be under any illusion about the countries that are about to come in. Many of them are long-term friends and many of them are democratic and adhere to the instinctive principles that Britain has represented over many hundreds of years, but they also bring with them certain aspects that will not be particularly to our liking. They already carry much higher agricultural subsidies than the common agricultural policy represents in Europe. They have much higher social costs than obtain in the countries of Europe.

We watch time and again as my right hon. and hon. Friends go across to the Council of Ministers and argue about matters connected with social policy and express their fears about the imposition of the extra burdens of social costs which would shackle industry and make us less and less competitive both here in Britain and in other countries of Europe.

Article 118 and others deal with the social matters that many of us believe should no longer be in the treaty and should be reconsidered. It is time that they were re-examined. When we consider those articles and understand what my right hon. and hon. Friends are discussing, we must have at the back of our minds an awareness that when those countries arrive they will not necessarily be our partners in discussions on these matters that we oppose. These matters cause us the greatest concern—the imposition of social costs. I suspect that they will not be with us in opposing those. It is more likely that they will be with those who seek greater imposition. There may be some differences of opinion on that, but we need to be aware that that is likely to be the case.

The largest part of the debate in Europe is about the common agricultural policy. The countries that are about to come in carry with them a much higher burden of subsidy than the CAP represents. They would have to take a drop to reach the CAP. Here we are examining the iniquities of the CAP. Sixty per cent. of the budget goes to bureaucrats and into food mountains and, of course, massively into fraud and only 40 per cent., if any, reaches the farmers.

We all say how dreadful it is, and that we must do something to reform it. In fact, many of us now have the view that much of the common agricultural policy should be repatriated to the nations comprising the European Community. The Government should be saying that more strongly.

I urge my right hon. and hon. Friends to make their position clear on the matter so that we can demonstrate to those countries coming in as a result of this accession treaty that we are seeking a full reform of the CAP. It is not enough for the levels that exist at the moment to be dropped—fraud and bureaucracy must go. There can be only one way do that, and that is by repatriation. The treaty gives us the opportunity to open the arguments again in the run-up to 1996.

Although the nations joining the Union will be independent-minded—that is to be welcomed, and perhaps they will be far less inclined to go down the road of federalism—there are other matters which will cause us some problems and which need to be looked at. I would point my hon. and right hon. Friends towards the position of institutional reform.

When the countries come in, they will bring with them —logically enough—a requirement to have more

Commissioners, and the number will go up to about 21. We may think that the system is unwieldy and difficult now, and that it is of a centralising tendency which brings more power to the Commission. However, 21 Commissioners will be more likely than not to ask for even more briefs to keep them busy.

The treaty gives us an ideal opportunity to go forward to 1996 from the springboard of this excellent beginning to reform the institutions. We must reduce the number of Commissioners. That must be a logical position for the Government to place before themselves for 1996, and this treaty gives us an excellent opportunity to do just that. To reflect the nature of what we believe in—a Europe of nation states—decisions must be taken more and more at the intergovernmental level. They should be manipulated far less; we must not have too many Commissioners.

Perhaps a good thing in the treaty is that it gives us an opportunity to look ahead to the reform of the institutions and of the CAP, and to start opening the arguments that we thought we had locked away following the Maastricht debate. There are things which must be done if we believe in looking ahead from the cold war. That will give us the opportunity to make the Community a workable one of nation states, rather than a heavily centralised, bureaucratic monolith which will collapse under the weight of its own failings.

I would also urge my right hon. and hon. Friends to accept that the treaty and the clause make up only the first of two stages of enlargement. If they stand by themselves, there will be failure. But if we accept that this is only a hand's grasp away from enlargement into the east, the Government can feel rightly pleased that we have sought to enlarge the Community. We will have sought not to destroy the Community, but to make it a community of nation states that works.

I am reminded that one of the directorates-general—either DG XII or XV—produced a document that talked about opening the markets immediately to the eastern countries, such as Poland and the Czech and Slovak republics, so that we could get cheaper agricultural produce, steel and iron. That would benefit us and we would be able to feed people at a cheaper rate and get the materials that would enable our manufacturing industries to compete with places outside Europe. We need cheaper raw materials and those places could have provided them. In return, we would provide them with the cash to continue to develop their own industries.

Mr. Spearing: I agree with some of the hon. Gentleman's remarks. He is advocating a wider and freer market over a wider area, perhaps on a worldwide level.

Is the hon. Gentleman aware that a famous British exporter, which I will not name, has said that it cannot get iron castings manufactured in this country and has to get them from Turkey instead? Does he consider that good for our manufacturing industry? Should there not be a limit to the freedom of markets, in the European Community and across the world?

Mr. Duncan Smith: Of course it is difficult to procure iron castings in this country if none are produced here. For those who used to produce them here, that is of course a major problem. However, the point is that there must be free movement of capital and goods throughout the world if third world nations are to have the chance to develop, and hence to make the money with which to buy the goods that we want to sell them. That is the logic of it.

If, however, we stand in the middle and block free movement—we are doing it to the eastern bloc countries now—it will be no good lecturing poorer countries about democracy and all the other wonderful things that we believe they should enjoy if we take away from them the one thing that will sustain them through the pain of all the economic changes to come. We must not take away their chance to make the money that they need. They have things to sell us, and it is not right that we should stop them exporting those things to us on the ground that we want to protect our industries. Our industries will benefit in the short and the long term from a commitment by us to trade.

I accept that there may be some limitations of the sort that the hon. Gentleman has in mind. They are what GATT dealt with, and they are why we need to move further along the lines of GATT.

Without going a stage further, what we are enacting today will prove an unmitigated failure. It is not enough to squeeze in only the countries that can afford the entry ticket and to ignore all the other countries which need us and which we in return need for our trade. Trading with them will do all our industries a power of good.

I have tremendous reservations about what my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) referred to as "deepening". Parts of this treaty include large elements of that deepening process; but I am prepared on balance to accept that the treaty will work to our benefit provided that we follow it up with the second stage: a wider Community. We must fight hard to stop the imposition of more social costs and to reform the CAP and the Union's institutions as we approach 1996. We must ensure that those institutions take account of a Europe of nation states of the kind in which the Government so rightly believe. It is what we must press for.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I oppose Norway's accession to the European Union, and not because I am anti-Norwegian. I take the point made by the hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan Smith) about our close links with Norway—links going back hundreds of years—although the Norwegians did come here originally as a form of early lager louts, stamping all over the good Celtic people up north. More felicitously, we have worked together and fought together in the recent past. It is, of course, not just a question of the Norwegians who died in the campaign to liberate Europe. A large number of British people died in the campaign to liberate Norway.

Nevertheless, I take the hon. Gentleman's point about our historic links with Norway, which is why I speak more in sorrow than in anger about Norway this evening. I have spoken out against it consistently because of its policy of slaughtering minke whales, in defiance of the International Whaling Commission and the great weight of public feeling in this country and the rest of the European Union.

The Norwegians are behaving quite unacceptably, which is why I take this opportunity to vent my feelings and express my protest in the only way I can. The Norwegian Government have licensed 30 vessels to kill 301 minke whales this summer. Those of us who are concerned for the future of this great marine mammal are grateful for the activities of organisations such as Greenpeace. A great many brave people from this country,

[Mr. Tony Banks]

Norway and around the world are at this very moment on the high seas trying to prevent Norwegian whalers from slaughtering the whales.

The Greenpeace ship Sirius has been attempting to prevent the Norwegian whaler Senet from slaughtering whales. For their pains, apart from being threatened by the Norwegian whalers, the crew have been arrested by the Norwegian coastguards in international waters. Their boat has been seized and they have been arrested.

I have a number of questions for the Minister. I should like to know what he is doing on behalf of the British Government to protest to the Norwegians about their behaviour in international waters and to find out how many Greenpeace campaigners are United Kingdom citizens who are entitled to the protection of the British Government, particularly when they are trying to prevent the Norwegians from breaking international law and agreements. That is why I am asking the Minister what investigations he has made.

9.30 pm

My hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) asked what the Government were doing in terms of protesting to the Norwegians about their whaling campaign, as did the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor), who is a great campaigner for animal welfare, particularly in terms of trying to prevent the slaughter of whales.

What sort of deal, if any, has been done? Is it possible within the context of the accession treaty for any deal to be done? The word used was "derogation". Have the Norwegians been able to get an opt-out? Is there an opt-out in the rules regarding non-whaling within European Union waters? Have the Norwegians been successful in getting an opt-out from that requirement? Is that possible? I should be most grateful if the Minister would give me those responses, as a number of us on both sides of the House are concerned.

The motor vessel Sirius—the Greenpeace ship—caught a Norwegian whaler shooting a harpooned whale in the North sea. That makes nonsense of the idea that somehow a whale can be slaughtered with a harpoon. There is no humane way of killing a whale.

When the Norwegians argued that we, the British, kill cattle, I remember the former Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the right hon. Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer), making the famous point that we do not shoot a harpoon into a heifer and chase it through five fields trying to kill it. That is precisely the point. There is no humane way of killing a whale.

I watched some footage of the Norwegians trying to electrocute a harpooned whale and shoot it with a gun. It is absurd and obscene and should not be allowed by any civilised nation. We should make sure that our protest goes out as strongly and volubly as possible from the House to our allies and close friends the Norwegians.

The Norwegians killed 226 whales in 1993 and at the International Whaling Commission meeting in Mexico recently the Norwegian estimate of the north-east Atlantic minke whale population was seriously challenged by the IWC's scientific committee. The north-east Atlantic minke whale was protected by the IWC in 1985 because of its seriously depleted numbers, the population having been reduced to less than half its original size because of the activities of Norwegian whalers, with some help from the Russians and the Icelandics.

Now that we have been able to build up the population of minke whales, the people who caused them to be depleted say that the population is sufficient to resume some form of slaughter.

The Norwegians started by calling it scientific whaling, which was one way of getting round the IWC moratorium on commercial whaling. Now they are going for limited commercial whaling.

The Norwegians do not need to sustain whaling for their economic prosperity. They have one of the highest per capita incomes on earth. Norway is a very rich country. If it were a small agricultural fishing community, I might have some sympathy with its predicament, but the Norwegians have no economic justification for doing what they are doing.

Much of that whale meat is exported to Japan. The Japanese are rather like the Norwegians in terms of their totally oblivious attitude to world opinion. They feel that they can kill anything because it belongs to them.

Whales do not belong to the Norwegians. No one harvests whales; there are no whale fish farms. Indeed, as we know, the whale is not a fish—but try to convince the Japanese of that. When they are attacked for whaling, they say that the meat-eating north is imposing itself in a racist way on the fish-eating culture of Japan. I must point out to the Japanese that, for all their scientific whaling, they still have not worked out that the whale is not a fish but a mammal—a mammal that can feel the pain of a harpoon shooting through it, or electrodes pushing electricity through it. Whales can feel bullets. Moreover, they have a family system and a community that may be something like ours. They sense; they feel; they understand.

The Norwegians still believe that they have the right to kill whales. They do not have that right. The whales belong to all of us. They are international. They do not live in Norway; they migrate, and come to our waters as well. They belong to us as much as they belong to the Norwegians, and the Norwegians have no right to slaughter them.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy)—who leads the Opposition's Council of Europe delegation—and a number of other hon. Members on both sides of the House will remember the occasion when Mrs. Brundtland addressed the Parliamentary Assembly, of which I am proud to be a member. She paraded her green credentials—Mrs. Brundtland, who goes to the United Nations and says, "What a wonderful green socialist I am." I can only say that I am ashamed that Mrs. Brundtland should even presume to describe herself as a socialist. I do not recognise her as a socialist; I recognise her as a murderer, who is slaughtering a creature that is capable of comprehension which in many ways resembles that of human beings.

I realise that I am becoming very emotional, Dame Janet. I am not tired and emotional; I am just emotional, because this is an emotional subject about which I feel strongly. I believe that my feelings may be shared by the great majority of our citizens, and it is on their behalf that I make my protest about the activities of the Norwegians. This has been an all-party effort: there has been a good deal of cross-party support. We have supported the British Government in their stand at the IWC. We have supported Ministers who have gone there and spoken for the British

people, protesting about whaling. We shall continue to support the Government, as long as they support the whales and represent the feelings that the people of this country have expressed.

I hope that the Minister will respond to some of my questions, and will realise that there are strong feelings about this subject—not only on my part, but throughout the House.

Mr. Cash: I believe that the question at the heart of the debate is, "Will the Bill benefit the United Kingdom, and will it involve Germany?" That is the ace question that has lain at the heart of the European Community since 1945. Will the Bill improve or retard our ability to achieve our objective?

An article in *The Spectator* recently quoted something that Bismarck said in 1877. He described his diplomatic goals thus:

"to create a situation in which all powers other than France need us, and are prevented as much as possible from building coalitions against us because of their relationships to one another."

The question is, will the treaty that is now part and parcel of the Maastricht arrangements enable us both to widen the European Community and to ensure that we do not deepen it? We are told that, through the treaty, we will widen it; but I fear that it will be deepened as well. The two processes run together because of the legal framework created by the Maastricht treaty.

In fact, the accumulation of power that will accrue as a result of enlargement and the accession of the four new countries—given the trade balances that operate throughout the European Community in favour of Germany—will enhance its power. The voting structure will ensure that there is a greater opportunity for those alliances to build up in favour of the matters that the Germans want to push through. I shall not today go through the extended list of areas in which the Germans have managed to accumulate greater power. However, it started with the speech on the Oder-Neisse line and, more recently, there has been the beef ban. There is a range of matters including the interest rate question, the way in which they behaved over the EMS and the recognition of Croatia. All those issues will be made much more difficult if the consequences of the Bill in terms of the accretion of the voting power of countries dependent on Germany results in their voting with Germany.

The most recent figures on the subject in the "Direction of Trade Statistics Yearbook" of 1993, which describes trade with Germany throughout Europe, including trade with the four applicant countries, show that, for Austria, the share of the total of exports to Germany is 39.8 per cent. The figure in respect of imports from Germany is 42.9 per cent. The effect of that is that the two countries are totally intertwined, and there is no reasonable prospect that the Austrian Government will at any time have the degree of independence that is claimed for them by those who say that the enlargement of the Community will enable Austria to go its own way as a separate nation state. I think that it will be bound up in an undesirable way. I hope that I am wrong, but I believe that that is the direction in which things will go.

The figures for Norway are different. The figure for exports is 13 per cent; the figure for imports is 14 per cent. For Sweden, the figures are 15 per cent. and 18 per cent. respectively. There is an increasing indication, borne out within the Community as it stands under Maastricht, of an unhealthy over-dependence of the other countries upon Germany. That will affect the voting structure and that is why qualified majority voting, which we discussed in the House some months ago, is so important.

It is precisely for that reason that it is essential that we reconsider the whole of the Maastricht negotiation and that the entire process back to the treaty of Rome and the Single European Act is re-evaluated at the intergovernmental conference in 1996. That re-evaluation must include the relationship that we have with the four applicant countries.

I welcome their involvement in the enlargement process. My fear is that because it is based on Maastricht as well—Maastricht is about government rather than trade—the implications of the voting structure will tend to enhance the intrinsic power of Germany at the expense of the rest of Europe. That is contrary to what I believe was intended by the other members, although not by Germany.

Mr. Marlow: I am grateful to my hon. and, on this occasion, learned Friend. I should like his legal advice before my hon. Friend the Minister begins his speech. My hon. Friend referred to qualified majority voting. If one of the applicant nations does not join the European Union, article 2(2) of the treaty comes into effect. That article says:

"The Council of the European Union, acting unanimously, shall decide immediately upon such adjustments as have become indispensable."

The threshold for qualified majority voting is 64. If the Government took the view that it was not indispensable to reduce that threshold, would they be able to make that point stick?

9.45 pm

Mr. Cash: My hon. Friend makes an extremely important point. It was the reason why I tabled an amendment, which was not selected—and I make no criticism of that decision. The amendment highlighted the fact that, if all the countries did not ratify the proposal through referendums, according to the constitutional requirements envisaged in article 2 of the treaty, the voting structure would be distorted. My hon. Friend makes a valid point and his contribution was a valuable one.

Although I have the greatest sympathy with many of the arguments on whaling and other matters that were advanced by some hon. Members, this issue is much more important than it seems. This is not just any old accession treaty: it enhances and increases the centralising process of the Maastricht treaty because it is based on it.

My comments on the relationship between the acceding countries and Germany were not hostile towards Germany. That is not the point. The key question is whether the measure will create an imbalance in favour of Germany as compared with the other member states. We are talking about what is called the European Union or the European Community. If it is to be a fair and proper arrangement, it must be balanced and it must not automatically lead to one or two countries enjoying superdomination over the others. The original treaty of Rome and all that went with it in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s was designed to avoid such an occurrence.

In May 1953, Jean Monnet said that, if Germany were to obtain a degree of industrial domination in Europe, which he could not foresee but which has happened, the concept of the European Community that he had in mind would disintegrate. That is part of the problem. With great

[Mr. Cash]

respect to my friends in the United States of America, the situation was not enhanced by Mr. Clinton's recent speech. With deep regret, I say that he has failed to understand the nature not only of the susceptibilities of the people of Europe but of the intrinsic balance of power that prevails even today, although some people may pretend that it does not.

I should also like to quote a great statesman, Bismarck. Some of my hon. Friends and Opposition Members may be surprised by that, but those people who know the difference between the Bismarckians and the Nazis would understand that he knew what he was talking about when he said:

"I have always found the word Europe on the lips of those politicians who wanted something from other Powers which they dared not demand in their own names".

Instead of blood and iron, we now have pen and rules. The four applicant countries may yet discover that it is not as easy to join the European Community as they had originally hoped.

In the past few days, I have received a letter from a 13-year-old constituent of mine. It states:

"We, as a nation, have just remembered D-Day and all the lives that were lost because we didn't want anyone else saying what our country should do. Why did we bother if it was all going to be changed anyway?"

The girl also sent me the list of signatories that she had collected. I read that letter with some concern because it is 50 years to the day since my father was killed in the war and won the Military Cross fighting in Normandy for the liberation of Europe. Many other people did the same. Many Germans do not want that to happen again and they have honest intentions; others, however, have another agenda.

I fear that the effects of the treaty and the accumulation of evidence of the assertiveness of Germany is not in the German interest. The Norwegians know and understand that only too well; the Austrians know and understand it; and so do the Finns from their relationship with Russia. I do not have time now to go into the Russo-German treaty, but I am sure that the Finns will be watching it with grave concern. The same is true of the Swedes.

It would be easy for us to assume that this short Bill, which contains only a few lines, can be skated through today, dealt with in the odd point of order and regarded as having relatively little importance. I believe that it is more important than that and will prove to be much more important than many people have thought. Indeed, on the question of the relative currencies in Europe, *The Daily Telegraph* reported only a few days ago:

"The Germans are at last in a position to dictate terms. They have no intention of rescuing the dollar, just as they had no intention of helping the pound when it was in trouble two years ago. The strength of the mark suits them well."

In an intervention on Monday on my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary, I pointed out that the Scandinavians have an obsession with the deutschmark—there is no question about that. That is part of the general problem and of the German question. The Germans themselves have to consider their relationship with those countries to ensure that we do not return to the problems of the 1930s.

I do not need to detain the Committee for too long, but I must point out that those who believe that the treaty will be advantageous for the United Kingdom should bear in mind a number of issues. There are said to be four advantages in the accession of the new member countries. The first is that they are relatively rich and would be net contributors to the European Community. Secondly, they are Protestant countries and would thus shift the balance of power against the subsidy farmers of the Mediterranean or olive belt. Thirdly, like Britain, they are attached to their national sovereignty and would resist further centralisation in Brussels.

Finally, and most important according to Government officials, enlargement is a necessary prelude to extending the European Community into eastern Europe. It is said that that expansion is in turn a moral obligation and the best guarantee against the follies of Euro-federalism as the united states of Europe would be too unwieldy once it included the eastern states. However, none of those arguments stands up to a moment's examination.

While the four new applicants would all be net contributors to the European Community budget—

Mr. Duncan Smith: Only just.

Mr. Cash: Only just, as my hon. Friend rightly says. I refer him to the trade statistics that I mentioned earlier, which are well worth reading. They include details of the massive deficits in favour of Germany.

Those countries' contributions would not noticeably reduce the burden on Britain caused by the Euro-budget, which we shall be discussing in a few months' time. As most of the new entrants' money has already been marked for cohesion funds—a point that some of my colleagues might like to note—to subsidise Portugal, Greece, Ireland and Spain, the idea that the new entrants will tilt the balance against agricultural interests is even more extraordinary. All four of the applicant countries subsidise their farmers even more than the European Community subsidises its farmers through the common agricultural policy.

Mr. Marlow: If we are being invited to vote for clause stand part on the basis that the four new countries will be net contributors to the Community budget, what should we do when we debate the European Community finance Bill, which will mean that we shall have to pay much more money into the Community budget than will be forthcoming from the contributions of the four applicants?

Mr. Cash: As ever, my hon. Friend asks a difficult question. At prayers today we said, "Lead us not into temptation", but the logic of my hon. Friend's argument is difficult to resist.

As I said, all four of the applicant countries subsidise their farmers even more than the EC does. Between 1989 and 1991 the average farm subsidy was 48 per cent. in Austria, 57 per cent. in Sweden, 71 per cent. in Finland and 75 per cent. in Norway—compared with a mere 46 per cent. in the EC. How does that argument stack up? The Minister of State is now having a nice little joke with our distinguished Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. I should be delighted if the Parliamentary Secretary would come to the Dispatch Box and try to deal with my question, because it is a bit of a problem.

Indeed, the most contentious issue in the membership negotiations for each of those countries was Europe's insistence that they cut their farm subsidies and food

prices, which are even more absurdly distorted than those in the EC. How successful were we? I should like an answer to that question.

As for the Scandinavians' fiscal probity, Sweden's Government deficit last year was 14.7 per cent. of gross domestic product, and Finland's was a mere 9.1 per cent. Those figures compare with deficits of 8.2 per cent. in Britain and 9.7 per cent. in that profligate country, Italy. We should bear those facts in mind.

I like to be fair in such matters, so I must admit that Norway does not have any deficit problems—[HON. MEMBERS: "They do not want to join."] No doubt Norway's lack of problems is due to its massive oil revenues, and I would not mind betting that some of the Norwegians have sussed out that joining is not such a big deal, so Norway may not join anyway.

However, Norway shares a certain fiscal characteristic with all its neighbours in Scandinavia. Wait for it. The Government collect more than 50 per cent. of national income in taxes. My intervention in the Foreign Secretary's speech on Monday pointed out the contrast between our policies and theirs on the social chapter, environmental protection and all that goes with them.

It is said that the Scandinavians are proudly independent and that they would help us to curb Euro-centralisation and harmonisation. However, I cannot agree with that either. As I have said, in almost every sphere in which Britain has fought against Brussels—social policy, trade union rights, consumer protection, environmental regulation—in the negotiations as well as in their domestic policies the Scandinavians have been on the side of more centralisation and regulation, not less. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I regard the attitude of Opposition Members to what I am saying as eloquent testimony to my argument. It is precisely because I disagree with them so much that I have reservations.

Even on monetary policy the Scandinavians have signed up enthusiastically to a single currency for Europe. And, as I have already said, they have an obsession with the deutschmark—complete with 100 per cent. interest rates.

Mr. Duncan Smith: The deutschmark will be the single currency.

Mr. Cash: That is a thought, which I should like to share with my hon. Friends who are worried about the exchange rate mechanism. As Mr. Anatole Kaletsky has pointed out, compared with 100 per cent. interest rates, the Prime Minister's ERM policy could be described as something on the margin.

It is clear why Labour wants the Scandinavian countries as comrades-in-arms, but why on earth should their membership be a top priority for us? At this point, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office throws its last argument into the arena. It says that enlargement is inherently desirable regardless of which countries are admitted because by widening Europe we shall prevent or at least delay any further deepening along federal lines. The Foreign Office advisers, who will urge the Prime Minister and others to back down on Europe, regard this as their intellectual trump card. But that argument is even more specious and certainly more unworthy—

It being Ten o'clock, THE CHAIRMAN *left the Chair to report Progress and ask leave to sit again.*

Committee report progress.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business),

That, at this day's sitting, the European Union (Accessions) Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

Question agreed to.

Again considered in Committee.

Question again proposed, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Cash: My hon. Friends may say that they have missed some of the argument. I assure you, Dame Janet, that I shall keep my argument as short as possible. I was on the point about the intellectual trump card of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. I am no more hostile to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office than I am to the aspirations of the Chancellery in Bonn. I regard what the Foreign Office has done as a perfectly understandable if mistaken policy. I do not say that in respect of this Bill because, although I have been critical about aspects of it, if there were a vote, I should vote for it. That is only because I believe that we must reorganise, under the 1996 conference, the whole of the Maastricht negotiations. The whole thing must be renegotiated. If we succeed in that objective and if the Prime Minister, the Foreign Office and the House are determined to ensure that we manage to renegotiate the Maastricht treaty, the four applicant countries will benefit from the fact that we shall have unravelled the legal framework that currently shackles and chains us down.

The diplomats have misled themselves. Do they really think that they can gull the French, the Germans, the Belgians and the other federalists, or are they really trying to fool the Tory party into supporting the federalism that is secretly embedded in the continuation of Maastricht within the framework of this treaty? That is the key to understanding the arrangement.

If the Community is to be widened, it must be a proper widening and not one that gives more power to Germany. After all, only the other day the Prime Minister turned down Mr. Jean-Luc Dehaene precisely for that reason. We are told that our right hon. Friend did not want Jean-Luc Dehaene to be imposed on us by the Germans. If that is the case, surely the corollary to that is that we ensure that we are not conned by the arrangements under the Maastricht treaty itself. This treaty of accession builds on that.

I shall simply conclude—

Mr. John Biffen (Shropshire, North): Oh no.

Mr. Cash: My right hon. Friend says no. I must say that I am looking forward to hearing what he has to say.

This treaty is more important than it looks. It is more important than its size, because its content is the future of Europe. It treads a path through history. It treads a path to the borders of Russia; to anschluss in the 1930s. It treads a path throughout the entire European foreign policy of the past 200 years. I hope that those four countries, on an enlarged basis, will contribute to the European Union. That is why I shall not vote against the treaty, but only on the basis that this treaty, like the others, will be renegotiated in 1996.

Mr. Biffen *rose—*

Mr. Spearing *rose—*

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory): The debate has

[Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory]

had all the variety of a Second Reading with a great deal of the detail that we would expect in Committee. I shall endeavour to answer at least the main points that have been made. If I fail in that, I shall write to hon. Members who may have raised matters of particular detail.

The clause is the heart of the Bill. It takes the treaty into United Kingdom law by the familiar means of using the European Communities Act 1972. My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) began the debate in characteristic style by suggesting that the four EFTA states were deluding themselves about the advantages of entering. In saying that, he underestimated their political acumen and their ability to assess where their own interests lay. All those countries have vigorous democratic systems. The whole process of applying and joining the European Economic Area and now, we hope, the European Union has been accompanied by an extremely wide-ranging and vigorous public debate in those countries. Indeed, the result of the Austrian referendum showed that, at least in that country, the people there weighed up the advantages and disadvantages and came to the very clear conclusion that the future of their country lay in the European Union.

My hon. Friend mentioned fish in particular and that issue was also raised by other hon. Members, especially the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman), who is not in his place at present. My hon. Friend, the hon. Gentleman and others questioned me about the balance of advantage and, in particular, they wanted an assurance that our own fishing industry was not put at any disadvantage by the accession treaty. I re-emphasise the point made by my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary on Second Reading that we have successfully reaffirmed the principle of relative stability as the foundation for the allocation of fishing opportunities between member states. That fact was conveyed to us with satisfaction by representatives of the fishing organisations.

Mr. Spearing: My hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow is not present but I, too, noted the Foreign Secretary's phrase. Is that not typical Euro-mysticism? How can one assess relative stability? Who is to decide what is relative to something else? Looked at cynically, does it not simply mean that it is a flexible opportunity for change?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I leave it to the chairman of the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations to comment on that. He wrote to me and my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on 31 March to explain that

"we were extremely appreciative of the efforts of"—

my hon. Friend and myself—

"to safeguard successfully the . . . cod quota and the principle of relative stability. The satisfactory outcome to the succession negotiations . . . is very welcome indeed."

If the industry is happy with the outcome of the negotiations, that should be enough for the House of Commons.

On Monday, my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary said that there were new opportunities for British fishermen. During the long and arduous negotiations we gained additional flexibility to fish western mackerel in each of the management areas concerned, including for the first time access to Norwegian waters for that stock. I can reassure the Committee that Spain has not gained any new access either to the North sea or to the waters of the west coast of Scotland and Ireland.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East talked about our gross contribution. That is more properly a matter for future legislation, when the House of Commons will have an opportunity to consider the EC finance Bill in the next Session. I reaffirm and re-emphasise that, for the purposes of the Bill before us, as a result of the accession of the four applicant states the United Kingdom's net contributions will be lower than they otherwise would have been.

Mr. Marlow: Perhaps my hon. Friend will tell the Committee what the savings will be from this Bill and what the costs would be from the EC finance Bill. Perhaps he could make a comparison in terms of the ratio of one to the other. I think that the Committee would be interested to know that at this stage.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I can repeat the figures that were given on Second Reading. During the first six years of accession our net contribution will be lower by about £350 million than it otherwise would have been. Thereafter there will be a net saving of about—it is only an estimate—£75 million a year. As for the other information that my hon. Friend wants, I must tell him that the Bill that we shall be considering in due course will refer to how our contributions will be affected by the Edinburgh conclusions on own resources that we and other member states will be paying into the budget between now and 1999.

I have been asked what would happen if one or more member states failed to join. Provision is made for that in the treaty that is under consideration. There would, of course, have to be some consequential adjustments, especially to the qualified majority voting arrangements. That is foreseen in the treaty and it would not be necessary to have a renegotiation.

The arithmetical alterations to the qualified majority voting figures would be limited to those technically necessary by the non-accession of one or more member states. That would be done by unanimity at a Council meeting held immediately after the relevant referendum. I can assure the Committee that the arithmetic is relatively uncontroversial and straightforward. There is a precedent because in 1972 Norway said no in a referendum and precisely the adjustments that I have described had to be made. That was done almost immediately and without controversy, and in time for the other member states to come in on the date specified in the treaty.

Mr. Marlow: The treaty states that a qualified majority will require 64 votes. If Norway does not join, would it be the Government's view, and would the Government be unanimous with other Governments, that it would be indispensable to change that part of the treaty? If the Government did not agree, there would be no unanimity. Therefore, there could be no change and we would stick on 64. If we stuck on 64, a blocking minority of 24 would exist instead of 27. I think that that would be something that the Government would favour.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: If Norway failed to accede, the treaty blocking minority would reduce from 27 to 26. That is clear from the arithmetic. It would not be open to the Government, or any other member state, to take a

completely different view, which I believe my hon. Friend is inviting me to take, because the treaty refers to adjustments which are indispensable. That clearly refers to the technical and consequential adjustments that would flow naturally from the non-accession of one member state.

10.15 pm

The hon. Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Gapes) referred at length to defence and security matters. I will not follow him down all the paths that he mapped out. However, I agree with him that it is very important that the future evolution of a European security apparatus, particularly through the Western European Union, is fully compatible with the Atlantic alliance and NATO in particular. That is one reason why we hope that Norway will accede, because it is a long-standing member of NATO.

The fact that three of the EFTA states concerned are currently neutral shows that they are shifting in their attitudes to that concept. Many people in those countries believe that the traditional neutrality that they have followed has become out of date following the end of the cold war. They are seeking to integrate their foreign policies more in line with the common foreign and security policy which the Maastricht treaty set up for the first time.There is no obligation on those states to join WEU, but I hope and expect that in due course they will at least become associated with the treaty.

In reply to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin), I put it to him that the fact that the European Union can welcome into its membership countries with a wide diversity of security attitudes—three of them being neutral—is an example of that multi-track Europe which my hon. Friend seeks. That is achieved within the existing treaty. No amendments are necessary. That shows that the treaty of Rome as amended by Maastricht is highly tolerant to several different security systems.

However, I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North about a point that he made. A similar point was made by the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy). This enlargement round is not, by itself, sufficient. We, too, regard it as one further step, but an important step, on the way to others which must include, in some way, the countries of central and eastern Europe.

Mr. Jenkin: Is not the real test of whether we are beginning to decentralise the Community not the multi-speed, multi-track aspects of the separate pillars—the pillars are apart from the main part of the Community—but whether we start to have multi-layer, multi-speed and multi-track in the central pillar, in the European Community itself, and cease to have to regard the acquis communautaire as inviolate, untouchable, sacrosanct and hitherto completely protected by subsidiarity? The Edinburgh guidelines on subsidiarity specifically state that one cannot attack the acquis communautaire.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I shall not follow my hon. Friend too far down that road as it is essentially a point for other debates. However, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I have made the point from the Dispatch Box that even within that central pillar of the Community there is already a variable geometry or multi-speed system. The provisions relating to monetary union allow for different timetables for different states. I would argue that, leaving aside how the Community or the Union may develop, we already have in it more than the seeds—we have the reality of some of the things that my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North is seeking.

The hon. Members for Greenock and Port Glasgow and for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) questioned me about whaling. I can assure both hon. Members that *Norway did not seek and certainly did not receive any opt* out or derogation from the provisions in existing EC law relating to whaling. The combined effect of the existing measures on whales and whaling amounts to a de facto ban on commercial whaling by member states in Community waters. Norway has agreed to and will be signing up to all the obligations and rules as they relate to whaling.

Mr. Tony Banks: Under the terms of the accession, at what point must the Norwegians cease whaling or find themselves in contravention of EU law?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: When Norway joins the European Union—on 1 January next year, I hope.

That brings me to an important point on which I think that I differ from the hon. Gentleman. He said that he did not want to see Norway join because of its whaling policy. I argue that all who seek an end to Norwegian whaling should welcome Norway into the European Union. The hon. Gentleman asked me what this country could do to try to protect whales more effectively from the Norwegians. The answer is, very little until Norway joins. Once it is subject to the rules, regulations and laws of the European Union, the whales will be safer. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will work for and welcome Norway's accession in due course.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Will my hon. Friend give us a clear and specific assurance—I know that he will—that, in the event of the Norwegians seeking derogation, the Government will stop it?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: No derogation has been sought and the question does not arise. I must be candid with my hon. Friend—many of the rules and regulations have not been tested fully in the European Court. I think that it was the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow who said that the issue may go to the European Court, and he may be right. The position is not entirely clear. I am giving what I consider to be the clearest guidance that I can at this stage.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): I am a Conservative Member with some doubt about the relevance of subsidiarity. Could the Norwegians claim that it was a matter that they should decide under subsidiarity because of its critical importance to the Norwegian economy?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: No, they cannot do that because they must and will sign up to the existing obligations and rules. Those rules cover whaling in directives such as the habitats directive—specifically aimed at whales and their protection.

The hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) and others talked about salmon. Norway will be entitled to all the rights of membership, including trade access for fish products. Article 53 of the treaty provides for the Commission to monitor the effect of serious disturbance of fishing markets and to take appropriate

[Mr. Heathcoat-Amory]

action if necessary. Once Norway is a member, if dumping can be proved or the payment of state aids by the Norwegian Government can be shown, action can be taken.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan Smith) discussed institutional reform. That is chiefly a matter for 1996, not this debate. But we share his view that there are too many Commissioners. There will be 21 if all four countries accede, which is too many. I do not know what they will all find to do. At the next intergovernmental conference I hope that we shall be able to find a way of reducing the number. I hope that it will not reduce my hon. Friend's enthusiasm to know that Mr. Delors shares his view. Mr. Delors wants a more effective, smaller Commission, whereas the maverick view might be to keep increasing the number of Commissioners so that they eventually collapse under the weight of their own expansion.

Certainly it is the view of the Government—I am happy to agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Chingford on this—that a pruning of the numbers would help us to achieve a more efficient, effective and responsive Commission. We shall work to that end in 1996.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) made several points which I shall not endeavour to answer as I tried to do so on Second Reading. However, I must take issue with one point that he made. He takes a most pessimistic view of the future development of German foreign policy. I do not share that view. In particular, he made the point—I regard it as an allegation—that Austria would become little more than a German satellite and could always be counted on to vote the German way. That is clearly wrong. In their referendum, the Austrian people did not vote 2:1 for entry in order to achieve an anschluss. They wish to join the European Union precisely because they will be able to sit alongside their German neighbours in the Council of Ministers on the basis of equality. It is precisely to avoid domination by one powerful neighbour that they believe that their relationship with Germany is best pursued in the context of a wider union.

With those few remarks, I commend clause 1 to the Committee.

Ms Quin: I welcome clause 1. It is the main clause of the Bill and the main part of the ratification process of the treaty of accession. Just as we welcomed the Bill strongly on Second Reading, so we welcome clause 1. The Minister was correct in saying that as it was the main clause it allowed a wide debate and allowed many hon. Members who had perhaps wished to speak on Second Reading to make their points on this occasion.

My hon. Friends have made many valid points, particularly on fishing, on whaling—raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks)—and on the possible consequences for European security arrangements of the accessions that we are considering today.

We have heard a variety of speeches from Conservative Members. They were somewhat different from the speeches on Second Reading. Several hon. Members almost seemed to be against enlargement. Certainly, the hon. Members for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) and for Stafford (Mr. Cash) seemed to think that this enlargement would reinforce centralism within the European Union. Many of us feel that it would not. They talked about "unthinking centralism" and seemed to suggest that the applicant countries favoured it.

The hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan Smith) talked about the commitment of the four countries, which we welcome, to high levels of social protection. He said that that was a direction that he and others did not like. I certainly do not believe that the four countries are in favour of unthinking centralism, and neither are we. It seems to me that many of the European Union countries already offer a decentralised model. I agree with the comments made by my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) about the belief in decentralisation here.

One thing that struck me in the debate was the great amount of suspicion which seems to exist among Conservative Members towards their own Foreign Office Ministers. *[Interruption.]* I am glad that they agree so strongly. It was particularly true of the remarks of the hon. Member for Stafford and perhaps even more striking in the speech of the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor), who said that he did not believe a word that the Foreign Secretary had said on fishing.

The Governments of the four countries believe strongly that it is in their interests to join the EU—including the people of Austria, as shown by their referendum result. Interestingly enough, they also feel that the terms of entry meet their concerns. Perhaps in that respect they are somewhat more fortunate than we were when we joined some 20 years ago. It is now up to the people of those countries where referendums have not yet been held to give their views. I hope that they will be encouraged by the support that most of us in the Committee have given to them tonight.

Mr. Spearing *rose—*

Mr. Timothy Kirkhope (Lords Commissioner to the Treasury): I beg to move, That the Question be now put.

Mr. Spearing: Let us have some democracy in this place.

The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order.

Question, That the Question be now put, *put and agreed to.*

Question put accordingly and agreed to.

Clause 1 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 2

POWERS OF EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT.

Question proposed, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

10.30 pm

Sir Teddy Taylor: I wish to make one brief point which is of some significance, and I would appreciate the Minister's view on it. When we passed the Maastricht treaty, we were told that when we became citizens of the European Union we had certain entitlements given to us in relation to voting in European elections and in council elections.

Although I did not choose to become such a citizen, can the Minister say how article 13 on page 359 of the treaty conforms to that? The article provides that member states

who find that 20 per cent. of their citizens are citizens not of their country but of other parts of the European Union can say that those people cannot vote unless they have resided in that country for five years and cannot stand for election unless they have resided there for ten years. That is set out in detail in article 13 of page 359. Can the Minister say why the Government accepted that and, in particular, whether it does not conflict totally with the assurances given in Maastricht on the rights of European citizens?

My second point is also brief. As the treaty also excludes certain areas of Norway and Sweden from having representation in the European Parliament—the Minister kindly provided detailed written answers on 11 July on the matter—is that also in conflict with Maastricht? It seems to be almost a form of ethnic cleansing. If that applied in Britain, and we felt that 20 per cent. of our voters were French, German, Italian or from other parts of the Union, we could say that they would have to have had five years' residence. That seems to be an unusual clause which does not seem to have any relevance to the previous treaty. Why on earth was it put in the treaty at all?

Mr. Spearing: First, may I apologise for a wholly out of order remark, Mr. Lofthouse? You may realise that a brief contribution at the end of the previous debate might have been of interest, particularly as the Minister rose when the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) and myself had indicated that we wished to speak. I will not pursue that matter because we are now debating clause 2.

I wish to ask—why is the clause here? We are all, whether we like it or not, citizens of the European Union and we all have a vote for the European Parliament. If the powers of the European Parliament were being expanded by virtue of the treaty of accession, under the European Assembly Elections Act 1981, there must be permission for that in an Act of Parliament.

I hope that the Minister can tell us why the clause is here. I was not aware that the treaty of accession, as distinct from the treaty of Union, enlarged the powers of the European Parliament, although of course it would enlarge its membership.

Mr. Biffen: What I have to say is tolerably brief and could certainly be as easily contained in a debate on clause 1 as on clause 2. It does not require much elasticity to ensure that it can relate to clause 2. I want to talk about the principles of consent which are contained in the Bill. I want to do so in the context of a quite remarkable speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash). It will not be the first occasion when a parliamentary campaign is conducted with relentless concentration upon one central issue which it is believed will have growing dominance in the public perception of what is at stake.

I note that my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) is in his place. He adds great intellectual distinction to our gatherings—a Greek planted among Romans—and he will confirm that Cicero warned again and again about the danger that Carthage posed for Rome. In that tradition, my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford is claiming that we cannot understand the European Union, or the implications of this Bill, or the enlargement process described in it, without relating it all to German policy. Those who believe that enlargement will, as it were, modify the sharpness of Germany have got it wrong. Enlargement will merely serve to underline the German confrontation with the rest of Europe that will almost inevitably proceed from the collapse of Soviet power as Europe reverts to its more historic power structures.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford on the determination with which he pursues the argument. I happen to disagree with it; I would not want hon. Members to think that I share that view of Germany. I do say, however, that we cannot understand what is developing in Europe without trying to see it through the eyes of the major European power. That does not entail facile performances of the type that President Kennedy attempted when he went to Germany and said, "Ich bin ein Berliner". That was all very well for a word bite, but our perceptions and judgments must be a good deal more sustained than that.

I welcome the clarity that my hon. Friend brings to these debates, although I also understand why the Minister did not immediately endorse his arguments. This is a debate that will remain with us. I look forward to more—perhaps briefer—contributions with the same degree of persistence by my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford.

To return to my theme of consent: clause 2 mentions the European Parliament, perhaps the institution most clearly linked to the idea of consent in all this. As we are being somewhat intellectual this evening, I should like to recall Shakespeare's comment that

"a monarch needs no unwilling subjects".

The truth about the European Community is that it is a bosses' show, a bureaucrats' show, a politicians' show. It has never been a people's Europe, although I know the Liberal Democrats hope to develop that idea.

Perhaps the most depressing feature of the recent European elections was the fact that so few people turned out to vote, and they do so in diminishing numbers at each election. Worse still, in almost every country the elections were fought on every subject under the sun—except the European Union. There is no basis for the EU in popular consent, which has been lacking even when a referendum has been used as a device to secure endorsement. The consequences of using that device have been relatively short lived.

My observations arise not out of any hostility for the arrangements that we have in the European Union but out of the fact that what I have described is the truth. Any analysis rooted in realism must accept that. Some of my hon. Friends have begun to develop a dialectic that contrasts widening with deepening. Those who claim that deepening must parallel widening must be quite sure what they mean by deepening. They had better be quite clear as to what further commitments should be made and, above all, they have to be able to demonstrate that the powers that will be taken by Government do not have to take account of the very thin levels of popular support for the European Union across all its functions.

I make that observation with no great foreboding or warning, except that if we are to have a debate about the balance between widening and deepening, let it be quite clear that unless and until we have clear, enduring evidence of popular affection for the European Union as a concept which commands loyalty and, above all, will support sacrifice—because government is about ordering priorities and the sacrifice that goes with ordering priorities—and if that mood and that commitment does not exist, whatever

[Mr. Biffen]

we advocate in respect of deepening has to take that severely into account or once more we shall embark upon a false trail which will end in disillusion.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I shall try briefly to answer one or two of the points that have been raised. I shall have to write to my hon. Friends, particularly my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor), who raised a rather detailed point. One might say that he has taken out one of my stumps as I am not aware of the particular residency voting requirements in the clause to which he drew attention.

In answer to my hon. Friend's other point, there are provisions for some of the states, particularly Norway and Finland, to decide later whether they wish to include particular areas in the franchise for the European Parliament. My hon. Friend may be referring in particular to the Aland islands, which enjoy a high degree of autonomy within Finland. The Finnish Government have not yet decided whether they should be directly represented in the European Parliament.

The hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) asked what was the point of the clause. We are required to legislate through the House when the powers of the European Parliament are enhanced in any way. They are in one small and detailed respect: the European Parliament will have the power to vet and approve the credentials of Members of the European Parliament elected between now and the end of the year from the accession states, in the event that in the next few months any of those countries wish to elect people to sit in the European Parliament. After 1 January next year, their credentials will have to be approved and that power, small though it is, will pass to the European Parliament.

In answer to my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen), I cannot possibly satisfy him or give him an adequate answer, except that I entirely accept his point about the need to take the people with us. One of the lessons of Maastricht was that the political class in Europe got well ahead of the people that it represented. It behoves us all to try to create a Europe for people, not one to satisfy political vanities or bureaucratic convenience.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 2 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 3 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

New clause 4

CLARIFICATION

"Within 12 months of the ratification of the treaty the Secretary of State shall present to parliament a report on the implications of the treaty for the finances of the European Union, its agricultural policy and its fishing industry.'.—*[Sir Teddy Taylor.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Sir Teddy Taylor: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

This is the only amendment which has been selected out of five pages of amendments, not because the Chairman of Ways and Means has become mean, but because in every single piece of European legislation the Government are becoming more clever in having a short title which prevents any detailed discussion on almost anything. Only through the skills of our own researchers are we able to have one particular amendment discussed in new clause 4.

The Government should be aware that it does not exactly help democracy when Members of Parliament are unable to discuss any aspect of policy in detail. While they are certainly very clever, conscientious and able, it does not exactly help democracy when we have a Bill which contains many important issues, but Parliament is unable to discuss them at all.

My new clause is simple. It suggests:

"Within 12 months of the ratification of the treaty the Secretary of State shall present to parliament a report on the implications of the treaty for the finances of the European Union, its agricultural policy and its fishing industry."

I think that it is a very good idea for the Government to tell hon. Members a year later whether things have turned out as they predicted. Irrespective of their views on the EC, hon. Members will surely agree that almost every day we receive information revealing that last year's pledges and assurances have turned out to be a load of rubbish, and that the Government are not really in control.

10.45 pm

It will be remembered that a Council was held in the lovely city of Edinburgh. Although they would be closing down plenty of military establishments the next day, causing much sadness among the military community, the Government agreed to give more cash to the EC, on one condition—that there were strict budgetary limits on spending. Hon. Members cheered, just as they cheered Mrs. Thatcher when we did same thing under the Single European Act. We said, "At last we have control. They cannot overspend by a penny." But we have already seen what has happened. We have seen a statement signed by the Paymaster General, which I obtained privately, and also one from Brussels, showing that, despite that pledge, our people will have to spend £1,000 million above the legal limit on agriculture in 1995 because the Commission says that that must be done. The Government say that it can be done if we spend reserve funds.

The same applies to contributions to agricultural spending. We were given assurances that things were sorted out now—that the amount would not be much more. I have challenged the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and I have with me the paper which states that in 1995 Britain will be paying an extra £2,000 million in its gross contribution. That means that every family living in every constituency, and all the poor Members of Parliament who have been assured that things are under control, will be spending an extra £3 a week.

It is all very well for some hon. Members to laugh, but there are many poor families in Britain. Many people cannot make ends meet. It is no fun for them to be told, "Sadly, we have got it wrong. You will all have to pay an extra £3 a week." It may be fun for Members of Parliament, but it is not fun for people who are finding it difficult to pay gas, water and electricity bills—people who may be unemployed. It is wrong, evil and terrible that Members of Parliament are consistently being led up the garden path and not being told the truth. Why not make a gesture of reconciliation? I am only asking the Government to come back to us a year after the treaty's ratification and say how it has worked out.

Fishermen are being told not to worry—everything will be all right. Our fishing industry will be slightly stronger, we are told, with with more opportunities; the Norwegian

industry will be all right. The plain fact is, as the Minister knows—he is one of the few honest guys in this place—that we have already agreed that in 1996 restrictions on the Spaniards will be removed. We have seen what has happened to our fishing fleet in the north: the Spaniards have cleared it out and our North sea catches are down to less than a quarter of their former value. Foreign Office Ministers may walk out of the Chamber, but they know the facts. They know that the value of our catch has fallen by three quarters. People become unemployed and all we do is offer them cash.

The Government say, "Do not worry about these countries joining; we are going to get more money. Britain will be £300 millon better off." The detailed Library papers, however, show that it is not quite as simple as that. Because we shall pay large amounts of compensation to these countries for several years in the form of transitional payments, no saving at all will be made, at least for the first four years. We are far from sure what will happen after that. I may be wrong, the Government may be wrong, but why not come back just once, in a year, and say how it worked out?

The same applies to agriculture. We are told time and again that agriculture will get better and that expenditure will go down. Yet time and again the Government's assessments are shown to be inaccurate, to be lies and misunderstandings or to be a mistake by the Foreign Office.

We cannot carry on like this. People are suffering. According to our Foreign Secretary, the average family in this country pays £28 a week extra on its food or taxes purely because of the CAP. Next year, they will be paying an extra £5 a week. That is not right.

Auditors' reports are published showing fraud and extravagance, but they are never debated in the House. I am not asking the Government to accept all that I am saying or to say that we should leave the EC or encourage others to do so or even that we should spend less money. I am simply saying that, as a gesture of reconciliation, the Government could agree to approve a clause that asks them to come back in a year and tell us how things have worked out. I do not think that that is asking too much. The Government could agree to do that just once. They could say, "We thought certain things were going to happen and they all did. How right we were"; or perhaps, "Things did not quite work out as they should." That would be far better.

My hon. Friend the Minister will probably say that we do not want to pass unnecessary legislation. We do not want to stick something into the Bill that we do not need. The Government will probably say, "Why bother about it anyway because hon. Members can ask questions?" My hon Friend the Minister is an honest chap in the Foreign Office and he knows that we cannot table questions. We cannot ask about our trade with the EC. We are told that the answers are contained in information in the Library. Sadly, the Library figures are not precise because there are many different ways of assessing them. The Government have now achieved a situation in which on many of the basic issues, such as contributions and spending on agriculture, Members can no longer ask questions; we have to go to the Library.

Just once, I want to ask our friendly Foreign Office to come back in a year and provide some figures and let us have a look. We do not even need to have a debate, although I should prefer one. This is a sensible and helpful suggestion and what has happened in the past more than justifies the request.

The new clause does not propose revolution. We are not proposing that everyone should stand on their head or that policy should change. We are simply asking for an auditor's report in one year to see how things have worked out. If the Opposition and the Government accept that, it will make us all happy. We will know that at least once we will have a proper auditor's report on what has happened, without having to listen to all the nonsense, misunderstandings and sometimes the blatant untruths that, unfortunately, we sometimes hear from the Foreign Office. Many hon. Members have tonight specified that the Foreign Office is the source of deliberate misunderstanding. That is wrong in a democracy.

Ms Quin: I congratulate the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) on at least having his new clause selected for debate. As he pointed out, he was the only person who managed to achieve that.

I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will admit that the new clause is modest in its scope. The Opposition are not particularly enthusiastic about it, simply because it refers to only certain aspects in the treaty of accession and not others. There are many other matters in that treaty that could be looked at. For example, social matters form an important section of the treaty. Other issues include environmental matters, regional matters and matters relating to democracy and open government. There is the declaration by Sweden on open government which also forms part of the accession documents.

The hon. Gentleman has made some valid points, particularly about the cost of agriculture for people on low incomes or who are living in poverty. However, if the hon. Gentleman is really concerned about poverty, he and his colleagues should speak out much more on the taxation system, the VAT rises and the deregulation employment policy of the Government, which have done a great deal to promote poverty in this country.

Six-monthly reports are presented on developments in the European Union. Issues such as those referred to in the new clause can properly be raised in those reports and in Select Committees and European Scrutiny Committees. I am not certain or convinced that the new clause is necessary. As I said earlier, we do not like its selective nature. If a report were to be presented, we would much rather that it referred to all the issues raised in the accession treaty. The hon. Member for Southend, East has an obvious and repeated distrust of the Foreign Office, so I am not sure that he would believe what was in such a report.

Mr. Wilkinson: In the debate on clause 1 stand part, I called my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) Mr. Valiant for Truth, and right hon. and hon. Members who heard his speech on the new clause will understand why. My hon. Friend and the supporters of the new clause are not asking anything extravagant or extraordinary of the Government. All we are asking is that their practice should match their rhetoric. We have often heard calls for open government and that the Government are custodians of the practice of open government.

The hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms Quin) said that the new clause is modest and not comprehensive,

[Mr. Wilkinson]

which is true. It does not refer to the environment or social policy, but it does refer to the three key issues that impinge on people's livelihoods and welfare.

The question of the European Union's finances is fundamental. My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East referred to the notional saving of £300 million over six years in our net contribution, which was described by my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary in his Second Reading speech, and the big increase in this country's gross contribution next year and probably thereafter. We want to see how that equation develops and whether we will achieve the savings that have been promised.

One needs only to take a trip around the countryside and to see the fields of oilseed rape and acres of set-aside land full of weeds to wonder whether the costly extravagance of the agricultural policy is working and whether it is in the interests of our people.

As for the fishing industry, as I mentioned in the debate on clause 1 stand part, whole communities are becoming derelict, which is a tragedy for many coastal villages throughout the land. We want to see whether policy is working out as the Government promised it would.

The new clause makes a modest, simple request of the Government. In a year's time, we want them to give an account of themselves on the important matter of the workings of the European Union after the accession of the four applicant countries, if all four join.

Mr. Winterton: I support the new clause tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor). Apart from the intervention that I made earlier, this is the first time that I have spoken in the debate. My hon. Friend said that the new clause is modest in its intent and objectives. That was confirmed by the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms Quin), who spoke for the Opposition. It is extraordinary, however, that Back Benchers have been able to debate only one amendment or new clause on a matter that I believe is of constitutional importance.

In an intervention in an earlier debate, my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) highlighted the lack of interest in Europe—in the European Community or the European Union—displayed by the people of this country. He said that the interest in and support for the European Community or European Union was in fact diminishing. I believe that the House has an important role to play, and I deeply regret the fact that it is unable to make a more meaningful contribution to debates such as this on behalf of the people whom we are here to represent. The hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) has made that point many times.

11 pm

The objectives behind the new clause are very limited. If the House does not allow its Members to represent the deep concerns of the people of this country about matters of constitutional importance such as this Bill, those people will wreak their vengeance on the political parties that have allowed the Bill to be passed in their name.

I do not think that it is unreasonable for my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East, supported by my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson), to ask the Government and the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, my hon. Friend the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory), who has displayed an understanding and realism greater than those of any other Minister at the Foreign Office, to give a sympathetic response to the new clause. Is it wrong to ask a Minister to come back to the House in 12 months' time to give an account of how the Bill has affected this country in three important areas of activity—finance, agriculture and fishing?

I accept what the hon. Member for Gateshead, East said in her brief contribution. Many of us would have wished the new clause to go even wider. If the House is to play a meaningful role in the governance of this country—in the United Kingdom and within the European Union—surely it is not too much to ask the Government to report to the House on whether what they said during the passage of the Bill was accurate and, if it was not, to provide an accurate report on precisely what has happened and to outline its actual impact.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East mentioned the cost to the people of this country of the European Community. I believe that he talked of a figure of £28 a week for each family. Is it not right that the United Kingdom Parliament should be able to judge what the Government have done and represent the interests of the people? If not, why are we debating the Bill at this time of night? *[Interruption.]* I am happy to hear a response from hon. Members who are not even within the limits of the Chamber. It is extraordinary that we should be able to debate only one modest new clause tabled in respect of a measure of such great constitutional importance.

I believe fervently in Parliament and in the role of its Back Benchers—I have been practising it for 23 years without a break. I suggest to the Minister that my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East has made a very modest request of the Government. I do not think that the Government are being honest with the House and with the people of this country unless they are prepared to report back to the House in 12 months' time to justify the policies that they have urged the House, and especially their colleagues, to adopt.

I have been brief and direct. I believe that, yet again, my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East, like my hon. Friends the Members for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin), for Stafford (Mr. Cash) and for Ruislip-Northwood, has done the people of this country a great service. My hon. Friends will go down in the history of this place as honest, direct and honourable. I ask the Government to do the same.

Mr. Marlow: I, too, intend to be brief, Mr. Lofthouse. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) for introducing the new clause, and I am especially concerned that we should have an early report on the implications of the treaty for the finances of the European Union.

One of the most important aspects is European monetary union. As we all know, that will be very expensive indeed, as countries in southern Europe are bought off through cohesion. The four applicant countries are in the penumbra of the Hun, so they will be in favour of European monetary union. Their joining the Community will make it more likely to go forward. Therefore, if we are to influence the debate on European monetary union, it is most important for the Government to make their position crystal clear at an early stage, through the report.

We know the views of the Chancellor of the Exchequer —that a European state without a single currency is

unthinkable. We know the views of the Secretary of State for the Environment—"Not tonight, Josephine. We do not know what the circumstances are; we do not know where we shall be, or what our attitude will be." Monetary union will take place by stealth.

The real question, the question to which we all need the answer, is: what are the Prime Minister's views? One could say that over the past few weeks my right hon. Friend has made a fresh start, and his fortunes are improving. Perhaps by making his position clear in the report on European monetary union he could add momentum to that recovery.

It would be useful to revisit my right hon. Friend's article in *The Economist* of 25 September 1993, in which he said that the nation state was here to stay. Is that compatible with monetary union? He also said that the people find the centralising vision of Europe alarming. Is that compatible with monetary union? He said that decision making should come closer to the people, not further away. Those issues could be reported on in the annual report.

The Prime Minister said in that article that economic and monetary union was a rain dance—something for the witch doctors. That is all sensible and encouraging stuff. But why not go further, especially as the four applicant countries will probably be hell-bent on monetary union? Let us make our position clear soon. Let us build on my right hon. Friend's success at Corfu, especially in the light of his views as expressed in the article in *The Economist*.

A real friend might say to my right hon. Friend, "John, you're on a roll. You're doing well. Cash in; take it further. The party in the country, the party in Parliament, and above all the people, want a European policy with which they can be at ease, a policy that they understand, and one that suits the United Kingdom. You've got it; go for it."

Of course we all know what a single currency would mean. It would not be a convenience for commerce or a bonanza for business. It would mean massive transfer payments. Those could be set out bit by bit in the report—

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. As is not uncommon, the hon. Gentleman is straying rather wide of the new clause. Will he get back to it?

Mr. Marlow: I have nearly come to the end of my remarks, Mr. Lofthouse.

I am saying that the Prime Minister, by bringing forward the report, could make his position with regard to monetary union crystal clear to the country. It is not a convenience for commerce or a bonanza for business. It means—these are items that could be set out in the report—a massive transfer of funds from the United Kingdom to the southern European countries. It means single interest rates and a single economy. It means harmonisation and a high rate of taxes. It means a single bank and it means inevitably that instead of being a nation state, instead of being the United Kingdom, we should become a mere province of a single, centralised European state. The decision making would be not closer but further from the people. There would be an expensive rain dance of an unrepresentative and unaccountable Government—the witch doctors of the European elite. That would bring forward a storm of resentment and ungovernability which would wash away not only the Treasury's policy and the agricultural policy, which would be reported on, but some of the aspects of European co-operation of which we are all in favour.

It could be said in the report that the British people cannot afford European monetary union and do not want European monetary union. From his statements, it is clear that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister does not want European monetary union. If the heart and mind of the Prime Minister and the hearts and minds of the people of the United Kingdom take the same view on this vital issue of policy—this vital issue of identity—does it do any harm for the Prime Minister to make that clear now? Does it do any harm for him to say, "I will never accept the single currency and I will never accept the single European state"? The two are a distinction without a difference.

Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory: I want to be helpful to my hon. Friends because I think that the provision of information to the House is important. National Parliaments should be more involved in European legislation and developments in Europe than they have been. However, the information sought in the new clause is generally available in other ways. During the passage of the Bill, we have tried to set out the implications of accession—in documentary form as well. On 29 March, we sent to the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs a fairly detailed account of the negotiations at that point.

In addition, my hon. Friends have overlooked the elaborate scrutiny system that already exists in the House. All important documents coming from the European institutions are deposited with the Select Committee on European Legislation and are available for scrutiny and debate. Indeed, I gave evidence to that Committee yesterday. Developments in the European Union are reported in six-monthly White Papers and Ministers frequently make statements on their return from Council meetings.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) in particular mentioned finance. It is true that the EC budget will have to be adjusted to take account of the states that accede, but that, too, will be the subject of scrutiny and debate. The documents will be deposited in the normal way, I hope before the end of this year.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): Is my hon. Friend aware of the sheer scale of this? The EU proposes to provide 200 million ecu in the first year for Norway alone. It is estimated that the cost of agricultural support is 2 billion ecu. Where is that extra 1.8 billion ecu to be found?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: As has frequently been made clear, agricultural support in the four countries is extremely high. One of the advantages of bringing the countries into the European Union is that it will reduce the degree of agricultural protection in Europe. Bringing them into the Union will be a net gain in terms of the reduction in agricultural protection. The overall flow of funds is to our advantage. I repeat the point that, although the common agricultural policy will remain expensive in those states, they are more than paying their own way—not only in the long term, but even during the transitional period before their systems align fully with exising policies.

The point on which I must end is that we should not legislate unless we absolutely have to. That is the principle, after all, which underlies our deregulation efforts. Given

[Mr. Heathcoat-Amory]

that all the information will be made available under normal proceedings, I must invite the Committee to reject the new clause.

Question put and negatived.

Bill reported, without amendment.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

11.15 pm

Mr. Spearing: The Committee was surprised that the Government Front-Bench spokesmen, or one part of their team, took steps to prevent the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) from contributing to an earlier debate. However, with his characteristic ingenuity and his knowledge of the rules of the House, he was able to speak.

On Third Reading, the Bill being about the Community and accession to it, I, too, would like to use the opportunity that the Standing Orders provide to make some brief remarks. The Bill is to permit the applicants, if they so wish, to join the Community—this Union which prides itself on its democratic tradition and its democratic opportunity, but which nevertheless is at something of a turning point due to the increasing dominance of one of its member states. The hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) referred a short time ago to what happened in Europe 50 years ago. Through the sacrifice of his father 50 years ago today, people like myself were spared the attacks of certain weapons in London. Those of us who survived that period were determined that after that war Europe would be a place where such a war could not happen again.

The Bill and the Community that we are offering to our Scandinavian neighbours is founded on treaties which cannot—and, I fear, will not—provide that sense of security, of democracy, of co-operation that we all sought 50 years ago. The reason is that, instead of encouraging co-operation, the Community's treaties encourage competition. Instead of going about things in an open way, they encourage package bargaining and secret negotiation. That is why our friends in Germany, in seeking to keep the freedom of their lands, are advocating a federal structure which some Conservative Members and others in this country rightly fear so much.

In other words, the Bill will enable our Scandinavian neighbours, if they so wish, to accede to a Community whose constitution and whose treaties are flawed because they do not serve the purposes for which they are advertised and cannot bear the fruit for which they are constantly praised and, one hopes, expected to produce. I do not think that they can achieve those objectives.

The right hon. Member for Shropshire, North, myself and others have not thought this because of antagonism towards our friends in Europe. It is the opposite of that. We want to ensure that friendship is founded on real democracy, real freedom and real open government, but we fear that these treaties will not ensure that. I hope that our Scandinavian friends, having been given the opportunity to choose whether to stand aside and to co-operate outside the alleged Community and the alleged Union, will opt to do so. It will be to their advantage and to the advantage of all countries in Europe if they choose not to accede at this stage. It will also be to the advantage of the House, the quality of politics in this land and the citizens of the United Kingdom.

11.20 pm

Mr. Marlow: I shall be incredibly brief. We are in favour, apparently, of bringing these countries into the European Community because Europe is moving our way, because they will agree with us and because they will help us to move Europe our way. Apparently they will help us to reform the institutions of Europe.

I have a suggestion for the Government. Money is power, and the less money the institutions of the European Community have, the less power they have—so do not bring forward the European Community finance Bill. Our finances have changed and Europe's finances have changed. There is massive fraud. We know that £300 million is being wasted on the European Parliament. We are taxing our elderly people to pay for their heating and we cannot afford it. Let us cut off the supply of money and add that to the alliance that we shall have with the four new countries of the European Community. Let us beat some sense into the heads of the bureaucrats of Brussels.

11.21 pm

Ms Quin: On Second Reading, the Opposition warmly welcomed the Bill and the accession treaty. Today's debates have not changed our minds. There have been many contributions and it seems that, especially among Conservative Members, the penny has dropped. There seems to be an understanding that the countries joining the European Union have European policies and domestic policies which have a great deal in common with Labour and rather less in common with the Government's views. That makes us, the Opposition, even keener about enlargement.

The right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) said that we risk not always taking the peoples of Europe with us in many of the matters that are discussed in the European Union and decided upon. He talked of the danger of a democratic gap between the European institutions and the people. It is important for us to demystify Europe and to make it relevant. We believe that the four new countries will help us to do that. Their commitment to open government—as a reality and not just rhetoric—is welcome.

The four applicant countries will bring considerable economic, social and environmental assets to the European Union, and they will help to make it more democratic. We welcome that, and we welcome them. We are pleased that the Bill is having its Third Reading.

11.22 pm

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

Members' Allowances

11.23 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): I beg to move,

That, in the opinion of this House, the following provisions should have effect—

Part A. Office costs allowance

(1) The limit on the office costs allowance—

(a) for any quarter in the year beginning with 1st April 1994, should be the amount obtained by increasing the limit for a quarter in the immediately preceding year by 2.3 per cent; and

(b) for any quarter in any subsequent year, should be the amount obtained by increasing the limit for a quarter in the immediately preceding year by the percentage by which the retail prices index for March in that immediately preceding year has increased compared with the retail prices index for the previous March.

(2) The limit on the office costs allowance in relation to Mr. David Blunkett should be 2.57 times that determined in accordance with paragraph (1) of this Part of this Resolution.

(3) Any limit determined in accordance with this Part of this Resolution should be calculated to the nearest pound.

(4) In this Part of this Resolution—

"quarter" means a period of three months beginning with 1st April, 1st July, 1st October or 1st January;

"year" means a period of twelve months beginning with 1st April.

(5) The references in paragraph (1)(b) of this Part of this Resolution to the retail prices index are references to the general index of retail prices (for all items) published by the Central Statistical Office; but if that index is not published for a month which is relevant for the purposes of this Part of this Resolution, those references in that paragraph shall be construed as references to any index or index figure published in place of that index.

Part B. Supplementary London allowance

(1) The annual rate of the supplementary London allowance—

(a) for the period of three months beginning with 1st January 1994, should be the amount obtained by increasing the annual rate at which the allowance was paid immediately before that period by 1.5 per cent;

(b) for the year beginning with 1st April 1994, should be the amount obtained by increasing the annual rate determined in accordance with sub-paragraph (a) of this paragraph by 0.4 per cent; and

(c) for any subsequent year, should be the amount obtained by increasing the rate for the immediately preceding year by the percentage by which the retail prices index for March in that immediately preceding year has increased compared with the retail prices index for the previous March.

(2) Any rate determined in accordance with this Part of this Resolution should be calculated to the nearest pound.

(3) In this Part of this Resolution—

"the supplementary London allowance" means the allowance payable in accordance with paragraph (1) of the Resolution of 20th December 1971 relating to Parliamentary expenses;

"year" means a period of twelve months beginning with 1st April.

(4) The references in paragraph (1)(c) of this Part of this Resolution to the retail prices index are references to the general index of retail prices (for all items) published by the Central Statistical Office; but if that index is not published for a month which is relevant for the purposes of this Part of this Resolution, those references in that paragraph shall be construed as references to any index or index figure published in place of that index.

Part C. Additional costs allowance

(1) The annual limit on the additional costs allowance—

(a) for the year beginning with 1st April 1993, should be the amount obtained by increasing the relevant limit by 1 per cent;

(b) for the year beginning with 1st April 1994, should be the amount obtained by increasing the annual limit determined in accordance with sub-paragraph (a) of this paragraph by 1.81 per cent; and

(c) for any subsequent year, should be the amount obtained by increasing the limit for the immediately preceding year by the percentage by which the retail prices index for March in that immediately preceding year has increased compared with the retail prices index for the previous March.

(2) For the purposes of paragraph (1)(a) of this Part of this Resolution the relevant limit is the amount equal to 144 times the Class A(i) London rate for a night's subsistence which took effect in the Civil Service on 1st August 1992.

(3) Any limit determined in accordance with this Part of this Resolution should be calculated to the nearest pound.

(4) In this Part of this Resolution—

"the additional costs allowance" means the allowance payable in accordance with paragraph (2) of the Resolution of 20th December 1971 relating to Parliamentary expenses;

"year" means a period of twelve months beginning with 1st April.

(5) The references in paragraph (1)(c) of this Part of this Resolution to the retail prices index are references to the general index of retail prices (for all items) published by the Central Statistical Office; but if that index is not published for a month which is relevant for the purposes of this Part of this Resolution, those references in that paragraph shall be construed as references to any index or index figure published in place of that index.

Part D. Car mileage allowance

(1) Paragraph (1) of the Resolution of 20th July 1984 relating to the car mileage allowance should have effect—

(a) in relation to journeys commenced in the year beginning with 1st April 1994, as if the rates per mile shown in the Table were the rates obtained by increasing each of the rates at which the allowance was previously paid by 2.3 per cent; and

(b) in relation to journeys commenced in any subsequent year, as if the rates per mile shown in the Table were the rates obtained by increasing each of the rates for the immediately preceding year by the percentage by which the retail prices index for March in that immediately preceding year has increased compared with the retail prices index for the previous March.

(2) Any rate per mile determined in accordance with this Part of this Resolution should be calculated to the nearest tenth of a penny.

(3) In this Part of this Resolution "year" means a period of twelve months beginning with 1st April.

(4) The references in paragraph (1)(b) of this Part of this Resolution to the retail prices index are references to the general index of retail prices (for all items) published by the Central Statistical Office; but if that index is not published for a month which is relevant for the purposes of this Part of this Resolution, those references in that paragraph shall be construed as references to any index or index figure published in place of that index.

Part E. Winding-up allowance

(1) The following provisions of this Part of this Resolution should have effect with respect to Members of this House who cease to be Members after 31st March 1994.

(2) Provision should be made under arrangements approved by the Speaker for an allowance to be made in respect of the expenses which, after a person has ceased to be a Member, are still required to be incurred in connection with his Parliamentary duties.

(3) The limit on that allowance should be four-thirds of the amount which, for the year in which that person ceases to be a Member, is the limit for that Member on the office costs allowance for a quarter in that year.

(4) The allowance should be paid to the person who has ceased to be a Member or, if he has died, to his personal representatives or a person nominated by him or selected under the arrangements approved by the Speaker.

(5) Any limit determined in accordance with this Part of this Resolution should be calculated to the nearest pound.

(6) In this Part of this Resolution—

"quarter" means a period of three months beginning with 1st April, 1st July, 1st October or 1st January;

"year" means a period of twelve months beginning with 1st April.

[Mr. Tony Newton]

Part F. Recall of House during a recess

(1) The following provisions of this Part of this Resolution should have effect with respect to any occasion on which, during a recess, this House is recalled before the expected end of the recess.

(2) Members who attend the House during the recall should be reimbursed in respect of such extra costs which are wholly and exclusively attributable to the recall as are necessarily incurred by them in connection with travelling—

(a) from any place to London; and

(b) during any further recess immediately following the recall, from London to any place (provided that the purpose is to fulfil, before the expected end of that further recess, plans which were in existence before the recall).

(3) For the purposes of this part of this Resolution—

(a) "recess" means not only a period when Parliament stands prorogued to a specified date but also any period when this House stands adjourned to a specified date, and the references to the expected end of a recess are references to that specified date;

(b) "reimbursement", in the case of a Member, means the payment to the Member of the amount of the extra costs concerned and the payment to the Inland Revenue, on account of the income tax liability of the Member, of the difference between that amount and such a sum as, after deduction of tax at the marginal rate applicable to the Member, is equal to that amount; and

(c) "extra costs", in the case of a Member means costs in respect of which the Member cannot be reimbursed otherwise than by virtue of this Part of this Resolution.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): I inform the House that Madam Speaker has not selected the amendment.

Mr. Newton: In case anticipation has been aroused by the length and apparent weight of the motion, I should say at the outset that it represents no major or strategic change. I hope, conversely, that it does not create too much disappointment, either.

The first four parts of the motion replace uprating mechanisms that for various reasons have ceased to work with one that does work and can be expected to continue to work.

The fifth part meets a problem that has arisen because of the greater contractual commitments that Members these days are finding it necessary to enter into. It is merely designed to ensure that those commitments can be met if a Member dies or ceases to be a Member for any other reason.

The sixth part corrects an anomaly which has hitherto meant that, if Parliament is recalled during a recess, Ministers can receive help with the expenses incurred but Members cannot. I hasten to add that the correction takes the form of extending help to Members and not taking it away from Ministers.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Will Members be reimbursed retrospectively for being called back? I was called back from Australia just over a year ago. That was hugely expensive.

Mr. Newton: I am afraid that it is not retrospective, and I cannot hold out hopes of anything other than sympathy to the hon. Gentleman this evening.

I will deal first briefly with the four existing allowances uprating mechanisms that have failed. The main one is, of course, the office costs allowance. That was formerly increased with effect from each April by reference to the pay of senior secretaries in the civil service. However, in the same way as the move to new civil service pay arrangements broke the old automatic linkage for Members' pay, which we replaced last year, so this one too is breaking down and needs to be replaced.

The additional costs allowance, to help with the problem of Members needing accommodation in two locations, was formerly uprated in August by reference to civil service overnight subsistence rates. With greater delegation to individual Departments, that too has ceased to be viable.

The position in regard to its near relation, the London supplement, is a little more complicated. Essentially, however, it is that it used to be linked to the inner London weighting paid to civil servants. That is being replaced by a recruitment and retention allowance paid at the discretion of individual Departments—which, once again, makes it unusable as an uprating mechanism.

Lastly, the motor mileage allowance used to be tied, in a very specific and detailed way, to a schedule of motoring costs which is no longer available in a form which can be operated within the terms of the underlying resolution of the House. Here too, therefore, we need a new uprating mechanism.

Against that background, we spent some time considering the possibility of devising what might be called fancy new mechanisms which could be presented as in some way cleverly and specifically related to each of those different purposes. We concluded that all of them would be vulnerable to endless argument, and probably in due course once again be overtaken by change comparable with what has caused the present problem.

We therefore decided that far and away the simplest, most straightforward and most sensible solution was to link them all to the retail prices index. That also has what I, and I suspect the House, regard as the inestimable advantage of being the most durable solution—that is, the one most likely to remain workable on an automatic basis, and thus to avoid the need for the House to have to keep passing new resolutions.

That is what the first four parts of this resolution do: they provide for all four allowances to be uprated with effect from April 1994 by reference to the RPI, and henceforth to be uprated with effect from each succeeding April by reference to the RPI.

The only reason for the slight variation in the actual percentage increases from April 1994 is that we have also taken the opportunity to make another sensible simplification, which is to end the variations of uprating date and to put everything on to an April to March basis.

Thus, the office costs and motor mileage allowances rise by 2.3 per cent., which is the RPI increase from April 1993 to April 1994. The London supplement rises by 1.9 per cent., which represents 1.5 per cent. due from January 1994 in respect of an earlier increase in the civil service inner London weighting, plus 0.4 per cent. for the RPI increase in the three months from January. The additional costs allowance rises by a little more—2.8 per cent.—but only, I emphasise, because that relates not to 12 months but to a 20-month period since its last uprating in August 1992.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): I should like my right hon. Friend to clarify a point relating to the office costs allowance with particular reference to the amount that we pay our secretaries or research assistants. In essence, is the increase being limited to 2.3 per cent.? If that is the case, it is lower than the increase being granted to the civil service, and that would be very unfair to our

secretaries, who do a great deal of work and who often have to work very long hours. Is my understanding correct?

Mr. Newton: I have explained, I hope fairly clearly —although I am moving fairly rapidly because I sense that it is probably the wish of the House that I should do that —that we have used the RPI as the most sensible and straightforward mechanism.

The office costs allowance, which was substantially increased a couple of years ago, as my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) will recall, embraces several other costs, such as equipment costs and others, which are not salary costs these days and which hon. Members meet. I judge that that mechanism remains the most sensible solution overall.

Sir Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare): My right hon. Friend based his argument about the increase in the allowances on the basis that they were originally fair. However, the additional London living allowance is based on the average number of sittings days of the House multiplied by the allowance given to a civil servant for one night in London.

How is it possible for any hon. Member to rent a flat or have any living accommodation on the basis of such a calculation? Is my right hon. Friend seriously suggesting that there was any fairness in that calculation in the first place? Will he confirm that all the allowances are paid against proven costs, as costs, to hon. Members, and there is no question of them being a benefit?

Mr. Newton: That is certainly the case, and I was going to say later that it is absolutely clear that allowances are generally paid against claims that the expenses have been wholly and necessarily incurred in the performance and pursuit of parliamentary duties.

On my hon. Friend's first point, it will ultimately be a matter for the judgment of the House, but I judged that some attempt to look strategically at this or any other allowance now would not have been the most sensible thing to do. I thought that it would be better to establish a sensible uprating mechanism.

In the process of what I am proposing, we have moved away from the position whereby the uprating depended on overnight subsistence costs, which in turn related partly to hotel charges. One reason why the additional costs allowance rose very little for a couple of years was the effect of the recession on hotel charges, which rose very little. The move to an RPI indexing system will at least ensure that my hon. Friend will receive a more sensible deal than he would otherwise have done.

I can sum up this part of my speech in two sentences. The purpose is simply to allow the limits on claims for expenses necessarily incurred by hon. Members in fulfilling their duties to be updated for inflation, and to ensure that they are annually updated in future. None of the increases, looked at on an annual basis, exceeds 2.3 per cent.

I turn now to the fifth leg of the resolution, which involves the winding-up allowance. That is the amount, currently a maximum of one sixth of the office costs allowance, which is intended to enable Members—or their executors where the issue unhappily arises as a result of death—to clear up their obligations after leaving the House. It has become clear that this amount is now inadequate in the light of, for example, prevailing contracts of employment with staff and the periods of notice which are often required in relation to the increasing amount of equipment that Members have.

Having taken advice from the Fees Office, I now propose that the allowance should be set at a maximum of one third of the annual office costs allowance, although Members will see that, for technical reasons connected with the way that the basic allowance is defined, the motion is drafted in terms of four thirds of the quarterly allowance.

In addition, the motion widens the scope of costs that can be covered from purely secretarial to all necessary costs. I emphasise, of course, that, in common with the OCA, and indeed others, the new figure is a ceiling to which legitimate costs can be claimed, and not in any way an entitlement.

Finally, I come to part F of the resolution, which introduces a new allowance to cover the necessary expenses of Members returning to Westminster in the event of a recall of Parliament during a recess—not, I should say, that we are planning one. *[Interruption.]* We are planning a recess.

As I said earlier, the present position is that Ministers faced with a recall can have their expenses covered by their Departments, but no such protection is available to other Members. The motion proposes that Members faced by a recall during a recess should be covered for all costs "wholly and exclusively attributable to the recall", which includes, assuming that time and plans make it reasonable, the expenses also of travelling to resume a holiday. This is not, of course, an allowance we would expect to be activated very often, but I think it a reasonable safeguard to introduce for Members who need or wish to attend the House in the event of a recall, and I hope hon. Members will agree with me.

Indeed, I need hardly say that I hope they will agree with, and support, the resolution as a whole. I believe it to be reasonable, realistic and restrained, and I commend it to the House.

11.33 pm

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): We are considering the recommendations in the shadow of recent events. We all recall what happened two years ago, when we took a decision, by a majority of the House, to increase the allowances paid by a large sum. That decision was unpopular outside the House, and the decisions that we take tonight will be seen in the twilight of the events that have taken place in the past three or four days. There is a great deal of cynicism about our status here. Most of it is unjustified, but we have to bear it in mind.

We heard tonight from the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) for the Liberal Democrats that an offer in excess of £10,000 was made to a Member of this House for secretly carrying out a small duty of booking rooms. That is the type of information that will be presented in the press tomorrow along with the recommendations that we make tonight. I believe that the recommendations are prudent and sensible.

We could put into our recommendations, if not tonight then on a future occasion, the same conditions that we lay down for other people who live off public money—those who live on income support. Those people have their ceiling of income support, as we have our recommended ceiling, which we have agreed. If they receive income in excess of that amount, of even a fiver a week, that amount is deducted pound for pound from their income support. In

[Mr. Paul Flynn]

order to defend our position, if income comes into our pockets for doing parliamentary duties, we should consider deducting that amount pound for pound from the amount that we receive.

When we took the decision to increase our allowances two years ago, 53 hon. Members opposed the increase. Those awkward 53 Members had substantial outside interests, which I believe brought them in a great deal of money. They opposed the increase, and I presume that they do not take the full allowance now. I believe that we are equal as Back-Bench Members of Parliament. We have agreed on a certain amount, and that should be the ceiling.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): We are talking about the office costs allowance, which is the expense of running an office. Is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that the money that he receives from the trade union, which goes for running his office in the constituency, should be deducted from his allowance? If hon. Members receive money to run the parliamentary office from other sources, the hon. Gentleman has a point. Most Labour Members receive large amounts of money from the unions to run their offices.

Mr. Flynn: I must explain to the hon. Gentleman that I and many other hon. Members receive not a penny from a trade union or any other organisation. I believe that the 14 per cent. of Labour Members who receive sums of money from trade unions and commercial bodies should act in exactly the same way as the 85 per cent. of Conservative Members who receive such pay.

If the amount that the House decided was appropriate for the office costs allowance was applied to everyone, the House could take a more realistic decision on what the office costs allowance should be. Some Members voted for a low office costs allowance when they realised that vast amounts of other funds would come into their office to do exactly the same job that all the rest of us do.

We have to look at the matter with some realism, and recall the decision that we took two years ago. The many Members who opposed the increase two years ago should consider the amount of money that comes into them. We must restore respect to the House, which we all love. It is the centre of our lives. We regret the comments that are being made about the House and Members of the House.

We have to say that any money that comes in to us, wherever it comes from, whether it is for making speeches or acting in the long term for a company, should be set against our allowance. As has been said, there is little difference between someone being paid a set amount to ask a single question, and someone being paid a substantial amount to act on behalf of a certain company over a period of years.

There is another point, which has probably been made. We have had a debate on the pensions industry and a debate on the Trade Marks Bill in the Chamber in recent months. In both debates, only one Conservative Member spoke who did not have a financial interest in the subject. Those hon. Members were speaking not on behalf of their constituents or their party, but on behalf of companies outside. Neither a trade union party nor a Transport and General Workers party stood at the election. There was not a Legal and General party—or an Ian Greer party—standing at the general election. People voted for the Labour and Conservative parties.

We have degraded our own democracy, and we have prostituted it. We have become so used to the atmosphere of soft corruption in the House that Members are shocked when they hear that what they are doing is wrong, and deeply wrong.

11.39 pm

Sir Peter Fry (Wellingborough): I do not intend to follow what the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) said. My inclination is to say that any Member of Parliament who feels that his allowances are too high does not have to claim them. Anybody who feels that he is paid too much ean pay it back to the Chancellor, who would be delighted to receive it.

My comments will be confined to the car mileage allowance. I say to the Leader of the House, with respect, that I believe that the car mileage allowance is rather different from other allowances. It was historically fixed to a scale of mileage allowances proposed by the Royal Automobile Club, but we know that that scale of allowances has long since disappeared. The problem has been how we are to peg the car allowance to a more realistic figure.

The fact that the original figure upon which we now base the allowance is years out of date does not give me the utmost confidence that we have the right formula. I would point out to my right hon. Friend that, perhaps unlike other allowances, the amount of money that is required to run a car could well rise, and, if the Chancellor keeps to what he said in the previous Budget statement, it will rise considerably faster than the cost of living.

Therefore, we shall progressively find that, unless some other things happen, Members will be increasingly expected to provide more out of their other taxed income to use on the car on parliamentary business. The only way that that can be avoided is to ensure that, when the Inland Revenue comes to the point of deciding whether any of the car allowance should be taxed, it should take into account what the cost is, and raise the amount that it allows before tax applies.

The present system for those who are now roughly paying the full amount of tax on the mileage allowance is such that, in many cases, Members are literally at break-even point. Certainly there is no question of their making any additional income from the car allowance. That makes it more important that we are careful in that respect.

If we accept my right hon. Friend's recommendations tonight, does he not agree that a message should be imparted to the Commissioners of Inland Revenue that the figure that they accept before tax is due on the mileage allowance is also altered to take into account not just the rise in cost of living but the actual rise in the cost of running a car while on parliamentary business?

11.42 pm

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): I congratulate the Leader of the House on his report to the House. It is never the right time to talk about allowances or salaries. I know full well that, despite the interventions from one or

two Members, what has been done tonight shall be seen in the press as being a payment to the Member, not a payment relating to costs incurred.

Sir Jerry Wiggin *indicated assent.*

Mr. Hoyle: The hon. Member nods his head, and he made a similar point a little earlier.

I know that that will happen. We are rightly bringing some relief to our hard-worked secretaries and research assistants, who are absolutely necessary for us to run our offices. It is pleasing to hear tonight that, in future, there will be an automatic allowance based on the retail prices index.

Speaking as a Back Bencher, and not in my position as chair of the parliamentary Labour party, I should like to ask that thought be given in future to ensuring that that allowance is not part of a Member's allowance, and that secretaries and research assistants are paid as though they were in the civil service. That would not prevent Members from choosing their own research assistants or secretaries, but it would mean that they were paid the right salaries, based on a civil service grade. It might also offer them career prospects.

I believe that, if a Member dies or retires, his staff should be kept on if possible. New Members arriving after an election could then select staff with experience. These people would also be available to help out Members whose secretaries were ill or on holiday—a better system altogether.

It would be good to have a House personnel officer to advise us on these matters. What I propose would also remove the uncertainties surrounding what research assistants and secretaries should be paid; they would be paid against a definite grade.

Perhaps the employer's element of our assistants' national insurance contributions could be paid, too. That would remove from Members the difficult choices of how much they can afford to pay in salary increases for their hard-worked staff, or whether to spend the money on office equipment. That too would afford us some relief.

The rest of the proposals are correct, in my submission. The change to the supplementary London allowance will help Members with London constituencies. I agree also with what has been said about the additional costs that may be associated with the car mileage allowance. It is right, furthermore, to equate Members with Ministers when it comes to reimbursement for the costs involved in a recall of Parliament during the recess.

I know from conversations with the Leader of the House that one of the difficulties has been finding a civil service grade to which to attach these figures. Now we are to base them on the retail prices index, so we shall not have to go through the whole process again. That is welcome.

I congratulate the right hon. Gentleman. I know that it has not been easy to achieve what he has done—there is never a right time, as I said—but the proposals in respect of the office costs allowance will, I hope, benefit our staff.

11.46 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Can the Leader of the House assure us that the car mileage allowance policy is consistent with Government policies on reducing car use, and compatible with the idea of using the smallest, most fuel-efficient cars that are commensurate with our duties?

11.47 pm

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): I ask the Leader of the House to reconsider the position of staff who are off sick or on maternity leave. Our current allowances do not adequately cover this problem. I recognise the difficulties, but increasingly Members' allowances are fully committed, and that can put Members whose staff are off sick or on maternity leave under pressure.

I appreciate that the right hon. Gentleman cannot give me a commitment tonight, but I ask him for an assurance that he will review an arrangement which has been in place now for a number of years, and which should be updated.

11.48 pm

Mr. Newton: Other hon. Members have raised with me the same point as the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) has just mentioned, and I am looking into it. I am sorry that I have not managed to find a solution to put before the House tonight.

I have taken note of other hon. Members' points. I have to say to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) that I view his points with a little less sympathy than some of the others that were put to me.

I shall certainly ensure that the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough (Sir P. Fry) is drawn to the attention of those to whom it was directed, and I would say to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) that I am a member of the Government, so I regard what I have suggested as being consistent with Government policy.

Question put and agreed to.

Members' Interests

11.50 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): I beg to move,

That this House approves the proposals in paragraph 18 of the Second Report from the Select Committee on Members' Interests (House of Commons Paper No. 353).

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Madam Speaker wishes me to announce that she has selected the amendment in the name of the hon. Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Mr. Michie).

Mr. Newton: This is now the sixth speech I have made on House of Commons issues since Monday and I shall try to keep this one reasonably crisp and brief.

I can be brief because the purpose of the resolution is simply to implement recommendations from the Select Committee on Members' Interests, whose Chairman will no doubt seek to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to set out in more detail the Committee's proposals and the reasons for them.

The House will probably need little reminding of the background. In March 1992, the Committee produced a major report on the registration and declaration of Members' interests. That report was debated on the Adjournment in June 1992 and formally approved by resolution of the House in June last year.

Most of the changes, which were substantial, have proved acceptable and appear to have worked without difficulty. That cannot, however, be said to have been the case in relation to the new requirement that Members who are members of Lloyd's should not only register that fact, but also list their syndicate numbers for the current year and their membership of any syndicates which remain unclosed. This requirement has led to difficulty well known to the House and complaints from a number of Members who argued strongly that those requirements went beyond what was reasonable compared with what is required in other fields and exposed them to intrusive, inaccurate and damaging speculation about the details of their financial affairs.

The Committee, therefore, and in my view rightly, decided to carry out a further inquiry and to make another report to the House. It is the recommendations of that report for further changes, having examined those complaints, that are the subject of this motion.

Essentially, the Committee has accepted that the requirements introduced last year have indeed inadvertently upset the balance between the accepted need for disclosure and the accepted need for hon. Members and their families to a proper degree of personal privacy. Its recommendations seek to restore what it believes to be reasonable balance while still going beyond the requirements of earlier years, and at the same time to take account of new developments in the Lloyd's market, in particular the introduction of what are known as members' agent pooling arrangements—MAPA—which on their own would clearly have necessitated some reconsideration.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith), the Chairman of the Committee, and his Committee performed a valuable service to the House in being willing to look again at what is appropriate in this difficult area and what they have proposed deserves the support of the House.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington) *rose—*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I call Mr. Bill Michie to move the amendment.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Has the Leader of the House actually read the report? What about the deprecation by the Select Committee?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Those are not questions for the Chair. I call Mr. Michie to move the amendment.

11.53 pm

Mr. Bill Michie (Sheffield, Heeley): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question, and to add instead thereof:

'takes note of the Second Report from the Select Committee on Members' Interests (House of Commons Paper No. 353); but considers that the existing rule on the registration of Lloyd's syndicate numbers is reasonable and necessary in the interests of transparency and that all honourable Members who are underwriting members of Lloyd's should comply with it.'.

May I first express my gratitude to Madam Speaker for allowing the amendment to be debated? I do not consider that the motion on the Order Paper in any way reflects what was discussed and voted on in Committee. That is why I tabled the amendment.

The debate took place over many months, going through a tremendous amount of detail interviewing individual hon. Members and the people of Lloyd's on the new arrangements to apply after 1991. The motion before us tonight does not reflect the issues that were before the Committee.

There were two totally separate issues. First, some hon. Members did not comply with the will of the House. We had to write to them and the Chairman, who is here this evening, had to talk to them. We had written submissions from some, and none from others. We gave them yet another opportunity to explain why they had refused to comply with the will of the House.

The House also gave the Committee the job of considering the changes that had taken place in the Lloyd's market since 1991-92. Even now, I have no doubt whatever that those two issues were meant to be separate and should have remained so, although obviously the Committee can deal with more than one issue at a time.

Slowly but surely, however, the Committee began to merge the two issues. I protested more than once. Finally, on Tuesday 24 May—I stand to be corrected, but I doubt that I am wrong—the issue of how the report should be framed was discussed again, and

"the prevailing view in the Committee appeared to favour the Chairman's proposal of a single Report divided clearly into two parts, although Mr. Michie protested strongly that this ran counter to the understanding on which the Committee's original decision to take evidence from Lloyd's had been based."

We knew that there had been changes in the Lloyd's rules and their interpretation. No one doubted that the implications for the future had to be considered; but that had nothing to do with the fact that certain right hon. and hon. Members had flatly refused to comply with the rules of the House. Any mere Back Bencher who did that in any other context would be crucified. But the Committee went on and on; excuse after excuse was given for why the details could not be given. It mentioned intrusion into personal finances, embarrassment to families and so forth.

Hon. Members may ask what difference the merging of the two reports makes. I believe that it makes a tremendous

difference. After all our deliberations, however, we ended up with the bland statement on the Order Paper—not a reprimand for hon. Members who were guilty of contempt of the House, but a recommendation that actually suits those hon. Members.

It is not just a case of "Let's look at the whole thing and come up with a consensus." No one reading the Order Paper would believe the way in which the report was worded. It is in two parts: the first deals with hon. Members who did not comply with the rule, and the second with the debate about whether we should change the rules in accordance with the new rules in the Lloyd's market. It states that

"12 Members who had registered an interest . . . had failed to comply with that additional requirement . . . The other nine Members have still not provided the required information; and two further Members have subsequently registered an interest in Lloyd's but have similarly failed to supply their syndicate numbers."

Ultimately, 11 hon. Members had failed to comply with the wish of the House.

The report states:

"The Registrar and the Chairman of this Committee have written successively to all these Members, drawing their attention to the relevant provision in the House's rules and making a formal request to them to supply details of their syndicate numbers. Eight of the 11 Members subsequently accepted an invitation to give evidence to the Committee.

There is therefore no question but that the Members' failure to provide the required information is the result of decision rather than inadvertence or any other cause.

The Registrar has informed the Committee that two of the named Members have submitted information about their syndicates to him, while withholding permission for the inclusion of the information in the published Register. We consider that this action can in no way be regarded as satisfactory compliance with the rule of the House."

The Chairman's recommendation in part I of the report states:

"Whatever the circumstances, the refusal by individual Members to comply with a rule which has been agreed by the House sets a bad precedent and is to be deprecated. We accordingly draw the attention of the House to the fact that the Members named in paragraph 3 above have refused to register their Lloyd's syndicate numbers as required by the House's resolutions of 28 June 1993."

That is damning.

The motion tabled by the Leader of the House states:

"That this House approves the proposals in paragraph 18 of the Second Report from the Select Committee on Members' Interests (House of Commons Paper No. 353)."

How can that be called a reprimand for people who told the Committee on more than one occasion to mind its own business and that it was out of order? Conservative Members are shaking their heads. I can go over this chapter and verse. I have all the drafts of what was said. It is great stuff. I will do that in private because I do not want to go on too long.

The issue of contempt has been swept under the carpet. We are changing the rules in accordance with the wishes of those who are guilty of contempt. That is what the motion means.

I do not doubt that in the future we may have to consider the new rules of the Lloyd's market and that that may be complicated. However, if because of MAPA and the change of rules we make changes because people might be embarrassed or because people are misled or misinterpret what the syndicate numbers mean, we will be making changes before things are proved. I say that because the syndicate numbers have not been registered and we do not know whether it will be embarrassing.

The Members finally said that this was intrusive and that there was a misinterpretation. The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) said that the press reports were wild, totally out of proportion and inaccurate. The strange thing is that he had not registered the syndicate numbers with the House. The few Members who did register the numbers did not suffer any embarrassment. If the press reports were wild, inaccurate and embarrassing, it was because Members did not provide the information to enable more accurate reports to be made. It is strange that the only people who have been embarrassed by the press are those who have flatly refused to give their syndicate numbers.

Let us look at registration. We had the Lloyd's people at the Committee. The MAPA business is very complicated. It is far beyond the wit of the average person. *[Interruption.]* I have to concede that I do not have the same great wisdom as members of Lloyd's

Mr. Campbell-Savours: They cannot be that wise.

Mr. Michie: My hon. Friend is right. They cannot be that wise because they put their money on a horse without knowing which horse it was and they did not know whether it came last or even ran at all. That is part of the problem. Then they go bleating to the bookie saying, "Can I have my money back because I was misinformed." Imagine somebody going back to the bookie after the Grand National. It is nonsense. They shout foul all the time.

Whatever happens tonight, at least it will be on record that some right hon. and hon. Members have got away scot free by basically saying to the House, "Get stuffed. We are greater and more powerful than you are." One of the arrogant statements that was made cannot be seen in the report because the wording has been changed. I have checked it with the Clerk. He said, "I think that I heard something like that." One of the right hon. Members said—

Mr. Michael Fabricant (Mid-Staffordshire): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. The hon. Gentleman is saying that the Clerk stated that the Committee record has been changed. Is not that outrageous?

Madam Speaker: Provided that they are in order, I am not responsible for the comments of the hon. Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Mr. Michie). Many outrageous statements are made in the House.

Mr. Michie: Coming from the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Fabricant), that point of order was a joke. I am not into slimming foods and things of that nature, so we shall not get into that subject, on which he did a good job the other week.

I did not say that the Clerk had misinterpreted, misunderstood or changed the wording. I know what happens in every Committee of that nature and a lot of it is confidential. I repeat that the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup said that, if the Select Committee probed too deeply into matters of this nature, men of substance may be disinclined to stand for Parliament. What arrogance, when one thinks about it.

The record now states that people of importance may not want to stand for Parliament, or something like that. Was that a threat to the Committee that it should not ask too many questions because, if it did, some people might not stand for Parliament? That is good news to some extent

[Mr. Michie]

because some of those so-called men of substance have only one interest, although not necessarily those in this place. I shall not suggest what that interest may be.

I come from an ordinary background, as did many hon. Members on both sides of House. We do not have to tell the Committee not to probe into our financial affairs. I am prepared to give evidence on anything, which I have not had much occasion to do. But I would not dare threaten the House by saying, "Do not probe too deep, otherwise great people like me may not stand for election to the House." For goodness sake, that is absolute arrogance.

The excuse is that, because of developments at Lloyd's and the difficulty of interpreting information, the latter have not been tested. Time and again, Committee members discussed the matter with Lloyd's representatives, who said that because of the new MAPA rule, complicated as it may be, a member may not at any one time know where his money is.

Mr. Bill Etherington (Sunderland, North): They do not know where it is themselves.

Mr. Michie: They do not even know where they are.

Members, therefore, cannot declare an interest because of their syndicate numbers. When I asked the representatives from Lloyd's whether it was possible for any member to know at any time where his money was invested, the answer was, "Yes, if they ask." That may be the case, but I still make the point that a Member should be responsible for declaring that to the Committee because that is the rule in the House.

I am not convinced by any stretch of the imagination that the good and great are right on this issue. Some might say that they are the good, the bad and the ugly, but I shall stick with the good and great. That those great people have special rights and special privileges which go beyond the will of the House is unacceptable.

Not enough time has been given for the present rules to be tried and tested. They should be given more time to work before the House considers anything else. If we pass the motion, we shall no longer reprimand those people who are in contempt and we shall concede their demands and their threats. No other group of people could get away with that. I beg hon. Members to accept my amendment for the sake of the House and democracy.

12.8 am

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): I am sorry that a member of the Select Committee on Members' Interests should propose an amendment to the motion. The hon. Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Mr. Michie) is an assiduous attender of our meetings and it is a shame that he should find himself at odds with the other members. As I hope to demonstrate, his serious charge should not be supported by hon. Members from whichever party.

If the hon. Member's charges against the Committee's findings are as serious as he claims them to be, why did not the Opposition table an amendment? I suggest that they did not do so because the findings of the Committee were based on the evidence put before us. As I shall mention later, when we consider proceedings, resolutions and rules involved in the Register of Members' Interests and the manner in which we declare those interests, it is very important that they should be seen to be fair and reasonable.

We have made it clear that the report is divided into two parts. Why publish them separately? What is wrong with publishing the two separate parts in one report so that hon. Members can ascertain our attitude towards those who did not abide by the obligations that we think were placed on them and, at the same time, see whether there is any justification, as a result of any non-compliance, for changing the rules? As I said, the changes that we have made stand four-square with the evidence put before us. If that were not the case, we should not have suggested them.

I shall be as brief as I possibly can. I do not want to go into too much detail because everything has been published, and I am sure that any hon. Member who wishes to raise an issue will do so. The hour is late; it is a short debate; and I know that other hon. Members wish to speak. We have now had the experience of seeing the printed entries in the register in which many hon. Members have disclosed their syndicate numbers. They are complicated and, in some cases, out of scale with the rest of the register. The introduction of the members' agent pooling arrangements—MAPAs—at Lloyd's at the start of this year was a development not foreseen by the Committee when it made its original recommendation in 1992 and it has greatly increased the potential complications, as I shall show.

The purpose and effect of MAPAs is to enable members of Lloyd's to spread their risk over a much wider range of insurance syndicates without increasing their overall financial commitment, just as an investor in the stock market can spread his risk by investing in a unit trust rather than in a small selection of shares. A member of Lloyd's who joined a MAPA this year will be participating in a minimum of 30 syndicates in that way alone. Next year, he may join another MAPA or the MAPA itself might change its syndicate content, but this year's MAPA will remain open for at least two more years so, under the present rule, the syndicate in it would have to remain in the hon. Member's register entry all that time, along with any new MAPAs or syndicates that he joined subsequently.

The net result was described to the Committee by a witness from Lloyd's, by which I mean an official from Lloyd's. He said that

"the entries are likely to get larger and larger as the years go on, as more and more detail may fall to be disclosed . . . becoming more and more full of numbers."

The Committee therefore sought an alternative rule that would provide information about an hon. Member's participation in the Lloyd's market, beyond the mere fact that he is an underwriting member of Lloyd's, but in a way that is more concise and more comprehensible to the layman than a long list of syndicate numbers would be.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: In reality, is a MAPA any different from a syndicate? A MAPA could have a number in the same way that a syndicate can have a number, but, whereas a syndicate relates to an individual portfolio, a MAPA relates to a portfolio that might include as few as 30 or as many as 60 syndicates. Why reverse the decision? Why not simply change the registration requirement whereby the MAPA is registered along with any syndicates to which an hon. Member belongs?

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: That would result in a bunch of numbers from which one would not be able to ascertain anything. I shall explain that as I go along, because it needs to be put clearly to the House.

The purpose of the Committee's proposal is to ensure that hon. Members who underwrite specific categories of insurance business at Lloyd's disclose those categories in their register entries in future. That is what we recommend.

Sir Ralph Howell (Norfolk, North): Will my hon. Friend now answer two questions that I have asked him in several letters? The first question is: what was the purpose of the request for members of Lloyd's to give numbers? What use could his Committee possibly make of those numbers? The second question is: what possible use can the Committee make of the new headings under which he asks us to record our underwriting?

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: The purpose is as follows. To say that one is a member of Lloyd's does not reveal whether there is a particular emphasis in the business that one does with Lloyd's. If there were a concentration of a Member's investments in one particular aspect of insurance—aviation, say—it would stand out in the Register of Members' Interests that his principal interest was aviation.

As I explained earlier, after the report was published the unit trust concept, with MAPAs, emerged, and that made the question of registration gobbledegook.

Mr. Bill Michie *rose—*

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: I really must proceed, because I am sure that plenty of other Members on both sides of the House want to catch your eye, Madam Speaker. I want to follow the steps that we took, so that they are clearer not only to my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North (Sir R. Howell) but to other hon. Members who have not followed the subject as closely as others have.

The second point openly acknowledged in the report is that the Committee has listened to the vigorous arguments and objections that have been levelled at the new rule by colleagues who are members of Lloyd's. The hon. Member for Heeley referred to that fact. Some will say that we were wrong to do that, because it sets a bad precedent. They say that in future Members who find a certain rule of registration troublesome will have only to complain loudly enough and the Committee will change it. That anxiety was expressed by members of the Committee when we discussed the issue, and I want hon. Members to know that I understand their fears. However, in this case I prefer the phrase used by my hon. Friend the Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason) in evidence to the Committee when he referred to its willingness to see "sweet reason".

The Committee certainly does not accept all the criticisms levelled both at us personally and at the new rule. In particular, we do not accept the idea that the new rule was to blame for the speculation in the media about the financial losses of individual Members. The financial and legal problems affecting Lloyd's have led to that speculation, and I fear that they will continue to do so, irrespective of any change that we may make tonight. If the rule is to blame for the speculation, why have those who have complied with it also suffered from speculation—even more than some who have not complied, it could be argued?

Nevertheless, the Committee acknowledges that information about syndicate numbers can be misused, because by combining information from the register about a Member's syndicate participation with information available at Lloyd's about the performance of each syndicate, it is possible to speculate about the financial position of individual Members.

Speculation on the basis of that information alone is bound to be wildly inaccurate, because no information is published about a name's financial commitment to any syndicate, or about any stop loss policies that he may have. It is important for us all to remember that we do not want the register to be used as cover for such misuse. It was never intended to provide detailed information about Members' personal wealth or poverty. The rules have always sought to strike a balance between the right of the public to know about the outside financial interests that may influence the conduct of an elected representative and the right of that individual Member of Parliament to a reasonable degree of personal privacy.

I accept what the Lord President of the Council said in opening the debate—that, although it was not the original intention, in the context of MAPAs the rule has inadvertently upset that balance. That is the other main reason for changing it.

I now refer to section 1 of the report and to the 11 hon. Members who have not complied with the existing rule. Paragraph 7 makes clear the Committee's view of their conduct. In recommending the change of rule, the Committee is not condoning that conduct. Speaking personally, I think that I was more influenced by the reasoned letters and representations I received from members of Lloyd's who had complied with the recommendations of the Committee.

The arguments in favour of changing the rule outweigh the danger that we may be represented as having given in to a campaign of non-compliance. There is another important reason. We who serve on the Committee recognise that our prime duty is to uphold the integrity of the Committee so that it may continue to enjoy the confidence of the House. That confidence depends on our being fair and reasonable. I hope that the House will accept that we have been both and will approve the motion.

12.20 am

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): In supporting the amendment, I must tell the House that I believe that the Committee was, unfortunately, sold a pup by Lloyd's in the representations that were made to it. I say that with no lack of respect for the Committee members and certainly I have considerable respect for the hon. Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith). It is simply a fact that Lloyd's, with a great deal of sophistry and a great deal of self-interest within the House, persuaded the Committee to adopt a course that was fundamentally wrong.

It is appropriate to note that Lloyd's has been aptly described as the home of unfettered insider dealing. It is unfettered by the House; it is unfettered by the Department of Trade and Industry; it is unfettered by the Financial Services Act 1986; and it is unfettered by effective rules of its own. It is effectively a law unto itself.

It is important that, as hon. Members have discretion to choose which syndicates they belong to or leave, their membership of syndicates should be disclosed. If they are members of unit trust arrangements, called the members'

[Mr. Peter Hain]

agent pooling arrangements—MAPA—those should be named as well. Disclosure provides a natural deterrent to any allegations of insider trading. It is particularly important that that membership is publicly known because that deterrent can then be exercised.

That point is especially important against the background of the recent controversy within Lloyd's. It has been alleged that hon. Members and others who have been insider traders with Lloyd's have been given preferential treatment while other external names, who have often been driven to destitution, bankruptcy or even suicide, have had all the losses from the catastrophic syndicates dumped on them, often as a result of certain members being taken off duff syndicates and other more gullible members being pushed on to them, or as a result of the losses being paid or credited in return for improper secret political influence.

The knowledge that such transactions show up because syndicate members have to be revealed in the Register of Members' Interests is a deterrent to that—*[Interruption.]* Hon. Members may scoff. There is a central contradiction that they cannot duck. Of the 51 Conservative Members who are Lloyd's names and who, I believe, have cumulative losses totalling £22 million, none has suffered destitution, bankruptcy or the tremendous losses that other external names on exactly the same syndicates with exactly the same lines in them have suffered. The Committee should have brought its attention to bear on that contradiction by maintaining syndicate registration.

The argument has been made that it is somehow an intrusion of privacy to disclose such information. If one has a copy of the Lloyd's blue book—it is not too difficult to obtain and every insider in the market has access to it—it is easy to determine on which syndicates hon. Members or any other Lloyd's names are placed. It is quite easy to determine that from inside the market. The question that the House must answer is why it is being denied that knowledge. Why are the public, through the House, being denied that knowledge because of the way in which the Committee is taking those rights to knowledge away from them?

It has been suggested by Lloyd's—the Committee has bought the argument—that it would convey sufficient information to satisfy the principles of disclosing hon. Members' pecuniary interests if they declared to the register the various types of insurance business that their syndicates wrote in that name.

That might seem reasonable at first glance, were it not for the fact that the ability of Lloyd's to categorise insurance business—I refer to the businesses listed in the annexe to the report—is notoriously unreliable, as well as being uninformative; it is recognised as such in the market. Lloyd's in fact ceased allocating the main categories of insurance for each syndicate in 1991.

The traditional allocation of the four categories of marine, aviation, motor and non-marine has broken down. Lloyd's realised that so many supposedly marine syndicates were, in fact, writing non-marine and aviation business, often at crazy rates half the size of those quoted by the normal aviation syndicates. As it had less and less true marine premiums coming in, Lloyd's realised that its categories were becoming a total farce. Lloyd's has apparently sought to re-present that worn out farce in this context and it is regrettable that the Committee has accepted its argument.

It is also important that we recognise that it does not necessarily matter which syndicate an hon. Member has been in in any one year. It is equally important to be able to identify whether an hon. Member has been removed from a particular syndicate, perhaps just before a year in which it incurred particular losses. I shall return to that point.

The ability to compare one year's membership of a syndicate with the next year's is absolutely essential if we are to see whether any insider trading is going on and whether hon. Members are being treated in a preferential way as compared with other Lloyd's names. That is essential because there have been thousands upon thousands of huge claims from all over the world in connection with asbestos and pollution against some Lloyd's syndicates, which have been concealed from Lloyd's insiders and from ordinary investors since 1981.

Those claims have not been settled; nor have they been withdrawn. In many instances the original syndicate members, sometimes true insiders on so-called baby syndicates, to which I shall refer in a minute, have managed to pass the liability on to new names who are not, as it were, as in on the game as those insiders who have rigged it for themselves.

Some hon. Members—not necessarily with their knowledge—have been removed from a particular syndicate the year before part of a large liability has been unveiled. There are at least three hon. Members of this House—I have notified them in the proper way, as required by the protocol of the House, that I shall refer to them in the debate—who are on preferred or so-called baby syndicates.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud) *rose—*

Mr. Hain: A baby syndicate—[HON. MEMBERS: "Give way."] A baby syndicate—[HON. MEMBERS: "Give way."] No, I am not giving way at this point. A baby syndicate has been likened to a baby kangaroo. The insiders involved in running a larger syndicate often set up a small one out of the profits of the larger syndicate.

Mr. Knapman: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Half the hon. Gentleman's speech seems to have suggested that we have received preferential treatment and the other half that we have lost £22 million. Is it possible that the hon. Gentleman is not making any sense at all?

Madam Speaker: As I said earlier, I hear a lot of comments in the House. It takes quite a lot to shock me. But the hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Hain) is obviously not giving way.

Sir Gerard Vaughan (Reading, East): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. Is it in order for the hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Hain) to imply that a number of us have been engaged in some kind of insider dealing? If that is so, it is a very great reflection on some of us.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Member for Neath said that he would mention names, but that he had already let the Members concerned know that he was going to raise the matter. Is that quite clear? I have already been deceived once today in this House on that matter. Do I understand that the hon. Gentleman has informed Members?

Mr. Hain: I certainly have, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Hain: I put notices on the board to tell hon. Members—[HON. MEMBERS: "When?"] Earlier this evening and well in time. If I can continue—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Hain: I was seeking to explain, Madam Speaker. I have not made any particular allegations of insider trading against any one Member so far.

As I was saying, a baby syndicate has been likened to a baby kangaroo. The insiders involved in running the larger syndicate often set up a smaller one that is run out of the pocket of the larger one.

There are many who have been badly hit by the shenanigans within the Lloyd's market. It has been difficult to expose that, not least because of the vested interests in the House. Those interests have prevented disclosure of what has been going on. Typically, there have been over 1,000 ordinary investors on the large syndicate and only the main underwriters, fellow directors and their families and friends on the preference baby syndicate. They have relied on the large syndicate being run by the same underwriter to cream off profits properly due to the members of the larger syndicate and divert them to the baby syndicate. That is important in the context of the debate.

Three Members were on three separate preference baby syndicates over the past seven years. One such was on syndicate 728, which was preferenced out of the coffers of syndicate 658. The best business was channelled into the preference syndicate, the baby, which made £1.5 million for every £1 million channelled into it in 1982. Both the hon. Members for Erith and Crayford (Mr. Evennett) and for Lincoln (Mr. Carlisle) were favoured in the preference syndicate over a number of years. I do not say that that was with their knowledge. I do not say that they were consulted about it. I am making no allegation to that effect.

Mr. David Evennett (Erith and Crayford): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I was not advised by the hon. Gentleman that he would mention my situation. I think that he has breached the protocol of the House.

Madam Speaker: When did the hon. Member for Neath put the notices on the board?

Mr. Hain: I think that it was just after 10 o'clock, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Member has been long enough in the House to know that the board closes at 10 o'clock.

Mr. Hain: I put them on the board. I was not sure when the debate was coming up. I put them on the board at the earliest opportunity that I had.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Member knew precisely that the debate would take place today. He knows also that the board closes at 10 o'clock. He might have made better endeavours than he has to inform the Members that he is now naming. I would suggest that he proceeds with great caution and care because he has not taken care to inform the Members that he is about to name.

Mr. Hain: I shall certainly proceed with caution, Madam Speaker. I apologise if notice was not given in advance. It was not due to any intention on my part not to give notice.

As I was saying, I am not alleging that any individual Member knowingly found himself or deliberately placed himself on preferential baby syndicates. I believe that those responsible in the Lloyd's market—members' agents and others responsible for running the market—have deliberately ensured that no Member was bankrupted or suffered the enormous losses that other external names suffered. Therefore, they were put on preferential baby syndicates and given preferential treatment in other ways. There are a number of examples.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. The hon. Gentleman has said that no Member, as a member of Lloyd's, has not been put in a baby syndicate. I have no knowledge of baby syndicates and I have never been in a baby syndicate.

Madam Speaker: Order. That is a point of argument, not a point of order.

Mr. Hain: May I move on to explain—[HON. MEMBERS: "No".] The House deserves to hear the argument.

Let us take the case of Lord and Lady Archer. They were on syndicate 162 and the Sturge syndicates, 206 and 209, which had concealed asbestosis claims for several years until eventually the claims and the resulting losses were disclosed in 1990. However, both Lord and Lady Archer came off syndicates 206 and 209 before the worst happened. Had they remained on them, along with all the uniformed members, they would have been asked to pay £63,116 with an expected further deterioration of £206,750. That is calculated from the Chatset guide to syndicate run-offs—

Sir Anthony Durant (Reading, West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. This is not a debate about Lloyd's; it is a debate about the Register of Members' Interests. We are wandering far from the register. It is not for me to offer guidance, but I believe that we are now a long way from the register.

Madam Speaker: I take the hon. Gentleman's point, which I believe is genuine. I cautioned the hon. Member for Neath about what he has to say. He might look at the motion on the Order Paper and refer to it rather more often than he is doing.

Mr. Hain: I will certainly do that Madam Speaker.

The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir. E. Heath) has been on syndicate 573. Had he remained on that syndicate, he would have suffered a further loss of £20,652 with an additional deterioration, as estimated under the Chatset league tables, of £37,500. Most fortunately for him, he was advised to come off in time.

If we consider the case of the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick)—

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I thought that you had ruled that, because the hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Hain) had put the notices on the board after 10 pm, he should proceed with caution. He has just mentioned another Member of this House.

Madam Speaker: I asked the hon. Member for Neath to proceed with caution. I have now asked him a second

[Madam Speaker]

time. He has mentioned another Member who has not presumably been informed because the Members concerned have received no information from the hon. Member for Neath that he was to raise these matters. If the hon. Member for Neath has not informed those Members, he is in breach of our procedures. I ask the hon. Gentleman to refer to the motion, which refers to the Register of Members' Interests, and not to individual cases.

Mr. Hain: You will advise me if my interpretation is incorrect, Madam Speaker, but I think that the amendment, which I support, moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Mr. Michie), refers to the fact that syndicate details should still be declared in the register. If it is no longer possible to list the syndicate numbers, all sorts of problems will arise, not least the failure to address exactly what has been happening in the Lloyd's market. That is why I am giving examples to support my case and to show why that is so important.

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Neath is moving very far from the point that he is really making. I hope that he will come to order and make his points correctly for the remainder of his address.

Mr. Hain: In that case, may I turn to the chairman of Lloyd's, Mr. David Rowland? He was obviously very well informed. He avoided liability on syndicates 437, 533, 582, 312—

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. This debate is meant to deal with the Register of Members' Interests. Are Mr. David Rowland and Lord Archer Members of this House?

Madam Speaker: I am sure that the hon. Member for Neath has now strayed very wide of the motion. He has taken a great deal of interest in the subject over many months and I am therefore sure that he is quite capable of speaking to the motion before the House. I ask him to do that now or I shall have to take action against him. I am giving the hon. Gentleman every opportunity. As I have said, the hon. Gentleman has been interested in the subject for many months. He should now be quite capable of speaking to the motion and the amendment on the Order Paper.

Mr. Hain: Madam Speaker, you will advise me if I am straying out of line.

Madam Speaker: That is precisely the case. The hon. Gentleman is straying far too wide.

Mr. Hain: If you will forgive me and advise me, Madam Speaker, I will continue, if you will allow me, to address the House.

Whether or not I have presented the case as adequately as I could have is a matter of judgment, but the House is refusing to face up to the fact that out there, in the Lloyd's market and among the public, is a well-founded suspicion that Members of the House and their friends in the Lloyd's markets have protected themselves against incurring the huge losses that would have resulted in bankruptcy and, in the case of hon. Members, their removal from the House. That is my central charge.

It is important that syndicate membership should still be required to be stated under the rules of the House—a requirement that my hon. Friend's amendment seeks to restore. If that information is not available for public inspection and the House's policing, all sorts of insider trading and deals whereby Members and others are placed on baby syndicates and given preferential treatment will become the norm. The House will be unable properly to scrutinise the matter because it will be shrouded in the mystique and mystery and the complications and complexity that surround the Lloyd's market. That is my central charge.

As you, Madam Speaker, have rightly said, I have sought diligently and honestly to address the issue over a number of years. In a number of ways my attempts have been thwarted. Tonight I have sought to draw the attention of the House to the fact that a number of Members have been preferentially treated. I have mentioned some of them. If I am to be prevented from mentioning others, I accept your guidance and ruling on that, Madam Speaker. I certainly do not wish to be ruled out of order.

There are still a large number of Members who are Lloyd's names and who have been given preferential treatment—[HON. MEMBERS: "Name them."] I would have preferred to carry on and give the details, but it has not been possible for me to do so. The House does itself no credit by introducing—through the Select Committee's procedures and under the rules of the register—new requirements for disclosure, then when it becomes clear that those requirements for disclosing syndicate membership are revealing to the public all the insider trading that has been going on—

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. May we have a ruling on something which is quite significant? You ruled that my hon. Friend the Member for Neath (Mr. Hain) cannot proceed in the way that he wishes. Are we to presume that in future debates we can no longer refer to the personal circumstances of individuals when we are advocating a general case, in principle, on an issue? Are we now to be precluded from that—

Madam Speaker: Order. Before—

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose—*

Madam Speaker: Order. Sit down. The hon. Gentleman must resume his seat. I can answer him. No, that was not my ruling. My ruling was that an hon. Member should inform another hon. Member when he or she is to be mentioned. In this case, the information was placed on the letter board at about the time that it was to close. That is why I said that it was not just to refer to individual Members because they had not been informed. That was the ruling that I gave.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. Are we to presume that this is now to be a rule? Are we to presume that unless an hon. Member has placed notice of reference on the board an hon. Member cannot make a reference? I understand that that is a new movement—previously, it was custom and courtesy to do so. Is it now a rule?

Madam Speaker: I believe that it is the custom and courtesy of the House, particularly when a motion on the Order Paper has been there for some time and an hon. Member knows that he or she wishes to speak, for that hon. Member to give ample warning to those hon. Members to

whom reference is to be made. That is common courtesy. It is because that courtesy has obviously not been shown today that I believe that it is correct, right and in accord with natural justice—which is what I am concerned about —that those hon. Members should not be mentioned.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. The ruling that we are given now is very important. A precedent is being set tonight— *[Interruption.]* It is—a precedent is being set because a rule is being defined. I do not object to the point that you make, Madam Speaker. I understand precisely what you are saying. My point is that you are now saying that in future, if we do not comply with the custom, practice and courtesy, we will not be able to raise matters. That is a rule.

Madam Speaker: I have not said that at all. If the hon. Gentleman will look at *Hansard* tomorrow, he will see clearly what I have said. I hate repeating myself, but I have said that it is the custom and courtesy of this House for an hon. Member, when referring to other Members, to let those Members know. In this case, the motion was on the Order Paper some time ahead. The hon. Member for Neath knew that he wished to speak on this matter. Therefore, it was incumbent upon him, in all natural justice, to inform those Members. The hon. Member for Neath—

Mr. Hain *rose—*

Madam Speaker: Order. I am on my feet. The hon. Member for Neath waited until almost 10 o'clock, as he said himself—[HON. MEMBERS: "After."] Order—when the letter board was about to close before he did that. Therefore, in natural justice it is correct that those hon. Members who have not been informed that they would be referred to should not be referred to.

Mr. Hain: If that is your ruling, of course I am obliged to respect it, Madam Speaker. As it has been alleged in a taunt from the Conservative Benches that this was some devious manoeuvre, may I say exactly what happened this evening?. It is true that I knew that the debate was coming up. I did not know what time it would begin. I have spent most of the day and most of the evening checking and rechecking the information. It is not easy to get at the details. I did not know until well into the evening which hon. Members I would name to bring out my point about baby syndicates.

It is my fault that I did not put notice on the board until just after 10 o'clock. Although I have been a Member for three years, I was not aware that there was a rigid rule that the board closed at 10 o'clock. That is my fault. I came in and presented the notice to the board and found that it was closed. I did not hold it back as some devious manoeuvre. I was determined to ensure that before I named Members I was absolutely certain of my facts. That is the basis on which I proceed.

Are you saying that I am not allowed to refer to any other Members, Madam Speaker?

Madam Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Hain: Right. I conclude by saying that it does not reflect any credit on the House—

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): I seek clarification on something that the hon. Gentleman said tonight. He said earlier that he did not make any accusation that hon. Members had sought preferential treatment or even that they knew that they had received preferential treatment —if indeed they did, which is very much in question. He went on to say a few moments ago, as *Hansard* will show, that hon. Members had sought to protect themselves. Will he clarify that? If he means it, he is contradicting what he said earlier and making a serious accusation. He might want to clarify that point.

Mr. Hain: Hon. Members, whether acting through their members' agent or in any other capacity, have naturally sought to get the best deal that they can out of Lloyd's. No one could dispute that. No investor in Lloyd's is going to say, "Do your worst for me." Of course they are not going to do that. Suddenly hon. Members were withdrawn from the catastrophic loss-making years of 1989, 1990 and 1991 —what a surprise!—so that they did not incur the losses that others have had to bear in their place. That is the central charge that I make.

I have spent the past few days going through the information, discovering that several hon. Members, some of whom, for reasons which you have explained, Madam Speaker, I have not been able to name, were on syndicates year after year through the 1980s until 1988 and suddenly they came off them. Why was that? It was because 1989, 1990 and 1991 were the years when billions and billions of pounds of losses were suddenly incurred. They all fell on the external names and none of them appears to have fallen on Members of the House who are or were members of those syndicates until that time.

That is why it was very important for the Committee to retain that syndicate requirement. That would have required more open disclosure, and would also have allowed for a situation where Members could have defended themselves openly and positively against the attacks and allegations that I and others have made.

As it is now, the friends of those hon. Members who are Lloyd's names and who are in the market have the information. They are doing all the wheeler-dealing and carving others out of and themselves in to the preferential baby syndicates and others. *[Interruption.]* I wanted to name some of the people who had benefited from those, but I shall give way.

Mr. Peter Viggers (Gosport): I declare an interest, as a member of Lloyd's since 1973—which predates my membership of the House—and also as a member of the council. Can the hon. Gentleman confirm that he has had a lot of conversations with Lloyd's and that Lloyd's has answered his questions? Does he agree that he has not made any allegations to Lloyd's regulatory board which is there to regulate the Lloyd's market, and that he prefers to spread his smears here rather than put them to the regulatory board? The chairman of the board is Sir Alan Hardcastle, a notable chartered accountant who used to be the head of the Government's accountancy service. The board has been sanctioned by the Bank of England and the Department of Trade and Industry, and it is there to deal with regulatory matters. Why does the hon. Gentleman try to give the impression that he has not been able to make his accusations fully and openly when the board is there to receive them?

Mr. Hain: The very simple reason is that nobody has any confidence at all in the people running Lloyd's. They police their own markets. The sooner Lloyd's is brought under statutory regulation and has ceased to be a law unto

[Mr. Hain]

itself, with people in it who police themselves and do what they like without any regard for anybody else or the rule of law, the better.

I believe that if the House had kept to the syndicate rule, it would have encouraged a process whereby Lloyd's would have become properly regulated on a statutory basis, thereby enhancing its reputation and the reputation of the City of London. Instead, it is part of a sordid plot to cover up what has been going on in the Lloyd's market.

12.51 am

Mr. David Evennett (Erith and Crayford): I did not intend to speak, but, having heard the nonsense which spouted forth from the hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Hain), I feel that I must make a couple of points.

I endorse totally what the Committee Chairman, my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith), said in his excellent speech. As someone who did declare all of the syndicates in which I participated—I was happy to do so—I was amazed at the comments of the hon. Member for Neath. I have been on syndicates, one of which the hon. Gentleman mentioned, since 1977, and my involvement pre-dates my membership of the House by many years. It is important that information is available and I endorse whole-heartedly what my hon. Friend said.

I think that we have just heard the most sleazy and slur-making speech from the hon. Gentleman, and I was appalled by it. If he spent all day researching his speech, it did not do him any good. The debate this evening has not been of the high calibre that we would have expected. It has been disappointing, and certainly the information given by the hon. Gentleman in respect of myself was inaccurate and wrong. That was not good from his point of view, and the people of Neath—whom he is supposed to represent—will deplore what he said.

12.53 am

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley): I wish to return to what I believe to be the main issue in the debate. It is not really about understanding what the numbers in the register are about, and I fear that my constituents would think that they were looking at bingo numbers if I showed them a copy of the Register of Members' Interests.

There were important matters raised by those members of the Committee who did not share the view of the majority, and I must challenge the Committee Chairman to an extent. My disappointment arises from the motion on the Order Paper in the name of the Leader of the House which totally ignores the first part of the report. I believe that it is wrong for Members of the House—however venerable—to decide that they shall not enter into a disclosure that the House has demanded. They should be reprimanded, and that was a recommendation of the Committee. The Leader of the House should take note of that, and not just refer to recommendation 18.

It took the best part of four years to effect the original changes to the register. I have been a member of the Committee only for the past 12 months, but I believe that Members of the House have exerted pressure for the changes because, for their own reasons, they do not want to disclose what the House decided they should disclose. The Committee, in short, was bullied into making the changes. Given that it took so long to create the new register and work up the new insertions, this matter could have been considered in greater detail. It should not be forgotten that some very senior Members of the House were among the 11 who have been named.

I await the response of the Leader of the House with bated breath. The reprimand issued by the Committee in its report cannot be ignored for much longer. If the Committee is to continue to enjoy the confidence of the House, the report must be accepted in total by the right hon. Gentleman and he must give the House a chance to vote on it.

12.56 am

Sir Anthony Durant (Reading, West): I recently became a member of the Committee. When I joined it, preparations for the new register were in hand and it was about to be printed. I am not a member of Lloyd's and I know nothing about it, and I could not understand the figures at all. I agree with the hon. Member for Worsley (Mr. Lewis): they looked like a lottery to me.

I therefore felt that that was the wrong way to proceed. But by then the register was already under way and had been printed. Subsequently, I have always argued for a different system. The Chairman has outlined the evidence that we took. I agree with him that Members should have filled in the forms—the first part of the report—because that was in line with a resolution of the House. There were reasons for reviewing the Lloyd's procedure, however. The hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Hain) tried to conduct a debate on Lloyd's that had nothing whatever to do with the register.

The purpose of the register is to assist hon. Members so that when a Member speaks in a debate on a particular subject, we can know why he is doing so. That was the original idea of the register and why it came about. It was never intended to be an exposé of Lloyd's—that was never the purpose behind including the numbers either.

I strongly support the Chairman's proposals. We shall have to look at this matter in the Committee, because just including the numbers means nothing to the outside world—except to investigative journalists and Members of Parliament. They certainly mean nothing to me. Certainly, we want to know whether a person is a member of Lloyd's and what his interests in Lloyd's are. When there are debates on insurance-related matters, we shall then know why the Member in question is saying what he is saying. That, surely, is the point of the register, and it is why I support the Chairman's proposal.

12.58 am

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): The motion invites the House to approve the proposals contained in paragraph 18 of the report by the Select Committee on Members' Interests, headed "Registration of Lloyd's Syndicates".

I do not want to state a final view; I have not reached a final view about what the rules for registration ought to be. We invited members of the Select Committee to look at that for us. They will have heard detailed evidence and carefully weighed the issue before making their recommendation.

What strikes me—and obviously struck my hon. Friend the Member for Worsley (Mr. Lewis)—is what our attitude to the existing rules should be and what I believe is the clear requirement on right hon. and hon. Members to comply with them.

The report does not just set out what the Committee believes the new rules should be—and we have a motion from the Lord President recommending them to the House and confirming that they will be the new rules. The report also contains paragraph 7, to which the Lord President's motion does not refer and to which his speech did not refer either. That paragraph states:

"Whatever the circumstances, the refusal by individual Members to comply with a rule which has been agreed by the House sets a bad precedent and is to be deprecated. We accordingly draw the attention of the House to the fact that the Members named in paragraph 3 above have refused to register their Lloyd's syndicate numbers as required by the House's resolution of 28 June 1993."

[Mr. Nicholas Brown]

The matter cannot simply be swept aside. We should require hon. Members to comply with our original decision, just as I assume that we will be requiring them to comply with the new decision which the Leader of the House is urging on us tonight.

It is not enough to deprecate the fact that hon. Members refused to comply. The Leader of the House should have something more to say about the matter; at least he should have something to say about the matter. Are the hon. Members who refused to comply with the House's clearly expressed wishes to be punished? Apparently not. Where does that leave those hon. Members—almost entirely Conservative Members—who did comply perfectly properly with the wishes of the House? They were right to do so and I applaud them, but they must feel rather aggrieved that they complied and others did not.

An hon. Member who spoke earlier in the debate referred to proceeding in a way that was fair and reasonable. We have to be fair and reasonable to every hon. Member. It is particularly right to be fair and reasonable to those hon. Members who have complied with the wishes of the House. Clearly we should have something to say to those hon. Members who have not complied with the wishes of the House.

Sir Gerard Vaughan: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will accept that there was no intention of carrying out any contempt of the House. It just seemed that the Committee, which has done an excellent job, was asking for information the purpose of which we simply could not understand. We approached the Chairman of the Committee, who willingly listened to us and, on reflection, the Committee has now decided that different rules should be adopted.

Mr. Brown: In life, we all get asked to do things that we do not understand. If it is a lawful request, we comply with it. That is the point I am making to the House. It is not up to us to choose which rules of this place we comply with —just the ones that are convenient to us—and to overlook the others.

Those are not my observations on the matter; I am being careful not to substitute my views for what the rules should be. I am referring to the decision of the Select Committee which has clearly decided to deprecate the refusal of Members of the House to register. They may well have had reasons for that and may well have argued with the Select Committee. I am sure that they did; nevertheless, I understand why the Select Committee has put the proposal before us.

On behalf of the whole House, the Lord President has a duty to reply to the debate and put the Government's view on paragraph 7 as well as their clearer view on paragraph 18.

1.3 am

Mr. Newton: I can say clearly what my position is and what led to the resolution being tabled.

In paragraph 7, the Committee made a number of comments which contain no recommendation. In the later paragraphs, it made a number of recommendations which require a resolution of the House to implement them. That is what the resolution provides for, and I spoke to that.

I shall say only one other thing, particularly to the hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Hain), whose speech made it clear, in conjunction with remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Gosport (Mr. Viggers), that the comments that he made, without having properly informed the people about whom he made them or intended to make them, did not follow any attempt to make complaints to the appropriate investigating body.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose—*

Mr. Newton: No, I will not give way.

The hon. Member for Neath made it clear that he had not communicated any complaint to the proper investigating authorities at Lloyd's. I presume from the fact that he intended to make his remarks and partially made them here, rather than anywhere else, that he is not prepared to list the names and suggestions outside the House.

Mr. Hain: I am fully prepared to make the information available. It was derived from sources within Lloyd's, from an analysis of the Lloyd's blue book and from an analysis of Chatset league tables. Anyone who takes the trouble that I took can find that information, and I am not seeking to use the privilege of the House.

Lloyd's has never invited me to expand on any of the early-day motions that I have tabled—as the Leader of the House knows—for the past two years, with the Speaker's permission. The reason is that Lloyd's is not interested, because it wanted to cover up what is going on in the market.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman has assured the House that he did not intend to take any action under the cloak of parliamentary privilege that he would not take in another context. Of course I accept his word, but I think that—following what I have said, what the hon. Gentleman has said and what my hon. Friend the Member for Gosport said—the hon. Gentleman's proper course would be to make whatever suggestions he wishes to make, and to give whatever information he wishes to give, to the body to which my hon. Friend referred, or make it available for investigation in other ways.

It was clear from the hon. Gentleman's speech that his reason for wishing all the information—the syndicate numbers—to be placed in the Register of Members' Interests had little, if anything, to do with what he thought it proper to require of Members in relation to their duties in the House, and everything to do with a political campaign that he is waging in relation to Lloyd's. As Leader of the House, I take the view that what should concern us is what is proper for the Register of Members' Interests in the House. I think that the Committee's recommendations are sensible in that respect, and I commend them again to the House.

Mr. Nicholas Brown *rose—*

Madam Speaker: Order. Has the hon. Gentleman the leave of the House?

Mr. Brown: I have to say, Madam Speaker, that the Leader of the House—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman requires leave of the House, and I am hearing objections.

Sir Gerard Vaughan: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. I must clear one thing at a time. I will take the point of order in a moment. Is the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) allowed to speak? I understand that he is. First, I will take the point of order from the hon. Member for Reading, East (Sir G. Vaughan).

Sir Gerard Vaughan: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Should the matter come to a Division, are those of us who have been involved entitled to vote?

Madam Speaker: Every hon. Member is entitled to vote, irrespective of whether he or she is a Lloyd's name.

Mr. Hain: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Should hon. Members who are Lloyd's names and have a particular pecuniary interest in being members of certain Lloyd's syndicates vote on the matter?

Madam Speaker: I sought sound advice on the question before I took the Chair. They can all vote if they wish to.

1.8 am

Mr. Nicholas Brown: The Leader of the House referred to campaigns. It seems to me that the most successful campaign has been that mounted by the members of Lloyd's syndicates who have refused to comply with our original decision that they should register. Instead of compelling them to comply with that decision, the rules have been altered.

The Committee may well have good reason for its action; I am not saying that it has not. I am saying, however, that the Lord President should have had something much sterner to say about the refusal of those hon. Members to comply with the original decision of the House. As he can say nothing about paragraph 7 of the report, I urge my hon. Friends to vote for the amendment.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: May I ask the Leader of the House a question? I assume that he has read paragraph 7 of the report which states:

"Whatever the circumstances, the refusal by individual Members to comply with a rule which has been agreed by the House sets a bad precedent and is to be deprecated."

Will the Leader of the House come to the Dispatch Box and deprecate the activities of five knights of the realm, a former Prime Minister and five Conservative Members of Parliament? Will he do that please? There is time before the end of the debate.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): The decision that was made by the original Select Committee on Members' Interests was that the syndicate numbers should be recorded and it was accepted by the House. Does the Leader of the House believe that that was done in some fit of absent-mindedness and therefore does not matter? What are the reasons for dismissing the original report, which was carried after an amendment was put to the Committee, by five votes to one, without the alternative position being argued?

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West) *rose—*

Madam Speaker: I have not been in the Chair throughout the debate. Has the hon. Gentleman spoken?

Mr. Flynn: No.

Madam Speaker: In that case, I call Mr. Flynn.

Mr. Flynn: I am afraid that the braying like daleks that we have heard from Conservative Members is characteristic of the disgraceful debate that we have just had. We had a debate on this subject some months ago and there were fewer Members present then than there have been tonight. Similar allegations were made by my hon. Friend the Member for Neath (Mr. Hain) and, with great bitterness, by a member of Lloyd's the hon. Member for Gloucestershire, West (Mr. Marland). The substance of what has been said by my hon. Friend the Member for Neath has been greeted by the closing of ranks by the spokesman for the Establishment. That is a disgrace and stains further the reputation of the House.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 30, Noes 130.

Division No. 294] **[1.11 am**

AYES

Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Connarty, Michael
Dixon, Don
Etherington, Bill
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Jamieson, David
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Mackinlay, Andrew
McMaster, Gordon
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Parry, Robert
Purchase, Ken
Rendel, David
Skinner, Dennis
Turner, Dennis

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Terry Lewis and
Mr. Harry Barnes.

NOES

Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Bates, Michael
Beggs, Roy
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Butcher, John
Carrington, Matthew
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliffe)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Duncan, Alan
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, Dudley
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Key, Robert
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith

Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pickles, Eric
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Richards, Rod
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Thumham, Peter
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Wells, Bowen
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Willetts, David
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Andrew MacKay and
Mr. Derek Conway.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put:—

The House proceeded to a Division—

Sir Peter Emery (*seated and covered*): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. You may have noticed that Standing Order No. 37 was altered yesterday with the result that, if two Tellers have been appointed, the Chair does not have to wait two minutes before putting the Question a second time. In view of the hour, and as Clerks are already at the Table, it would be convenient if you acted according to new Standing Order No. 37.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): I also recall that the Standing Order gives the Speaker or the Deputy Speaker discretion.

The House having divided: Ayes 130, Noes 21.

Division No. 295] **[1.22 am**

AYES

Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Bates, Michael
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Butcher, John
Carrington, Matthew
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliffe)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Duncan, Alan
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, Dudley
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Key, Robert
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Paice, James
Pickles, Eric
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Rendel, David
Richards, Rod
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Wells, Bowen
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Willetts, David
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Irvine Patnick and
Mr. Derek Conway.

NOES

Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Dixon, Don
Etherington, Bill
Flynn, Paul
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Jamieson, David
Kilfoyle, Peter
Mackinlay, Andrew
McMaster, Gordon
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Parry, Robert
Purchase, Ken
Skinner, Dennis
Turner, Dennis

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Harry Barnes and
Mr. Terry Lewis.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House approves the proposals in paragraph 18 of the Second Report from the Select Committee on Members' Interests (House of Commons Paper No. 353).

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, for the remainder of this Session, Standing Order No. 54 (Consolidated Fund Bills) shall have effect as if for the words 'nine o'clock in the morning', in line 15, there were substituted the words 'eight o'clock in the morning'.—*[Mr. Wells.]*

SITTINGS OF THE HOUSE

Resolved,

That—

(1) this House do meet on Thursday 21st July at half-past Nine o'clock;

(2) notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph (2) of Standing Order No. 17 (Time for taking questions), no Questions shall be taken, provided that at Eleven o'clock the Speaker may interrupt the proceedings in order to permit Questions to be asked which are in her opinion of an urgent character and relate either to matters of public importance or to the arrangement of business, statements to be made by Ministers, or personal explanations to be made by Members; and

(3) at Three o'clock the Speaker do adjourn the House without putting any Question, provided that this House shall not adjourn until the Speaker shall have reported the Royal Assent to any Acts agreed upon by both Houses.—*[Mr. Wells.]*

Statutory Instruments, &c.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): With permission, I shall put together the motions relating to statutory instruments.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

MONOPOLIES AND MERGERS

That the draft Fair Trading Act (Amendment) (Merger Prenotification) Regulations 1994, which were laid before this House on 14th June, be approved.

COMPETITION

That the Anti-Competitive Practices (Exclusions) (Amendment) Order 1994, (S.I., 1994, No. 1557), a copy of which was laid before this House on 14th June, be approved.

RATING AND VALUATION

That the draft Alcan Aluminium UK Ltd. (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 14th June, be approved.

That the draft British Gas plc (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 14th June, be approved.

That the draft British Telecommunications plc. (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 14th June, be approved.

That the draft Caledonian MacBrayne Limited (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 14th June, be approved.

That the draft Electricity Generators (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 14th June, be approved.

That the draft Forth Ports plc (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 14th June, be approved.

That the draft Glasgow Underground (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 14th June, be approved.

That the draft Lochaber Power Company (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 14th June, be approved.

That the draft Mercury Communications Ltd. (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 14th June, be approved.

That the draft Railways (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 14th June, be approved.

That the draft Scottish Hydro-Electric plc. (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 14th June, be approved.

That the draft Scottish Nuclear Limited (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 14th June, be approved.

That the draft Scottish Power plc. (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 14th June, be approved.

That the draft Water Undertakings (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 14th June, be approved.—*[Mr. Wells.]*

Question agreed to.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(9) (European Standing Committees).

CONSUMER DISPUTES

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 11141/93, relating to the access of consumers to justice and the settlement of consumer disputes in the single market; and endorses the draft Government response set out in the Supplementary Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Department of Trade and Industry on 1st July.—*[Mr. Wells.]*

Question agreed to.

PETITION

Tommy Lee Bannister

1.31 am

Mr. David Jamieson (Plymouth, Devonport): I present a petition to the House on behalf of the friends and family of Tommy Lee Bannister, a three-year-old boy from Plymouth who died in his home of unnatural causes. Despite the appalling injuries that he suffered, no one was charged with his death. It is estimated that there are at least 12 cases each year in which children die in their homes and no one can be brought to court on those charges. The petitioners seek a change in the law that permits suspects to walk freely from such crimes.

The petition reads:

Wherefore your humble petitioners pray that your honourable House will change the law to enable suspects to be jointly charged with an offence if they refuse to give evidence against each other. And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

The petition is signed by 12,000 people from Plymouth and the counties of Devon and Cornwall.

To lie upon the Table.

Road Bridge (Kelso)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn—*[Mr. Conway.]*

1.32 am

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): It is my pleasure to rise, even at this early hour in the morning, to take advantage of the opportunity of the debate on the Adjournment to raise the very important subject of the need for a replacement road bridge at Kelso.

I am sorry that the Minister has been kept up until this late time in the night. The longer I am a Member of the House, the more committed I become to the need for a reform of its procedure. I am sure that many of my constituents, who will be anxious to follow the proceedings over the next half hour, will be puzzled about why we arrange our business in such a way that consideration is given to such an important subject at this untoward hour.

I know that the Minister is familiar with the Borders, and that he frequently visits the area. We are always pleased to see him, because he listens with great care to what is said to him, and the visits are always useful from our point of view. I know that he will be familiar with the town of Kelso. Kelso is, indeed, a very successful Border market town. It enjoys a high quality of life, and has a close-knit community. It is an almost perfect place in which to live and work.

However, in common with, I suppose, many similar historic towns in other parts of Scotland and the United Kingdom, Kelso is struggling to cope with the pressures and demands of 20th-century life in an environment designed to serve a bygone age. Of course, other communities are also suffering those problems. There are always increasingly acute problems facing communities which seek to reconcile the requirements of modern traffic flows, in particular, with inadequate internal town roads.

Kelso has a peculiar problem, because it is cut in half by the River Tweed. That problem does not face many other towns, certainly not Border towns. Of course, as a bisecting physical feature, the River Tweed is a partition which admittedly has some advantages. It provides one of the most attractive picture postcard settings throughout the length and breadth of Scotland, which is of considerable advantage to tourism.

But the Tweed separates 80 per cent. of the houses on the northern bank of the river from 60 per cent. of the jobs on the southern bank. That would be a big enough problem for a town which had a modern bridge to provide modern communications between the northern and the southern banks, but it is an intolerable problem as the only connection between the two halves of the town has to be made by means of a bridge, which was designed in 1799 and built between 1801 and 1804.

The bridge, with which I am sure the Minister is familiar, has a width between the parapets at the side of the road of 24 ft. That is made up of a 16 ft wide roadway and two 4 ft wide footpaths. All the utilities—the Borders regional council water and drainage facilities and services, Scottish Power, British Gas and British Telecom—have apparatus in the platform of the bridge.

Kelso bridge is included in the statutory list of buildings of special architectural and historic interest as a category A building. It is also scheduled as an ancient monument. That presents problems of its own, because no easy amendments or additions or alterations by way of a remedial structural extension can be contemplated against the background of that kind of importance. It was, of course, built and designed by Renay and it has a quality all of its own.

Way back in the 1920s, there were attempts to engage in works to strengthen the bridge. Cleaning and pointing work has been undertaken, and the inside faces of the parapets have been rendered from time to time. It is difficult, however, to do anything fundamental to increase the capacity of the bridge as it stands.

A proposal to increase the width of the bridge was included in the Roxburghshire county council development plan of 1958. After much controversy locally, objections to that suggestion were heard at a local public inquiry in 1962, at which it was decided that no change should be made.

To come nearer to the present, in 1980 both parapets had developed a distinct outward lean, and there was an observable amount of stone deterioration. Restoration had to be undertaken on the upstream side during 1981 and the downstream side in 1985. The work, which was similar on both sides, consisted of taking down the entire parapet and rebuilding plumb.

There was an accident in 1980. A vehicle collided with the downstream parapet, knocking a 27 ft length of cope and panel into the River Tweed. Remedial works were undertaken, but they were confined to rebuilding the dislodged section with salvaged stone augmented with new stone as necessary.

Parapets on old stone arch bridges were never designed structurally to contain the vehicles that now use them. They were built, sometimes in an ornamental style, to prevent pedestrians and farm animals from accidentally falling from the arch. Such parapets are unable to provide the same standard of containment as that recommended now for new bridges.

The old bridge carries at peak hours about 12,000 vehicles a day. That is the peak flow figure. The last reading that I have been able to find for average flows—it was taken in 1994—is that the bridge is carrying 9,650 vehicles a day. There has been an increase of about 7 per cent. since that reading, which was taken some 12 months ago.

These figures are extremely high for such a type and design of bridge. That is the view of the local people. There is significant concern about the risk of further personal injury or death as a result of accidents that could happen on the bridge.

I have had a heavy postbag from local mums, who fear running the gauntlet of the 4 ft pathway, especially when there are advancing heavy goods vehicles, with prams, toddlers and children. They have to use the bridge, as it is the only way of crossing daily from one side of the river to the other. These women make the crossing with their hearts in their mouths and their courage in their hands. They get their heads down, and sometimes they run, literally for their lives.

If that is true of young mums, it is true too of elderly people and cyclists. It is becoming true also of heavy goods vehicle drivers. All these people are concerned about safety, and all are finding that conditions are worsening and becoming much more difficult to contend with.

The problem is not confined to potential injury to life and limb. The closure of the bridge, for whatever reason it had to be contemplated, would require a detour of about 19

miles to Mertoun bridge, or 20 miles in the other direction to Coldstream. That is not an acceptable degree of potential disruption in modern circumstances.

The burden of my remarks is that local people have been waiting too long for remedial action to deal with the problem. The first recommendation that I have found was made in 1967. The A698 Kelso relief road scheme was originally recommended by a technical working party. It was approved by the old Roxburghshire county council and Kelso town council. That was nearly 30 years ago.

As the Minister is aware, the current scheme, which has been developed by the present roads authority— Borders regional council— has now been included in the roads and transportation committee report. It is known as the TPP — the transport policies programme. The scheme in that report involves the section of the relief road from the north end of Bullet Loan at its junction with Shedden Park road via the new bridge over the River Tweed at Crown point, and via the former railway line to join the Jedburgh road at Wallaceneuk.

Following a detailed traffic study of that proposal in 1988, it has been confirmed that that scheme would be of tremendous benefit to the historic hinterland and centre of Kelso, as it would occasion a considerable reduction of traffic on certain routes, including a decrease of up to 65 per cent. on the existing bridge, which, as I have said, has problems with width, safety and high traffic flows. The Minister will know, as he made urgent inquiries about it at the time, as we all did, that an accident occurred recently on the bridge, resulting in a fire tender going through the parapet and the driver of the tender being tragically killed.

In order to make progress, the scheme that the regional council has put together will require help to enable it to be sustained within the time scale envisaged by the current council capital programme. As the Minister is aware, the regional council applied to the Secretary of State for consent to develop. An environmental statement, a compulsory purchase order and side roads orders were also forwarded, and the Secretary of State has now given consent for all those proposals.

However, the cost of the project represents a very high proportion of the capital allocation for roads and transportation over the period of construction. In relation to the scheme, the regional council has requested that the Secretary of State take special heed of the proposed expenditure by increasing the council's capital allocation over the period in order to permit the project to proceed at a reasonable pace without deferring unduly other schemes within the five-year rolling capital programme.

On 7 July, I received a written answer to a question in which I asked the Secretary of State

"when he expects to be able to approve the necessary capital consents to enable a start to be made on the new road bridge for Kelso."

The reply contained the statement:

"The Government set annual block allocations for capital expenditure on roads and transport and any proposals contained in councils' financial plans will be given careful consideration,". —[*Official Report*, 7 July 1994; Vol. 246, c. 273.]

That is a form of words that the council has been receiving in response to increasingly urgent requests for information about the Kelso bridge and relief road scheme for too long now. The provisional allocations of capital consents for 1994-95 and 1995-96 do not give any indication that that any additional section 94 consent is to be allocated, or is to be allocated in the near future. That is a matter of some concern.

Quite simply, the problem is that the project is too big for the annual programme of capital spending to be accommodated easily. The project is expensive. It will cost about £8 million, and ancillary work must be carried out to the associated road network at either end of the bypass and the bridge. Environmental considerations, in any major structure built across Scotland's premier salmon river, must be paramount.

There are complications about the way in which the project has to be mounted. The design standards have to meet modern road requirements, and they must recognise the high quality of the surrounding environment. The cost is high because standards cannot be compromised.

As the Minister will know, the scheme will take 18 months to two years to complete. The council cannot commit borrowing consent into future financial years. With a capital spending programme on roads of £5 million a year, plus or minus a little, the council simply cannot find £8 million over a two-year period without severely prejudicing or ceasing all other expenditure on roads for two years. Clearly, that is not a realistic possibility, and the Government must accept that.

It seems that the answer lies in the hands of Ministers, who have the power to allow a temporary hump in capital consents over the necessary two or three-year period so that the project may be committed and built. The delay is now becoming intolerable and unacceptable. We are not talking about enormous amounts of money in terms of the total public expenditure spend on roads in Scotland. The Government have done exercises to enable the Borders region to do similar capital projects such as the Melrose bypass.

I am making an urgent plea tonight for the Minister to give fresh consideration to the issue so that the necessary capital consents can be found for the bridge to be built without any further delay.

1.50 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): I congratulate the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on securing this debate about the need for a new Kelso bridge. It is nice to see the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) present to support the hon. Gentleman.

I am well aware of the strength of local feeling about the need for the project to proceed, and I believe that the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire has made a persuasive case tonight. It has been useful to have the matter aired. The hon. Gentleman has made a well-reasoned case for the project, and has drawn the subject forcibly to our attention. He can be assured that we will give it careful and sympathetic consideration when deciding future roads and transport capital allocation levels generally and, in particular, for Borders regional council.

Before focusing on the specific project at Kelso, I think that it would be helpful if I were to explain the Scottish Office's role in relation to the local authority capital expenditure roads and transport programme. Let me make it clear first what our role is not about. When we came to power in 1979, we took the decision to disengage substantially from detailed involvement in local authority decision-making. As a result, neither Ministers nor

[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]

Scottish Office officials are normally involved in the detailed decision-making process about individual local roads and transport projects.

Our role is, in fact, twofold: first, to determine the broad overall level of capital consent resources which can be made available for local roads and transport projects; secondly, to take decisions about how that total is to be distributed to meet the competing claims of the 12 regional and islands councils. That process involves a general consideration of the council's transport, policies and programme documents and financial plans. Those documents set out the proposals for roads and other projects in their area over the next five years. The documents are updated annually by way of programme supplements.

Careful consideration is given to particular projects which are drawn to our attention. Account is taken of the resources available, but at the end of the process a block consent is issued to each roads and transport authority. It seems entirely right that the authority should decide its own priorities.

It should be remembered that these resources are not limited to the advisory allocation which is notified to them each year. Authorities are free to add to their allocation in a number of ways. They can switch resources from other capital programmes. They can use receipts from the disposal of assets. They can transfer funding for capital projects from their current expenditure budget. They may be able to attract private finance.

By these means, councils, including Borders regional council, have substantial resources at their disposal to enable them to proceed with projects to which they attach priority. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will agree that it is not for me, or any other member of the Government, to tell the council what it should or should not be deciding on the capital projects.

As regards Borders regional council's roads and transport capital allocations, I should emphasise that there is no automatic right to a particular share of the available resources to enable authorities to undertake capital expenditure. As I have said, financial plans are considered afresh each year, and we shall certainly consider with great care what the hon. Gentleman has said tonight.

As regards the particular levels of capital consent, it is fair to point out that the amount of consent issued to the council has remained at a steady level, despite this being a period of restraint on public expenditure. Indeed, the provisional allocations announced indicate a modest increase in the level for 1996-97 of some £400,000. That equates to a percentage increase of approximately 10 per cent.

There is therefore no substance to the claims that have apparently been made locally that the authority's roads and transport allocation has been reduced. Also, supplementary allocations have been made where possible, with a particularly generous one issued to Borders last year. I accept that the allocations issued are below the levels included in the council's plans, but councils cannot always expect to have all their wishes met against a background of tight expenditure control.

The 1994-95 level of £4.2 million equates to expenditure per head of some £40. That is the third highest level of all the regions in Scotland. The regional average for expenditure per head in Scotland is £33—considerably lower.

It is also worth emphasising that, wherever possible, each year, if further resources become available through underspending by authorities in the previous year, we will give careful consideration to issuing supplementary allocations for appropriate projects. As I mentioned, last year Borders received an additional £670,000—£270,000 for bridge strengthening and repair and £400,000 for road improvements. Its share of the supplementary allocations issued for roads and transport was more than three times its annual share of the core consent.

Allocations have been issued for this year, and there is no reserve available which could be drawn on now. While I cannot give the hon. Member any guarantee about the availability of supplementary consent in the current year, should the opportunity arise, the needs of the Borders will be considered most carefully before any decisions are made.

I would also add that any supplementary allocation which might become available for 1994-95 would not in itself solve the funding problems which Borders regional council seems to face in financing the Kelso bridge and bypass project, although it would make a start.

Mr. Kirkwood: The problem will get worse before it gets better. After 1996, a larger number of smaller unitary authorities will all face this problem with capital consents. Their annual level of capital spend just cannot cope with a project the size of £8 million. If one is running a budget of £5 million capital, one will never get to the stage of achieving the necessary phased finance for an £8 million project. Are the Government prepared in principle to address the problem?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have already told the hon. Gentleman that we will consider most carefully Kelso's case for a new bridge and bypass. We will look at it sympathetically in the framework of what is possible. If there is a possibility of a supplementary allocation, the points that he has made will most certainly be borne in mind.

As for the merits of the case, the hon. Gentleman made a persuasive case. We have received a number of representations, including one from the Fire Brigades Union and another from the community council. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that there was a fatal accident inquiry in 1993.

The matter was also discussed between my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and Lord Minto earlier this year, and the case for increased resources was considered carefully at that time. Traffic flows now average about 9,500 per day, and I believe that on one day the traffic flow peaked at more than 12,000 vehicles in the relevant 24-hour period, which is very relevant.

As regards the region's plans for a Kelso bypass and a new bridge, the necessary planning consents have been obtained and that is an important step forward. Planning procedures necessary for the project mean that, under the regulations governing development, the council had to publicise its proposals, and Borders submitted its notice of intention for the proposed bypass on 14 December 1990. Fourteen objections were received following the statutory advertisement.

The Secretary of State concluded that there were no grounds which justified him requiring the regional council to submit a formal planning application, and a clearance letter was issued on 21 August 1992. Planning consent is therefore deemed to have been granted. My right hon. Friend's decision is final, and he has no further procedural involvement in the matter.

The proposed bypass would, I understand, be built on the south and east sides of Kelso. It would run from the Jedburgh road, some 200 m west of the Wallaceneuk farm access, to Shedden Park road at its junction with Bullet Loan. The greater part of its route follows the line of the former railway along the south side of the River Tweed. A new bridge over the Tweed would be built south east of Bullet Loan. The existing road would be improved, five lengths of road and one private means of access would be stopped up, and one new means of access would be provided.

The latest plan we have to hand from the council indicates a projected spend over three years of £1.4 million, £2.7 million and £1.3 million for each of the three years—a total of some £6.4 million. I understand that the latest estimate for the project which the council received has now risen to about £7.4 million, and that an additional project linking the bypass to the road network will cost a further £0.5 million. I recognise that those are considerable sums, and that Borders will have some programming difficulties in accommodating such a proportionally large scheme.

I understand that the council is now committed to progressing phase 3 of the Melrose bypass via Newstead —a project estimated to cost more than £2 million. It of course remains open to the council to spread the construction phase over a longer time span than previously planned, although I appreciate that there may be constraints, given the nature of the construction contracts for such projects.

We will give the case for additional consent serious thought within the context of the forthcoming public expenditure round, and in the distribution of capital allocations next year. I also emphasise that it is entirely for Borders regional council to decide on its own priorities, and therefore the projects it wishes to take forward.

As to the future, when reorganisation takes effect, there is no reason why Borders regional council should be disadvantaged in terms of its capital allocation levels—indeed, it should be in a strong position to state its case. Careful consideration will be given in the forthcoming period to the system of capital allocations to operate from—

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock, and the debate having continued for half an hour, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned accordingly at two minutes past Two o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 14 July 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

FEDERATION OF STREET TRADERS UNION (LONDON LOCAL AUTHORITIES ACT 1990) (AMENDMENT) BILL *(By Order)*

Order for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time on Thursday 20 October.

LERWICK HARBOUR ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL.

Read the Third time, and passed.

Oral Answers to Questions

NORTHERN IRELAND

Administration

1. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he is taking to ensure that the process of administration of Northern Ireland involves the input of opinions from all political parties which support the present constitutional arrangements.

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr. Michael Ancram): The Government are fully committed to involving all the constitutional political parties in Northern Ireland in the good government of Northern Ireland. Their views are sought on all legislative proposals and at all times my ministerial colleagues and I are available to discuss issues of concern with representatives from the political parties.

Mr. Shaw: Should not the greatest emphasis be placed on involving in the administrative process people who support the current constitution? Should we not recognise that the majority of the people of Northern Ireland and of the whole United Kingdom want to see the parties and people who support the present constitutional arrangements much involved in furthering the future of the constitution of Northern Ireland and to exclude from consultations and talks people who have no understanding of or time for the present constitution?

Mr. Ancram: I agree. We have made it clear all along that those who wish to partake in the dialogue by which we hope to reach a political settlement must abide by the constitutional and democratic methods suitable to this country. People who have not renounced violence on a permanent and credible basis will not be part of that dialogue.

Mr. Molyneaux: Given that the indiscretions of Mr. Reynolds have seriously damaged the rather cumbersome talks process initiated back in 1991, will the Minister seriously consider the proposal of the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) and perhaps settle for something more modest which would enable the people of Northern Ireland to work and live together, as the greater number of them clearly want to do?

Mr. Ancram: I understand the desire of the people of Northern Ireland to see democratic institutions working again within the Province, and I understand the right hon. Gentleman's keenness to see that. However, I have made it clear on a number of occasions that my view and that of the Government is that that cannot be achieved in isolation from decisions on the other relationships involved—between the north and the south and between the two Governments. Those issues are interlocked and can be solved only on an interlocking basis.

Dr. Hendron: Does the Minister accept that while most people in Northern Ireland and, indeed, the island of Ireland believe that there must be change—that is what the talks in which the two Governments are involved are all about—only political parties that support the democratic process and have a mandate from the people can be involved in talks?

Mr. Ancram: I certainly confirm that. That has been the situation since the current talks started in March 1991. We have made it clear that the main constitutional parties will be involved in those talks if they wish, and I still regret that one main constitutional party is not prepared to take part in those talks at the moment. I repeat, however, that the British Government will not see involved in those talks parties that have not renounced violence permanently and credibly.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Further to the question of the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) and the answer that he received, has the Minister read the statement made two days ago in the United States of America by the Prime Minister of the Irish Republic, who said that he is seeking in the present talks the reconstruction of the police? Will the Minister comment on the Irish Government's proposal to remove the word "Royal" from the Royal Courts of Justice and the Royal Ulster Constabulary to achieve some sort of a settlement?

Mr. Ancram: I am not going to become involved in the detail of the current discussions between the two Governments, but it is clear that if they are to be successful they must be based on a broad spread agreement among the people of Northern Ireland. Anything that is not likely to secure that broad spread agreement would be unacceptable.

Sir James Kilfedder: May I ask the Minister why I have been excluded from the talks since the beginning of the process, despite my protests?

Mr. Ancram: I know that the hon. Gentleman has made that point on a number of occasions, and I appreciate his wish to be involved. At the time when the talks process began, however, it was decided that only the main constitutional parties should participate; otherwise there would have been a proliferation of parties seeking to do so. Let me tell the hon. Gentleman—as I have told him before—that I am always delighted to hear his views on where we should be going and that I will meet him whenever he wishes.

Mr. Canavan: May we have an assurance that the proposed summit will go ahead next week and that the agenda will include the setting up of structures on an all-Ireland basis? We should bear in mind the fact that even the Government of Ireland Act 1920 referred to a Council of Ireland and a Parliament for the whole of Ireland and also yesterday's announcement that the European Union would make additional money available for cross-border co-operation.

Mr. Ancram: As I have said, I will not talk about the detail of the current conversations between the two Governments. I will say, however, that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will see the Taoiseach at the Brussels Council tomorrow, where they hope to have a serious working meeting to review progress made by officials on the framework document, as well as security issues and the prospects of an end to violence. They will also consider the prospects and timing of the next bilateral summit.

Political Talks

2. **Dr. Spink:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on recent developments regarding the joint declaration.

9. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the latest peace negotiations in the Province.

10. **Mr. Hain:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what recent discussions he has had on the Downing street declaration; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Sir Patrick Mayhew): The joint declaration stands as a statement by the British and Irish Governments of fundamental principles by which they will be guided. We have made it abundantly clear that violence for political ends is incompatible with these principles and that it will continue to exclude those responsible for it from the democratic process.

Dr. Spink: In view of recent speculation that Sinn Fein may soon respond to the joint declaration, will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that Government policy remains that there will be no commencement of even exploratory talks until there is a permanent and total cessation of violence? Would he care to comment on the Taoiseach's recent comments on the matter?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. We have made it clear time and again that there must be a permanent cessation of violence, and an unequivocal declaration and commitment to that cessation.

On 12 July Mr. Reynolds, the Taoiseach, said in the United States:

"Other parties will not sit around the table with those who reinforce their argument by the use of violence or the threat of it. That is why there must first be a lasting and definitive commitment to a purely democratic political strategy."

That is the joint position of both Governments.

Mr. Dykes: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that one of the striking features of the process since the joint declaration is the fact that the two Governments have continued to stand shoulder to shoulder in their search for peace? May we again put on record our thanks to the Irish Government for the constructive role that they are playing?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: They have indeed stood shoulder to shoulder. That is what makes the use of violence for political purposes so abundantly self-defeating. Those who use it in that way know perfectly well that both Governments are determined that coercion shall not be rewarded. That is the view of the British Government and also of the Irish Government. We make common cause very effectively to ensure that those who resort to violence are thwarted and defeated.

Mr. Hain: Does the Secretary of State accept that many of us share his disgust—and probably even despair—at the recent terrifying explosives find in Heysham, and the recent IRA attacks? May I urge him, however, not to be diverted by those events or by other pressures from the central goal of getting Sinn Fein to the negotiating table in one way or another, as that is one of the keys to peace?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: It is obviously desirable thatevery political party with a democratic mandate which is committed to the democratic process should participate, in one way or another, in the discussions, but people should not suppose that by continuing to resort to violence, or by justifying it, they can somehow hold up that process because they cannot—they will be left outside. So it is for them to choose—the process is unstoppable.

Mr. Mallon: The Secretary of State will agree that in the joint declaration his Government define their role as the creation of agreement among all the people of Ireland. I am sure that he would also agree that that implies creating a unity of purpose and a political agreement with which all the people of Ireland can identify. How and when will that be presented to us by the two Governments so that the emphasis can shift to the legitimate political process and away from those who support and plan acts of violence?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The hon. Gentleman refers to the discussions going on between the two Governments, the objective of which is to reach a shared understanding of the sort of package that would lead and help the democratically elected and constitutional parties in Northern Ireland, with the two Governments as appropriate, to reach that overall settlement, which has been their goal since 1991. That is what we are about. Of course it is not easy. The reason why we are trying to achieve that settlement is that from time to time party leaders have said, "We cannot say how far we are prepared to go and what our bottom line would be on, let us say, strand 1 or strand 2 until we know the position of the Governments." It is therefore desirable that the Governments should demonstrate that shared understanding, if we can. It is not easy, but a lot of progress has been made. I cannot say when success will be achieved, but there are sensible grounds for believing that it will be.

Mr. Robathan: I am sure that hon. Members are pleased to hear that we stand shoulder to shoulder with the Irish Government, but what tangible progress has been made by the Irish Government or what concessions have made by that Government to the concerns of the people of the North of Ireland, who belong to the Unionist majority, since either the Anglo-Irish Agreement or the Downing street declaration?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: As I think that my hon. Friend knows—I have often told him so—the co-operation between, for example, the two police forces has progressively improved over the years and in very recent times. If he consults Hugh Annesley or the Commissioner of the Garda Siochana, as I hope that he will, he will become aware of the close character of co-operation and trust which exists and of the practical ways in which they are helping each other. I do not share the view implicit in my hon. Friend's question: I know that he takes an interest in this matter and how sincere he is, but I do not share his implicit distrust of the Irish Government or the view that they are somehow not fully committed to the defeat of terrorism—I am satisfied that they are.

Mr. John D. Taylor: Since one of the main objectives of the declaration, now more than eight months old, was to bring about a renunciation of violence by the IRA and to involve it in the political process, leading towards some form of devolution in Northern Ireland in which the leader of Sinn Fein, Mr. Gerry Adams, and the leader of the Democratic Unionist party, the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley), would both work together and play a major role, how long will it be before the declaration achieves that objective? *[Interruption.]*

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) will no doubt speak for himself —and I expect that we shall hear him—either from an upright or from a sedentary position. Both Governments made it clear at the time that the purpose of the declaration was to set out fundamental principles of democracy, of the rejection of violence and of realism. That was achieved, and that is why I said that the declaration stands. Of course, if those people who have believed—and still believe—that they can make progress towards their political objectives by violence are persuaded that they have been mistaken, that is well and good and we shall all rejoice. But if, contrary to all the evidence, they continue to think that they can make progress by violence in our democracy, that is too bad: we shall proceed with the process in which all the principal political parties have been engaged and we shall carry it through—we do not intend to give up.

Mr. McNamara: The official Opposition entirely support what the Secretary of State has just said. On another matter, however, does he accept that the Government of Ireland Act 1920 should be amended to reflect the principle of consent?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I do not accept that it should be amended to reflect the principle of consent because it seems to me that the principle of consent has been well and truly established in a number of statutory instruments since the Government of Ireland Act. Everyone knows that it is the policy of the Irish and British Governments that no change in the status of Northern Ireland can or should take place, save by the consent of those who live in Northern Ireland. Both Governments have said from the very beginning—and my predecessor said from the very beginning—that absolutely nothing is precluded from being put on the table in the constitutional talks. That is my answer to the hon. Gentleman—there is no need for the Act to be amended, but if someone wants to have it amended we shall examine any proposal and consider it on its merits.

Cross-border Security

3. **Mr. Spring:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his assessment of cross-border security co-operation.

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Sir John Wheeler): There is already an excellent level of co-operation between the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Garda Siochana. Both Governments, however, are constantly striving to find ways of improving the effectiveness of security measures.

Mr. Spring: In view of the current level of violence and the appalling acts of terrorism perpetrated in Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic, will my right hon. and learned Friend reassure the House that co-operation is taking place at the highest level, as is necessary to deal with the tragic situation on both sides of the border?

Sir John Wheeler: My hon. Friend is correct. Violence occurs on both sides of the border and neither country can afford to be complacent. However, I can tell the House that co-operation between the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Garda Siochana is of the very highest level. The Gardai's record speaks for itself: last year, they recovered nearly 400 firearms, more than 25,000 rounds of ammunition and nearly 3,800 lbs of explosives, and inquiries and arrests have continued this year.

Mr. Maginnis: With respect, the Minister is singing the same tune that we heard in 1975, 1980, 1985 and 1990, and that we shall probably also hear in 1995. It is boring, it has too many flats and it certainly does not reflect the fact that, as the Minister must admit, lorry load after lorry load of explosives are being trundled across the frontier from the Irish Republic into Northern Ireland and that, very possibly, the Heysham bomb came from that direction, too. In the same vein, will he—

Madam Speaker: Order. I must have a question rather than a long statement from the hon. Gentleman as a number of hon. Members are hoping to ask questions.

Mr. Maginnis: Will the Minister face the reality that security is ineffective at the level where it counts, irrespective of what happens at the highest level between the Chief Constable and the Commissioner of the Garda Siochana?

Sir John Wheeler: I visited the Commissioner of the Garda Siochana only last week and was able to see the level and extent of the training and arrangements for the management of the Garda Siochana. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that that police force is as determined as the Royal Ulster Constabulary or any other police force in the United Kingdom to confront terrorism wherever it can, and the record of success is improving all the time.

Mr. William O'Brien: On behalf of Her Majesty's Government, will the Minister give assurances that resources will be provided to ensure that there is cross-border co-operation, and will he prevail upon the Government of the Irish Republic to do the same? If we are to develop tourism and business trade between the north and the south, which is the way to peace initiatives, we need to be sure that such traffic will be able to travel between the north and the south without interference and that there will be security at the border.

Sir John Wheeler: I can assure the hon. Gentleman that both police forces and both Governments are well aware of the importance of commerce and of facilitating the movement of traffic between the two countries. That has to be achieved within the bounds and constraints of defeating and controlling terrorism, and every effort is made to work towards those objectives.

Lady Olga Maitland: I totally accept the Minister's assurance that there is good co-operation between the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Garda, but does he agree that it would be helpful if certain members of the Irish Government could cast aside some of their political sensitivities so that we could enhance security?

Sir John Wheeler: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and I regularly meet Ministers from the Republic of Ireland. Through the intergovernmental conference procedure, we have the opportunity to review in detail the security arrangements between the two countries and the successes of our police forces, and to examine how they could be further advanced. We shall continue to do that.

Political Talks

4. **Mr. Corbett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the talks that he has had with the parties in Northern Ireland and with the Irish Government in relation to the constitutional future of Northern Ireland.

6. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he last met Ministers of the Irish Republic to discuss the latest political developments in Northern Ireland.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: Bilateral discussions are continuing with three of the main Northern Ireland parties. I last met the Tanaiste, Mr. Spring, at the intergovernmental conference on 17 June, when we reviewed progress on the preparation of a joint framework document which might facilitate the negotiation of a comprehensive political settlement involving the main constitutional parties and the two Governments as appropriate.

Mr. Corbett: Can the Secretary of State give us the date of the next Anglo-Irish summit, and does he propose to put on the table proposals for cross-border executive bodies in exchange for amendments to articles 1 and 2 of the Irish constitution?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: We have had that one already. It is not for me to say when the next summit meeting will take place. The two Prime Ministers will meet in Brussels tomorrow and will have a workmanlike discussion, which will no doubt cover the prospects for and timing of the next summit. The agenda, too, will depend upon such matters.

Mr. Winnick: Do the two Governments recognise that the rejection of the joint declaration by Sinn Fein and the IRA, totally without justification, has led to the escalation of violence both from the Provisional IRA and from the loyalist murder gangs? Although I totally disagree with virtually everything that the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea) stands for, will the Secretary of State join me in utterly condemning the assassination attempt? We are all most grateful that the hon. Gentleman survived it, but if his children had been slaughtered we would no doubt have heard the same weasel excuses from those responsible as we heard from those responsible for the child murders in Warrington.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has referred to the disgraceful and disgusting attack on the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea). I endorse what the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) has said; indeed, I said as much myself when I visited the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster at his home the morning after the attack. Only a matter of seconds saved his 14-year-old daughter from being murdered, and no doubt the intention was that the hon. Gentleman would be murdered, too. The people involved presume to speak about self-determination and their support for the self-determination of the Irish people. How can self-determination be secured, save by democracy? The hon. Member for Mid-Ulster is a democratically elected representative, but those people have been elected by nobody—in their mouths, talk of peace and the peace process is no more than hypocritical blasphemy.

Mr. Trimble: Does not the Secretary of State realise that recently we have come to the painful conclusion that, despite our willingness, the Government are not presently committed to any serious discussions with the Northern Ireland political parties and prefer instead to allow themselves to be strung along by the Irish Government and the Provisional IRA? Does not he also realise that the reported concession offered by the Irish Government over the amendment to article 3 of the constitution is utterly worthless and totally hypocritical? Is not it time to bring that charade to an end and for the Government to bring forward sensible proposals for the good government of Northern Ireland, along the lines which were mentioned by my right hon. Friend the Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux)?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I understand the hon. Gentleman's impatience. I do not share the feelings that lead him to describe what is going on as a charade; nor do I recognise that the Government are being strung along by the Irish Government. That said, I recognise impatience. But it is the duty of us all—I am not a particularly patient man by temperament—to demonstrate as much patience as we can as long as there seems to be a realistic prospect of bringing the discussions to a successful conclusion. If it becomes clear that that cannot succeed, I shall remember and the Prime Minister shall remember that the British Government have responsibility for Northern Ireland. Then it will be for us to consider what we bring forward ourselves, unilaterally, by way of facilitating the achievement by the political parties of the kind of overall settlement which has been everybody's objective for so long.

Mr. Alton: In combating terrorism which prevents political progress from being made in Northern Ireland, will the Secretary of State tell the House what progress is being made in combating the systematic organised crime which bedevils Northern Ireland and the flow of arms and weapons into the island of Ireland from state-sponsored terrorism by a country such as Iran?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The hon. Gentleman knows that the Iranians have been rumbled in exactly that context. Every step is being taken to ensure that no arms reach any paramilitary organisations from any source outside the

island of Ireland. Furthermore, while we are making progress, there is no doubt that racketeering exists on a completely unacceptable scale. We have amended the law and the new law is being applied. It will be very much easier to concentrate on that if violence for political purposes has been brought to an end. But it is a real problem of which we are well aware.

Mr. McNamara: Is the Secretary of State aware that the statements that he and the Minister have made regarding the possibilities of a summit next week may send conflicting signals to different parts of different peoples in the island as to the success and the determination of the two Prime Ministers and the two Governments? Will he therefore consider carefully whether it would be better in the long run if, after the officials have had their discussions this week, the two Prime Ministers at least meet formally at a summit to stock take and to discuss how far they have got and where they may be able to make progress?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: As a mere Sherpa, who does not aspire to lead the summit, it is really not up to me to say more than I have said already. The two Prime Ministers will meet tomorrow and they will be discussing the prospects for a summit meeting and the timing for it.

Forestry

5. **Mr. William Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects to make an announcement on changes in incentives for private forestry in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ancram: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland will be making an announcement about the outcome of the forestry review in Great Britain shortly. An equivalent announcement on incentives for private forestry in Northern Ireland will be made as soon as possible.

Mr. Ross: While I welcome that reply about the statement on incentives, does the Minister appreciate that we have had tremendous success in private planting in Northern Ireland over the past few years, but we are right up against the deadline at which people must make plans to buy the small trees to promote the package? They cannot promote the package if one is not available. Can we have the statement on incentives as soon as is humanly possible?

Mr. Ancram: I agree with the hon. Gentleman that improvements have been made in planting in Northern Ireland over the past few years and it is our intention to build on that success with the incentive scheme review when it is announced. I accept the hon. Gentleman's comment that there is pressure on those who want to know the planting incentives for the next year and I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland is also aware of that pressure.

Technology Firms

7. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the level of inward investment in technology firms in Northern Ireland.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Tim Smith): Between April 1991 and the end of March 1994, the Industrial Development Board has secured inward investment in technology firms amounting to some £227 million. The IDB's recent successes in this area are a very encouraging development.

Mr. Coombs: It is clear from my hon. Friend's answer that information technology can play an important part in building up the economy of Ulster, despite the troubles which have been discussed during this Question Time. How many jobs were created in the technological sector, including information technology, last year and what was the total value of that investment?

Mr. Smith: My hon. Friend is entirely right about the importance of IT. I am glad to be able to tell him that last year the IDB had one of its most successful years ever. We secured more than 2,300 new jobs and investment of £259 million.

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: In view of the support that was given through the "Best of Northern Ireland" exhibition that took place in the House—one of the persons who gave that support was the Secretary of State—is not there a case to be made for holding a "Best of Northern Ireland" exhibition in the United States of America or other parts of the world, specially adapted of course? Would not that be a good way to bring inward investment to Northern Ireland? Will the Minister give his support to that idea?

Mr. Smith: That is an extremely good idea. I should certainly like to consider it. As the hon. Gentleman probably knows, the IDB already organises trade fairs overseas. I recently went to a successful trade fair in Washington called "The Look is Ireland" organised jointly with the Irish trade board.

Madam Speaker: Mr. Eddie O'Hara. I am sorry—Mr. Eddie McGrady.

Mr. McGrady: Thank you for the new baptism, Madam Speaker. It is usually O'Grady rather than O'Hara. I was interested in the Minister's response to the question. He lauded the IDB for its efforts in the past year. Will he and the Department take cognisance of the fact that many of the minority areas suffered 50 years of Unionist misdirection of industry and that that has not been corrected by 20 years of direct rule? For instance, in the past 10 years less than 1 per cent. of inward investment has come to South Down. Less than 1 per cent. of the total number of jobs created have come to South Down. Yet we are 10 miles from the central port of Belfast and in the southern part of the constituency we have a new and modern harbour. Can the Minister explain that discrepancy, which continues year after year?

Mr. Smith: The hon. Gentleman knows that we are unfortunately not in a position to direct inward investors to any particular area in Northern Ireland. I should like as much the hon. Gentleman to see more inward investment in his constituency. I shall visit his constituency soon and discuss the issue with him.

Security

8. **Mr. Nicholas Winterton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many police officers, reservists and military personnel have been killed or seriously injured in Northern Ireland in the last 12 months.

11. **Mr. Jonathan Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement regarding the current security situation in Northern Ireland.

Sir John Wheeler: Between 1 July 1993 and 30 June 1994, six RUC officers, five military personnel and 79 civilians were killed as a result of the security situation in Northern Ireland. In addition, 131 RUC officers, 319 military personnel and 489 civilians were injured.

No effort will be spared in bringing those responsible for terrorist crimes to justice. Already this year, 246 people have been charged with terrorist-related offences, including 54 with murder or attempted murder.

Mr. Winterton: I thank my hon. Friend for what I would describe as those horrific statistics. Does he accept that the peace process is sadly contributing to those horrific statistics? Does he further accept the fact that we are negotiating with a country that claims part of the United Kingdom as its territory in its constitution and yet we expect our security forces to protect that part of the United Kingdom? Does my right hon. Friend accept that the sooner the Republic of Ireland renounces its claim to Ulster as part of its territory, the sooner these dreadful slaughters will cease?

Sir John Wheeler: My right hon. and learned Friend has already dealt with an aspect of my hon. Friend's question. The fact is that the Republic of Ireland and its police service work as closely as they can with the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the United Kingdom's security forces to prevent crimes and outrages. They will continue to do so. As to my hon. Friend's point about the peace process, the only peace process that matters is the giving up of violence and killing, and the operation of democracy.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: While we express proper concern over the security situation, does my right hon. Friend agree that the House should not allow this Question Time to pass without passing to the security forces our great congratulations on the find of explosives on the Warrenpoint to Heysham ferry, which undoubtedly saved one Member of Parliament—or maybe more than one Member—from seeing an outrage committed within their constituency? Will my right hon. Friend convey to the security forces the grateful thanks of the House for their activities in that regard?

Sir John Wheeler: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He is absolutely right. The security forces are achieving remarkable results. They are professional. They are achieving significant results in the sense that something like four out of five potential terrorist attacks and killings are stopped or prevented before they occur. That shows the degree of professionalism, and I will gladly convey my hon. Friend's remarks to the security forces.

Mr. Beggs: Condemnation of violence and expressions of sympathy to bereaved families and those who are maimed because of IRA atrocities are much too small a response from those who are responsible for the security of service personnel and civilians in Northern Ireland. How many more attacks on helicopters, sniper attacks, mortar bomb attacks and, indeed, blockbuster bomb explosions must occur before the Government face up to the reality that, with or without the support of the Irish Republic, we must have selective internment of the "Godfathers"? The Government should not insult our intelligence any more by repeating the comment made time and again that security co-operation was never better than it is today, because it must have started from a very low position.

Sir John Wheeler: As to the hon. Gentleman's substantial point about the question of internment, it remains available to the Government and is constantly kept under review. But we must measure that possibility against the advice that my right hon. and learned Friend and I receive from the Chief Constable as to the successes of the RUC and the security forces—their achievements, the collection of intelligence and what they believe is the right policy to pursue to prevent these outrages from occurring.

Foreign Heads of State

12. **Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what consultations his Department has had with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office regarding visits to Northern Ireland by foreign heads of state.

Sir John Wheeler: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office is consulted at official level about all visits by foreign heads of state to Northern Ireland.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Does the Minister share my concern and the concern of many in Northern Ireland that the President of the Republic of Ireland is exploiting British Government tolerance in so-called private visits which are really public engagements and reinforcing the irredentist claim of articles 2 and 3, even to the point of unveiling plaques on public buildings funded by public money?

Sir John Wheeler: The President of the Republic of Ireland visits Northern Ireland in her capacity as a private visitor. They are working visits. She seeks to initiate those visits herself or visits at the invitation of local bodies or groups, and she is received with courtesy on behalf of the Government.

Bill of Rights

13. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proposals he has to publish a White Paper on the implementation of a Bill of Rights; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I have no plans at present to do so.

Dr. Godman: In light of the recommendations contained in the Opsahl report concerning the need to examine measures that will help to bring about parity of esteem between the two traditions, have the Government any plans to examine such steps, either within a Bill of Rights or in some other form?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: We have already introduced tangible measures to ensure that parity is obtained in employment matters. We have the toughest non-discrimination legislation in the whole of Europe. I have said that I would be perfectly willing to consider whatever may be proposed, so far as a Bill of Rights is concerned. The fundamental human right that has to be guaranteed above all others is the right to life, and that is what we are concentrating on. A great many people—I do not include

the hon. Gentleman—who are keen on advancing a Bill of Rights are reluctant to condemn the violence that is being deployed for political purposes in this democracy.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 14 July.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning, I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Mackinlay: What instructions has the Prime Minister issued this week in connection with combating the appalling level of air pollution throughout the Thames valley and in every other urban area of the United Kingdom? Can we be assured that it is Government policy that the polluters will pay and be prosecuted, rather than merely be given a ticking off and a prohibition notice? Now is the time for action to combat air pollution.

The Prime Minister: Of course, it was a Conservative Government who established the first ever environment Department as long ago as 1970, and we take environmental matters very seriously. On air pollution, we have already agreed tight emission standards for new cars and lorries and we intend that they be rigidly enforced. We have taken the lead over the rest of Europe by introducing integrated pollution policies and we are determined to ensure that those are kept. We made it clear earlier this year in discussion documents that making the air cleaner is an important part of our policy and, where necessary, we will take action.

Mr. Marlow: Is a single European currency a commercial convenience, or does it mean single European interest rates, a single European economy, harmonised and high levels of European taxation and, effectively, a single European state? And, if it is the latter, could my right hon. Friend tell the House that he is most unlikely ever to put it before the British people? It would give a great deal of simple pleasure to a lot of simple people if he could say so.

The Prime Minister: I am always prepared to give some simple pleasure to my hon. Friend. As I have told the House on many occasions, a single currency would not be a practicable proposal, unless one had a proper and equally performing series of economies right across the area that would be governed by that currency. Without that, there would be the very practical difficulty that one would get large-scale structural unemployment and a massive demand for funds transferred from one part of the European Union to another. It is for that very practical reason that I do not believe that we are within many years of being able to consider a single currency.

Mrs. Beckett: Is the Prime Minister yet able to tell us whether, in the context of the presidency of the European Commission, there are any candidates who do not support the social chapter?

The Prime Minister: I can tell the right hon. Lady that, since we are not partners to the protocol, it does not matter from our point of view whether they are in favour or not.

Mrs. Beckett: But the meeting is tomorrow. Is the Prime Minister telling us that, having used the veto—so he said—to permit extensive consultations, he does not know whether any of the candidates are against the social chapter?

The Prime Minister: I sometimes think that the right hon. Lady prepares her second and third questions before listening to the first answer. The second question bore no relationship to the answer which I just gave her, which I shall repeat. Since we are not partners to the protocol that governs that aspect of European policy, it does not matter to this country whether the new president does or does not support that.

Mrs. Beckett: The Prime Minister, as he will be well aware, has twice run away from answering the question. Is he reluctant to answer it because he knows that, in a triumph of personal diplomacy, he vetoed the appointment of one Conservative Prime Minister from a Benelux country who supports the social chapter, and will now support the candidacy of a Conservative Prime Minister from a Benelux country who supports the social chapter?

The Prime Minister: Oh dear, oh dear. I fear that the right hon. Lady has shown the House too clearly that she does not have a scintilla of understanding of the European policies of each of the candidates whose name has been put forward for the presidency of the European Commission. There is a substantial difference between those policies that I vetoed last week and those that are followed by any of the candidates who remain in the ring at the moment.

The decision will be made on Friday and the right hon. Lady might then understand the distinction between the policies of a European Commission president whom I would not accept and those of a European Commission president whom I can accept.

Mr. Batiste: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the impending statement from the Secretary of State for Defence will be keenly awaited by many people who work in the defence contracting industry in Leeds and in many other parts of the country? Can he confirm that "Front Line First" means enhancing the capabilities of our front-line troops by giving them the best available equipment to do the many jobs with which they are faced?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. and learned Friend will be making a detailed statement about the matter in a few minutes and, if my hon. Friend will forgive me, I will not anticipate that statement in detail. "Front Line First" was established to ensure precisely that we direct the resources available to the front line to maximise the fighting capacity and the cutting edge of the British armed forces.

Q2. **Mr. Hain:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 14 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hain *rose—*

Mr. Richards: Liar. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. *[Interruption.]* Just a moment. Let me establish who made the remark.

Hon. Members: Stand up.

Madam Speaker: Order. I understand that it was Mr. Rod Richards. Is that the case?

Mr. Richards *indicated assent.*

Madam Speaker: In that case, I require the hon. Gentleman to stand up and immediately apologise.

Mr. Richards: I withdraw my remark, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman must apologise to me as the Speaker of the House for those words.

Mr. Richards: Madam Speaker, I apologise to you.

Mr. Faulds: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. I call Mr. Hain.

Mr. Hain: Will the Prime Minister establish an inquiry —*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The House must now come to order. The matter is over and done with.

Mr. Hain: Will the Prime Minister establish an inquiry into the way a member of his Cabinet, Lord Wakeham, and other leading Conservatives were in 1988 taken off selected Lloyd's syndicates which later suffered three years of catastrophic losses? Were they the beneficiaries of insider information while millions of pounds of losses were dumped on ordinary Lloyd's investors?

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Gentleman has any information whatever to suggest impropriety, he should bring that information forward. Given the inferences that clearly underlie his question, under the privilege of Parliament most people would not regard it as the right way to raise that matter.

Mr. Mans: Has any member of my right hon. Friend's Cabinet in the past advocated the abolition of nuclear weapons while at the same time suggesting that they should be retained, or suggested that we should withdraw completely from the European Community while advocating a federal Europe with Britain inside it? Have not all three contenders for the Labour leadership done all of those?

The Prime Minister: The answer to that question is clearly, no. Had they done so, they would certainly not be members of my Cabinet.

Q3. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Prime Minister what official engagements he has already fixed in the London borough of Southwark for the rest of the current year.

The Prime Minister: I have no engagement planned at this stage.

Mr. Hughes: In that case, will the Prime Minister accept a short engagement to cross the river and explain to the people of Southwark, a borough with one of the highest levels of deprivation and unemployment in Britain, whether it is the Government's policy to narrow the gap between the richest and the poorest in Britain and increase public services before thinking of cutting taxes? If so, when?

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Gentleman looks at the available public assistance given to people in hardship, both to those in work on very low incomes and those out of work, he will see that there has been a significant improvement in recent years in the resources available to deal with those problems. He will know of the significant resources put particularly into inner-city areas of deprivation like Southwark over a large number of years. What does need to be done, and it requires the assistance of local authorities and others if we are to get to the root of the problem, is to ensure that those boroughs are also prepared to co-operate with bringing private capital into the area so that a joint approach of public and private capital can maximise the improvement for people who live in poor circumstances.

Q4. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 14 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Wareing: Since the Tory Government came to power in 1979, this country has lost a considerable proportion of its manufacturing base, yet, alone among European Union Governments, this Government have benefited to the tune of £124 billion worth of North sea oil revenue. We can guess what the Germans and French would have done with that. What did the Tory Government do with it?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman would, perhaps, be prepared to acknowledge in private that employment in manufacturing industry has been on a downward trend since the 1960s, whomsoever have been in Government. It has now stabilised. The manufacturing base at the moment is broadening, not narrowing. We now have the best economic circumstances, not just for exports but for growth and manufacturing, that we have had for the past 20 or 25 years. That is readily understood by everyone beyond the confines of the Labour party.

Q5. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 14 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Bruce: It is common ground in the House that the civil service is full of people of ability, honesty and integrity. Yet we would all agree—indeed, civil servants would agree—that the high cost of government and grandiose waste in building projects, for instance, are not what we are looking for. Does my right hon. Friend agree that the White Paper published yesterday, "Continuity and Change", shows that we also need improvement and cost reductions?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend. We can take pride in the performance of the British civil service over many years. That is evident not only in this country but by the fact that a number of other countries have copied the British civil service system. It has high standards of integrity, and we are determined to maintain that integrity and impartiality while improving the service delivered through the civil service to the people of this country, who pay for it, and to us.

Mrs. Mahon: The Prime Minister will be aware that at the moment, no national health service patients can be placed in private health care systems or homes against their wishes if they or their relatives will incur a personal charge

for that move. Will the Prime Minister give the House a guarantee that people will retain the right to free NHS care?

The Prime Minister: I can certainly give the hon. Lady that guarantee: the right to national health service care free at the point of delivery is an integral part of the Government's policy, and will remain so.

Q6. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 14 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Oppenheim: Has my right hon. Friend had a chance to study the recent report by the National Institute of Economic and Social Research, which shows that during the 1980s, Britain's manufacturing productivity growth out-performed that of Germany, whereas the period when we were most out-performed by Germany was between 1974 and 1979? Does not that illustrate that the time when this country was in danger of slipping into a second rate, low productivity, low wage, skivvy economy, with Mickey Mouse jobs, was not under the present Government, but rather in the heroic days of Labour's industrial strategy?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend has unearthed some interesting facts, which Opposition Members would do well to study. He is entirely right. The key to lasting prosperity and lasting jobs is to get the underlying economic conditions right, and then to keep them right. That is what we have done, and is what we propose to continue to do.

"Front Line First"

3.31 pm

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): With permission, I should like to make a statement on the outcome of the study known as "Front Line First".

At the end of the cold war there were major changes in the international situation. In response, along with all NATO countries, we have reduced the size and adjusted the balance of our armed forces. We believe that our plans for the armed forces reflect the challenges that are likely to confront us. We are determined to maintain that position, and not to drop our guard. Accordingly, I have no proposals to announce that would reduce the fighting strength of our armed forces.

Defence is expensive. This year, we are spending £23 billion, a larger proportion of our gross domestic product than most NATO countries. That amount is being reduced, as was announced last autumn. There is a continuing need to ensure that the administration and support of our armed forces are subjected to the most rigorous analysis. Only by doing that can we ensure that the money available for defence is being spent properly, and in a way which contributes to our fighting capability.

That is why I set up "Front Line First"—not to consider fighting strength, but to consider headquarters, stores, infrastructure, manning and all other aspects of defence administration and support.

I have also been determined that we should benefit from the experience and ideas that are to be found in all parts of the armed forces and in the civil service. Accordingly, we invited service and civilian personnel to contribute their ideas, and they did so to a splendid and unprecedented degree. More than 3,000 proposals were received. All those proposals were considered, and many endorsed.

We recognised from the start that strong and efficient support is a necessity and not a luxury; unless the armed forces are recruited, trained, clothed, fed and supplied in a professional and successful manner, their operational capability will suffer. Accordingly, every recommendation for change was examined against one major criterion—would it directly or indirectly affect the operational capability of the armed forces?

We relied heavily on the professional advice of the chiefs of staff. If it was concluded that a proposal would damage the fighting capabilities of the armed forces, it was rejected.

The proposals that have now emerged are set out in detail in the report published today. I have placed copies in the Library of the House. I do not have time in this statement to go through every proposal, but I should like to set out the most important of our decisions.

A number of themes have emerged from the work that has been done. First, the Ministry of Defence and other headquarters at all levels are too large, too top heavy and too bureaucratic.

Secondly, there is scope for far more delegation of responsibility down the management chain. We can simplify working practices and increase personal responsibility and accountability. We should try to bring to our peace-time working practices the reliance on personal responsibility which the armed forces show so effectively in operations.

Thirdly, recent experience shows that military operations are increasingly conducted on a joint service basis. Our structure should reflect that.

We intend to reduce the Ministry of Defence in central London still further, from more than 5,000 to a central core of 3,750—a reduction of more than 25 per cent. on previous plans. They will be housed in the main building and in the old War Office, instead of four separate buildings as presently planned. We have decided to form a permanent joint headquarters at Northwood, to replace the current approach where headquarters staff are drawn together ad hoc in response to developing crises.

The Procurement Executive headquarters will have 500 fewer staff. We will go ahead with the planned relocation of the executive at a single site at Abbey Wood near Bristol, but it will now be collocated with another headquarters, which will allow significant capital savings.

We have looked in depth at our arrangements for holding and distributing stores for the armed forces, such as clothing, food and fuel. We have found that modern supply techniques mean that we can reduce unessential holdings, enabling us to rationalise storage facilities while improving our ability to get stocks to the front line.

That will allow the closure of 17 depots of varying sizes in the United Kingdom. They are identified in the report published today which I have placed in the Library, and details have been sent to those hon. Members in whose constituencies they lie. Altogether the changes in our logistic arrangements set out in the report will save the defence budget more than £200 million a year and will improve operational capability by providing a more efficient supply chain that is better able to deliver essential stores to the front line.

A number of the studies took a fundamental look at the arrangements for recruiting service men and women, and our procedures for managing and training personnel. The total cost of our recruiting activities amounts to £100 million each year and is unacceptably expensive, especially when recruiting needs are low. At present, it is costing between £5,000 and £15,000 for every recruit.

It has become clear that there is scope for closer co-operation with the Employment Services Agency. Subject to the successful completion of a pilot trial, we intend to use the facilities of the 1,300 job centres as the first point of contact for those wishing to join the armed forces. That means that we can replace the existing network of more than 200 careers information offices with a much smaller specialist regional organisation. We expect that proposal to save us £25 million a year.

Given the joint service nature of military operations, we believe that it is right to combine command and staff training at senior level and create a joint services staff college. Further work is in hand to examine whether that should be located at Camberley or Greenwich, and whether junior command and staff training should take place on the same site.

"Front Line First" identified a number of ways in which we could reduce the cost of flying training. We intend to establish a single defence helicopter flying training school for all three services at Middle Wallop near Andover or at Shawbury near Shrewsbury, increase the involvement of civilian instructors and contractors in much of our flying training activity and rationalise training. That will mean that RAF Finningley and RAF Scampton will no longer be necessary, and they will be closed.

Skilled medical support is essential for the armed forces, but at present service hospitals have substantial overcapacity and there is considerable scope for closer links with the national health service. We intend, therefore, to reduce the number of service hospitals in the United Kingdom from three to one, which will be situated at Haslar in Gosport, and to establish regional military district hospital units in NHS hospitals at Derriford and at two new sites, and to retain a presence at Catterick.

We have also looked at military music. This is part of the fabric of our armed forces and makes an irreplaceable contribution to morale and fighting spirit. We have therefore decided that the number of musicians and bands which I announced last year should remain. But there is a need to rationalise and reduce the costs of training.

The Royal Marines believe that training their musicians at Deal has become prohibitively expensive. The maintenance demands of the buildings, and other running costs, have resulted in costs per musician trained of up to £300,000. We therefore intend to transfer Royal Marine music training to a new location by April 1996.

I now turn to naval infrastructure. In 1993, it was decided that the Portland naval base would close by 1996, which would leave four bases at Portsmouth, Plymouth, Faslane, and Rosyth. Over the past three years, the number of ships in the Royal Navy has reduced further, and over-capacity has increased. We should not be spending large amounts of money on bases unless there is an operational requirement to do so. The money spent on excess base capacity could and should be spent on enhancing the Navy's fighting capability. The Royal Navy therefore has examined whether the number of bases could be safely reduced.

The conclusions were that Faslane on the Clyde should remain, in view of the operational need for a strategic submarine base. It is also necessary to retain at least two surface ship bases, given the substantial size of the Royal Navy. Of the three surface ship bases, Rosyth is the smallest, and is designated as the base for two of the three squadrons of minehunters and for the fishery protection squadron.

The Royal Navy has concluded that there is no strategic need to keep these ships permanently at Rosyth. We have therefore decided to move one squadron of minehunters to Faslane on the Clyde, which is closest to its normal area of operations. The second squadron and the fishery protection vessels will move to Portsmouth. That is sensible, as the fishery protection squadron operates almost entirely off the coast of England and Wales. The Scottish Office provides a fishery prptection service around the Scottish coastline.

Rosyth will not, however, close. There is a continuing need for other Royal Navy-related activities at the Rosyth naval base site. These include necessary support for Rosyth dockyard, for storage, accommodation, Defence Research Agency activities, and the Defence Land Agent. Rosyth base will therefore become a royal naval support establishment continuing alongside the Rosyth royal dockyard. We will also retain the option of using Rosyth as a forward operating base should it become necessary to establish such a base on the east coast of Scotland.

All in all, these proposals will mean that over 900 civilian and service jobs will remain at the Rosyth base; 70 new jobs will be created on the Clyde. Around 700 civilian jobs will go; around 600 civilian jobs will remain.

We expect these proposals to save about £22 million a year, with no operational disadvantage. A consultation document on our proposals for Rosyth is being issued today. The royal dockyard at Rosyth is not affected by these proposals and, as announced last year, can look forward to a substantial programme of surface ship refits.

We have also looked at arrangements for the shore basing of naval aircraft. We have concluded that the naval air stations at Culdrose and Yeovilton should continue and that the Lynx squadrons now accommodated at Portland could be moved to Yeovilton without any detriment to operational effectiveness. This will save about £12 million a year.

The air station at Portland will close by 1 April 1999. This will involve the loss of 400 jobs at Portland, though some of these and about two thirds of the service personnel based there will transfer to Yeovilton.

In the aftermath of the cold war, there is no longer a requirement for the maritime HQ at Pitreavie. We therefore intend to close it in 1996. We intend to transfer some staff, together with Flag Officer Scotland, Northern England and Northern Ireland, to Faslane. The rescue co-ordination centre for the whole of the United Kingdom which we had planned to move to Pitreavie will now be set up at RAF Leuchars in Fife.

The Special Boat Service headquarters will be transferred from Poole to Portsmouth, where the facilities will meet our requirements. This will enable the closure of Royal Marines Poole. We are also rationalising Royal Marines barracks at Plymouth, and, subject to the outcome of current studies, we hope to transfer certain units to Chivenor, which is no longer required by the RAF.

We have also looked at our requirement for ranges. We have concluded that we can provide the armed forces with all the range capacity required and at the same time make savings of £7.5 million a year. This will involve the closure of the ranges at Kircudbright, Pendine, and Hurn. There will, however, still be a need for the ranges at Aberporth, and at Benbecula in the Hebrides.

Finally, so far as RAF Germany is concerned, we have also decided that we require only one air station. The Harriers and helicopters currently based at RAF Laarbruch will accordingly be redeployed to existing operational air stations in the UK. That will have operational benefit, because aircraft now based at Laarbruch often have to train over the United Kingdom.

Change on the scale envisaged in "Front Line First" is bound to have painful consequences. The overall impact of the package will mean net job reductions of about 18,700 over the next three years. Compared with previous plans, the number of civil servants in the Ministry of Defence will fall almost 7 per cent., or 7,100, and the total of uniformed personnel will fall 5 per cent.—of which the Royal Navy will reduce by 1,900, the Army by 2,200 and the RAF by 7,500.

Those cuts will fall on all levels of service and civilian personnel. We anticipate that more than 20 senior military and civilian posts—that is, major-general level and above —will disappear. That will bring the total reduction in senior posts since 1990 to about one third.

A proportion of those reductions will require redundancies in the armed forces and the civil service. We will wish to deal sensitively and fairly with those who have served the nation well. The terms on offer will be the same as have applied to other recent redundancies.

It will be seen that manpower reductions are higher for the Royal Air Force. That reflects in particular the conclusions of work set in hand by the Air Force Board

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some two years ago. The work addressed the scope for reducing costs by civilianising or contractoring out uniformed jobs. It also looked at savings to be derived from introducing new engineering work practices, and from reducing the number of expensive aircrew occupying ground posts.

The Air Force Board endorsed the outcome of that work, which is reflected in the measures that I have announced today. Like all the other proposals that I am announcing, those manpower reductions will not adversely affect our front-line fighting capability.

I should now like to outline our plans for the future of the Territorial Army. The Government remain committed to making greater use of the reserves. There has been a detailed study of the structure and manning of the TA. One option was to make a major reduction in the size of the TA to reflect the reduced home defence role. We decided, however, to reject that option.

In future, the role of the Territorial Army should be to act as a general reserve to the Army. It will remain an integral component of our defence forces on mobilisation, and we intend to make greater use of it in peacetime. Our previous plans were for a TA with formed units of 59,000, plus a recruits pool of 4,500.

The latter is no longer necessary, but we intend to retain at its current level of 59,000 the formed units of the TA. We shall consult widely within the TA whether there should be some reroling of units or other changes within the 59,000 total, and we will announce the outcome later in the year.

We do not underestimate the challenge that the proposals I have announced represent for all involved. They will have a significant impact on the lives and prospects of many who serve in the armed forces, as well as on civilians in the Ministry of Defence. The changes are, however, essential if we are to focus our resources on sustaining and enhancing our operational capability and fighting strength. "Front Line First" has enabled us to do that. In particular, "Front Line First" has allowed us to make a number of highly significant enhancements to our front line capability, which I will outline to the House.

For the Royal Navy, I am able today to announce key equipment improvements across a range of capabilities that will enhance the Royal Navy's ability to sustain operations, as well as being of value to Britain's warship building industry. We will complete the modernisation of our amphibious capability. Last year, we ordered a helicopter carrier. Today, we are announcing that we shall shortly issue an invitation to tender for two new assault ships to replace HMS Fearless and HMS Intrepid.

We will also extend the Royal Navy's capability for anti-ship and anti-submarine warfare well into the next century, with the invitation to tender for the design and build of a new class of nuclear-powered submarine—the batch 2 Trafalgar class, which will replace the Swiftsure class.

We are able to carry forward our programme to build a force of 25 modern and highly capable mine counter-measures vessels. Accordingly, we are today placing an order with Vosper Thornycroft for a further batch of seven Sandown single-role minehunters. Four type 23 frigates are currently on order. We plan to issue invitations to tender for a further batch during the coming year. The Government will assess the case thereafter on the basis of price and operational need.

For the Army, we can now confirm the order of a further 259 Challenger 2 tanks from Vickers Defence Systems. This will enable us to field an all-Challenger 2 fleet of tanks, improve the quality of the country's contribution to NATO's Rapid Reaction Corps and ensure that we have a continuing capability to make a significant contribution to the type of coalition operation we saw in the Gulf. This order will be very good news for Vickers and its work force of nearly 2,000 at both Leeds and Newcastle, and to the company's sub-contractors throughout the country.

An order is also being placed with Royal Ordnance at Glascoed, Gwent for 400,000 rounds of 51mm mortar ammunition.

Finally, we will use some of the additional 3,000 personnel made available last year for the Field Army to allow the Royal Armoured Corps Training Regiment, currently the 9/12 Lancers, to be given a role as a third and additional armoured reconnaissance regiment and to take its place in the front line.

For the RAF, we are placing a production order for the mid-life update of 142 Tornado GR1 aircraft. This will provide improvements to the aircraft's avionics, navigation and armaments systems. It will maintain the operational effectiveness of the RAF's long-range attack capability well into the second decade of the next century, and help to preserve British Aerospace's manufacturing base at Warton in Lancashire in the run-up to production of Eurofighter 2000.

As for weapons programmes, the Gulf conflict demonstrated the value of precision stand-off weapons to allow targets to be attacked accurately, while reducing aircraft vulnerability. We are therefore placing an order for advanced laser-guided bombs with the associated thermal imaging and laser designation pods. The bulk of the work will be done in Edinburgh and elsewhere in Scotland, in the west country and on the south coast.

In addition, the Government believe there is a good case in principle for a new long-range air-to-ground missile, CASOM. They will continue to examine the case for CASOM carefully and, subject to the outcome of that examination, intend to open discussions with industry later in the year.

This is a substantial programme of investment in new equipment. The orders that I have announced today, and orders resulting from the invitations to tender, should together be worth about £5 billion, and are expected to sustain directly over 10,000 jobs. These decisions represent a major boost to British industry, as well as providing vital enhancements for all three services.

The success of "Front Line First" has also identified resources that can now be used to deal with other pressing priorities. I have decided that the most important priorities are to reverse the hollowing-out measures of recent years, and to increase levels of operational training.

To that end, I can announce that the success of "Front Line First" has enabled me to increase RAF operational force levels by moving 12 Harrier GR7 aircraft from the reserve fleet to the front line. I can also inform the House that the frigate and the submarine previously planned to go into mothballs within the next few years will remain in service as part of the operational fleet. I know that those proposals will be particularly welcome within the armed forces.

Equipment levels are themselves of little consequence unless they are backed up by intensive and highly developed training arrangements. Here, too, I am able to announce proposals for all three services. For the Army, we shall be improving our training areas in the United Kingdom and Germany. This will allow an increase in such training of between 50 per cent. and 100 per cent., particularly at the battle group level. We shall be acquiring additional training aids to allow more complete simulation traininq.

For the RAF, it is important that pilots should have sufficient regular flying to preserve and enhance their skills. As part of our shift of resources to the front line, I have decided that the current level of aircrew flying training hours will be increased progressively over the next three years. When completed, the increase will bring the level of flying training for each aircrew member up to 20 hours a month, a total increase of 8,000 hours a year for the fast jet force.

For the Royal Navy, we shall be purchasing additional anti-submarine and gunnery targets to allow more realistic training for ships and naval aircraft deployed away from usual target facilities.

One of the most important achievements of "Front Line First" will be progress in tri-service operational capability. I have already referred to proposals for a joint headquarters, a joint staff college and a joint helicopter school.

I am pleased to be able to say that we intend to develop a joint rapid deployment force. We have already the fighting elements of rapidly deployable forces such as the Royal Marines, the Parachute Brigade, and 24 Air Mobile Brigade. We shall be looking at how best we can develop the capabilities of those forces to enable them to intervene even more effectively and speedily together.

We shall be providing additional communications infrastructure to improve their effectiveness, and many of the equipment enhancements announced earlier will contribute directly to improving this important area of capability. The concept of the joint rapid deployment force is one that can be built on, and the overall ability of our forces to operate at speed and effectively in the sort of situation described will be a high priority for the future.

In the changed strategic environment, there is a wider range of operations in which our forces may be deployed. In this context, for the Navy, we are therefore also examining the case for acquiring and committing to NATO conventionally-armed Tomahawk land attack missiles, and we will be seeking information from the United States of America Government and from industry.

I am conscious that the changes that the armed forces have undergone since the end of the cold war have been painful and demanding for them as well as for civilian staff. The nation already owes them a great debt, and successful implementation of the proposals that I have announced today can only increase that indebtedness. That process of change needs to be managed with sensitivity and care for our people, and that we will do.

The changes are necessary and justified. They will enable us to preserve the front line and proceed with a programme of investment necessary to maintain its operational effectiveness. Today, we have demonstrated the Government's determination to preserve and enhance our fighting strength and to ensure that our armed forces, soldier for soldier, pilot for pilot and ship for ship, remain the best in the world. I commend the proposals to the House.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): May I first express the regrets of my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) for his absence today? As has been explained to the Secretary of State for Defence, he is attending his daughter's graduation ceremony today.

I thank the Secretary of State for his very long statement, which lasted 56 minutes—[HON. MEMBERS: "Twenty-six".] Twenty-six—it just felt like 56. The starting point must surely be that our armed forces are one of our country's great centres of excellence and have a worldwide reputation, and that nothing should be done that might destroy that excellence.

Obviously, we must have time fully to digest all the details that were set out today, but we welcome elements of the statement. We welcome, for example, the announcement in relation to the territorials, who at least are likely to have some stability after three years of very substantial cuts. We welcome the greater training planned for all three services. We welcome the new equipment orders and the development of a joint rapid deployment force, for which the case is well established.

We would have little difficulty in accepting the case for cuts if operational efficiency were not thereby impaired, but is it not clear that this latest round of cuts, when 1990's "Options for Change" is only two-thirds complete, has the Treasury as its sole driving force, as the silence of Conservative Back Benchers demonstrated today? If the cuts are so clearly justified, why did they not form part of the "Options" exercise? After 15 years of Conservative government, is it a credible reason that only now have efficiencies come to light?

In short, is it "Front Line First" or "Conservative party first?" Is it "Front Line First" or "bottom line first"? Is it not a clear admission that the Government have got it wrong in the past? Was it an accounting miracle or administrative incompetence that led to the discovery by the MOD that it was spending £500 million more on research and development than it originally thought?

Will the Secretary of State confirm that, because of the timing of the announcement, it will be more than three months before the House has an opportunity to debate his statement, including all the major cuts which are part of it?

Does not the experience of recent military operations, especially those in the Gulf, where more than 70 per cent. of our Royal Air Force personnel were deemed to be support staff, show how spurious is the distinction between support services and the front line in a modern integrated service community?

On contractorisation, is not the Secretary of State's faith in privatisation at least troubled by the fact that 18 front-line RAF Tornado F3 fighters have recently been taken out of service and are awaiting repair at RAF St. Athan, due to the poor standard of repairs by civilian contractors? As a lawyer, does he not fear that in an emergency a civilian contractor might well say, "Sorry, it is not within the terms of our contract," or, "These extras have to be charged at premium rates"—as happened during the Gulf operation? Are contractor personnel likely to be asked to risk their lives? What obligation will be placed on contractors to train their own people, and not just poach from a diminished MOD pool?

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As for redundancies and the regions affected, do not these cuts represent the sacking by the MOD of 18,700 workers? Will not they have a major effect on regions such as the south-west of England, which are already reeling from Government unemployment policies?

If my hon. Friends catch your eye, Madam Speaker, they will no doubt be making constituency points, but may I congratulate my hon. Friends the Members for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) and for Dunfermline, West (Ms Squire) and the trade unions on their magnificent campaign which has at least partially saved the Rosyth base? That campaign will continue, particularly to keep the minesweepers at Rosyth. Is it true that the Secretary of State had to re-write the Rosyth script as late as last Friday?

What is the Secretary of State's estimate of the compulsory redundancies? Why will not the Government undertake a total cost benefit study of such decisions, including the social security and job regeneration costs? Does the Secretary of State accept that it is hardly in our national interest to transfer payments from the MOD to the social security budget?

As for particular matters affecting the RAF, for example, which will bear the brunt of the cuts, is the decision to leave only one air station in Germany final, or can we expect a further announcement?

There are many particular problems affecting the Royal Navy. How can the shore-sea ratio in the Navy, which is so vital to morale, be maintained if home-based jobs, which our sailors would expect to be available, are lost to the Navy as a result of contractorisation?

As for the new orders announced today, have not those major defence equipment orders and sweeteners already been announced—some of them many times? Are they not just a smokescreen to hide the cuts?

Can the Secretary of State tell us of any major equipment order announced today that has not already been announced, in this year's Statement on the Defence Estimates, to the Defence Select Committee, or by way of a written answer—in some cases by all three methods? If the Secretary of State claims that, before today's announcement, those orders were in doubt, is he not in effect clearly conceding that we can put no faith in Government promises?

Why was there no mention in the statement of the location of the Army personnel office or the privatisation of the royal dockyards? Announcements on either would have major job implications throughout the country.

Finally, can the Secretary of State give an assurance to our shell-shocked service personnel—whose morale, as he and his colleagues well know, is fragile at the moment —that, after that further blow, there will be a period of stability? Or is that just another promise, like the promise by his predecessors when they said, "This is the end of the cuts"? Are there not further cuts on the horizon—cuts of at least an extra £2.6 billion from the financial year 1996-97?

There is still no defence review, no attempt to strike an overall balance between commitments and resources. There is no attempt, for example, to deal with key questions such as tanks versus helicopters or Tornados versus Harriers. The Government have no coherent strategy. Their defence policy is based on tactics, short-termism and accountancy tricks. Do not our service personnel and workers in the defence industries deserve better? They will receive better—under Labour.

Mr. Rifkind: After that contribution from the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson), I understand why *The Guardian*, of all newspapers, this morning said: "There is no field of politics in which Labour is less convincing than defence".

I shall try to respond to those of the hon. Gentleman's remarks that represented questions. He asked me about Rosyth, and implied that somehow the intervention of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) had led to changes in the Government's policy over the past few days. That is a sign of the delusions that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East experiences on a regular basis. The proposals that I announced today are exactly the same as those that I put to the relevant Cabinet Committee a week ago, and have not been changed one iota since then.

We do not consider it necessary to retain both the bases in Germany. Because of German restrictions on flying over Germany, RAF planes now often have to fly back to the United Kingdom for training before returning to Germany later in the day. That makes little operational sense, and that is why the change is being made.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the Army Personnel Centre. That has not been mentioned today because there is no change in the current position; it will be established in Glasgow.

The hon. Gentleman also asked me whether there was to be some stability in defence, and sought to contrast the Government's position with that of the Labour party. But the programme of new equipment and operational improvements that we have announced today is a clear demonstration of the direction in which the Government intend to head.

Compare that with the policy of the Labour party; a policy of calling for a defence review on the front line, on force strengths, on capabilities, which would threaten the armed forces with total uncertainty, not only between now and the general election but, God forbid, thereafter, in the event of a change of Government. The Labour party offers nothing but instability and uncertainty to the fighting strength of the armed forces. Today, we have demonstrated our determination not only to maintain the fighting strength but to enhance it by the various new proposals which we have announced.

Mr. Tom King (Bridgwater): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that, while there is—obviously—regret about any losses of jobs, he has the clearest possible duty to see that the support and administration of our armed forces is brought in line with the new structure of our front line? In that connection, while some of his proposals follow on from the plans, as he knows, laid out under the new management strategy, may I congratulate him on some very imaginative new proposals, which have clearly benefited from the consultation process? The investment proposals and new equipment go a long way to meet our undertaking of smaller but better.

However, as he turns to our armed forces and all in the Ministry of Defence to see that that undertaking is successfully completed, will he recognise that it has been a period of major change? If today's announcement is to mark the end of that period, will he take the opportunity to say that, while the pursuit of efficiency must always continue in the Ministry of Defence, the service and duty

of our armed service men and defence personnel entitle them to a period of stability to implement those changes, and to ensure that they are successfully concluded?

Mr. Rifkind: I thank my right hon. Friend. Of course I agree with the sentiments that he has expressed. He has rightly identified that balance between improved efficiency, the search for which must always continue to ensure best value for money, and the maintenance and enhancement of the fighting strength of our armed forces. We have shown today that that is not rhetoric, but is matched by enhancements of fighting capability, of training opportunities, of the available equipment and of the way in which our armed forces can carry out their responsibilities. I thank my right hon. Friend for his remarks.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): Since the exercise is described as "Front Line First", will the Secretary of State tell us what assurances he has had from the Treasury about his ability to keep every penny of the savings which he proposes to make and to apply them to the front line?

Will he confirm that the continuation of Rosyth, even in a limited way, is an acceptance of its strategic value? What is the state of readiness for that installation? What exercises, if any, will be carried out to maintain that state of readiness?

In the light of his statement, is not the right hon. and learned Gentleman persuaded that it would be right to look not only at costs, but at commitments as well? In the first instance, would it not now make sense to withdraw the Royal Air Force in its entirety from Germany, since the political and military purposes for which it was located there are no longer necessary?

Mr. Rifkind: On the first question, I should have thought that the basis on which I have been able to announce a substantial increase in training, the return to the front line of defence assets which were in reserve, and our policy on a joint rapid deployment force and Tomahawk land attack missiles would have indicated clearly to the hon. and learned Gentleman that the additional savings that we have identified have been available to enhance the front line in the way I have described.

The hon. and learned Gentleman also asked about Rosyth's future role. I have said that Rosyth's future role will be as a naval support establishment, but because of the continuing access of berthing facilities, because of the Crombie ammunition depot nearby and the other available facilities, it will be open to the Royal Navy to use it as a forward operating base, if at some future moment that would seem to be desirable.

I do not agree with the hon. and learned Gentleman that it would be appropriate to withdraw all our Royal Air Force forces from Germany. The tangible, physical presence of the Royal Air Force and the Army in Germany is part of our commitment to NATO and to the integrated military structure of NATO. Therefore, it is right and proper that we should demonstrate that, as we are doing.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor (Upminster): I add my voice to that of my right hon. Friend the Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King) in congratulating my right hon. and learned Friend and all those who took part in the 33 defence costs studies groups, who have come up with this solution to a very difficult problem.

However, may I ask my right hon. and learned Friend to remember that many of us on this side of the House feel that, notwithstanding the defence costs studies results, some areas of our defences are still in need of further enhancement than has been given today—noticeably the number of soldiers available, which leads to the emergency tour plot gap, which we feel should be filled.

I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend can confirm not only that there will be a period of stability, as he has done, but that we have now reached the bottom of the cuts that we have seen for the past four years and that, as the economy improves, we shall be able further to enhance the capability of all three armed services.

Mr. Rifkind: I thank my hon. Friend for the tribute that he has paid to all who took part in the studies. I especially give my own thanks to my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement, who chaired the executive group and carried out much of the detailed work.

We shall keep the number of Army personnel under careful consideration. My hon. Friend will recall that we significantly enhanced the size of the field Army not only by reprieving the proposed amalgamation of the Cheshires and the Staffordshires, the Royal Scots and the King's Own Scottish Borderers, but by subsequently announcing a further 3,000 Army personnel for the front line for the field Army. That has enabled us to ease the situation significantly as a consequence.

Sir Harold Walker (Doncaster, Central): Do the Government ever have regard to the employment consequences of their decisions? After the devastation of the coal mining industry and the railway manufacturing industry, my constituents have become increasingly dependent on the jobs provided by RAF Finningley, and now the Secretary of State is to wipe them away, too.

Will he have regard to the employment consequences and say something about the steps that the Government might take to offset the further increase in unemployment in the black spot of unemployment in my constituency? What phasing may take place in the closure of the bases?

Mr. Rifkind: Of course we are conscious that defence expenditure has important employment implications. That is why I should have thought that the right hon. Gentleman would join me in welcoming the 10,000 defence industry jobs that will be saved or created as a result of the announcements that we have made today.

I am conscious that in several locations there will be job losses. It is never a very pleasant task to announce closures in any part of the country. With his background, the right hon. Gentleman will be the first to acknowledge that it is necessary to use defence resources purely to fulfil the requirements of the armed forces: they cannot be used simply to provide employment for its own sake. The right hon. Gentleman would be the first to acknowledge that, and to accept that that is indeed the reality.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that rationalisation and the pursuit of more cost-effective armed forces should happen not purely in reviews but constantly? What is the strategic justification for this review? The world is getting more dangerous, and there are more conflicts rather than fewer, as was the case in 1989 when the cold war ended.

What is to happen to the central flying school, which is the centre of excellence for flying standards in the Royal

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Air Force, and is currently located at RAF Scampton, the base from which the Dambusters flew to attack the Möhne, Sorpe and Eder dams? What is to become of navigation training, which is currently undertaken at RAF Finningley, and to rear crew training, which is also done there? What is to happen to the group structure of the RAF? Rumour has it that many of them are to be embedded in the Headquarters Strike Command.

Mr. Rifkind: The strategic background to the review is the essential requirement of concentrating defence resources on the fighting strength of the armed forces. Therefore, the redeployment that we have announced today is highly sensible for the very reasons that my hon. Friend has stated.

In answer to my hon. Friend's specific questions, we have no proposals to change the group structure of the Royal Air Force. I announced in my statement that both RAF Scampton and RAF Finningley would close. Flying training at the basic level is already in part provided by the private sector. There will be some increase in that provision.

I am conscious of the fact, however, that flying training, when it reaches the level required from military skills, can only be provided by those with military background and military capability; therefore, we will be careful to ensure that those who provide the training are fully qualified to meet the needs of the Royal Air Force. In that respect, I am very much guided by the advice of the Air Force Board.

Ms Rachel Squire (Dunfermline, West): Can the Secretary of State explain what strategic, economic or military reasons he has for moving minehunting and fishery protection from Rosyth naval base, when his own advisers have told him that Rosyth can do it better and more cheaply? Does he agree that his statement on job losses involves 1,620 service personnel moving and 740 civilians losing their jobs, with the impact that that will have on the local economy?

Can he further explain why, only last July, he announced that the rescue co-ordination centre for the United Kingdom would be at Pitreavie, yet today he announced that the maritime headquarters will be moving from Pitreavie?

Finally, does he agree that his statement and his Government's defence policy amount to a betrayal of the trust, loyalty and commitment of the men and women who work at Rosyth, who have served their country so loyally for so many years?

Mr. Rifkind: I understand the hon. Lady's strong feelings on this subject, which she naturally expresses, but she is misinformed. First, the advice that I received from the Royal Navy was unequivocally that there is no longer a strategic requirement for the ships to be based at Rosyth. If the hon. Lady considers the matter as objectively as possible, she will see the strength of that argument.

Of the two minehunter squadrons, one has the purpose of protecting the deterrent in the Clyde, and that is why it is more appropriate for it to be based at Faslane. The other minehunter squadron serves in the Gulf, the Atlantic or elsewhere, and there is no particular argument that points to one location or another as its base. As the hon. Lady must be well aware, the fishery protection service does not provide fishery protection for the waters around Scotland; it provides protection for the waters around England, Wales and the south-west of England. She should bear that point in mind.

The hon. Lady was right to point out that, in addition to the job losses, service personnel will be moving from Rosyth. It is not yet certain how many will move because, clearly, that will depend on a number of factors. *[Interruption.]* No, although they will not be working in Rosyth, it does not necessarily follow that all of them will leave, because 400 personnel will be working at Faslane, and it will be up to them to decide whether they wish to move.

As for Pitreavie, the announcement that we made some months ago related to the rescue co-ordination centre. That will be placed at RAF Leuchars in Fife. Although the hon. Lady is correct to point out that it will not be at Pitreavie, she will acknowledge that it will be in the same part of Scotland.

Mr. John Ward (Poole): My right hon. and learned Friend will understand that the people of Poole will be dismayed by his announcement today that the 40-year association with the Royal Marines is to be broken. Is he aware that we should be careful to ensure that any savings are spent on weapons, and not on bricks and mortar to house the Royal Marines elsewhere? In particular, will he consider what efforts the Government could make to compensate for job losses? Can he tell us what is to happen to the joint warfare school, which was moved to Poole at considerable public expense only a few years ago?

Mr. Rifkind: I can understand my hon. Friend's sadness at the move from Poole of the Royal Marines, but it will save some £12 million over the next 10 years; therefore, sadly, it was difficult not to reach the decision that that was the right thing to do. As with any other closures, there will be a consultation period of some three months, and we will carefully examine any suggestions that come forward as a result of that. The relocation of the joint warfare school is the subject of a separate tri-service study, and we will announce the outcome of that as soon as we are able to.

Mr. Bruce George (Walsall, South): Many Secretaries of State have appeared before the House—certainly since 1985—to announce cuts. In order to achieve the Government's target of reducing defence expenditure to under 3 per cent. of gross domestic product, will the right hon. and learned Gentleman answer the question that his hon Friend the Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor) asked? It was right to use a Nelsonian tactic against a descendant of Nelson. The Chairman of the Defence Select Committee asked, "Is this the end of the cuts? Will there now be stability?" The House would welcome an honest answer from the Secretary of State on the subject.

Secondly, the future of the Ministry of Defence police was one of the subjects that the Secretary of State omitted from his very detailed presentation. One of the dafter suggestions of the Blelloch committee was that redundant soldiers should replace Ministry of Defence policemen who were to be made redundant. Has that idea been knocked on the head?

Mr. Rifkind: On the Ministry of Defence police, a study published today identifies the need for further work before we can reach a conclusion on the Blelloch recommendations. I answered the earlier part of the hon.

Gentleman's questions in my answer to the question asked by my right hon. Friend the Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King), when I emphasised that we must continue the search for efficiency. No Government Department will expect to be exempted from that. My announcement today gives total authority to my statement that the Government are committed to maintaining the fighting strength of our armed forces, and we are not going to depart from that.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): My right hon. and learned Friend will recall that he made a speech on 24 June 1993 in which he said that there would be a reduction of only 450 in the work force at Rosyth. He went on to say that there was every confidence that, if the work force applied themselves, they would increase their numbers, employment and benefits. That seems to have gone by the board. I have one simple question. Why?

Mr. Rifkind: I can reassure my hon. and learned Friend: it has not gone by the board. The statement that he mentioned referred to the royal dockyard at Rosyth, and it is heavily involved in work at the moment and has good prospects, and its management are optimistic. I stand by the remarks I made.

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone): May I welcome that part of the Secretary of State's statement that I hope finally removes the doubt about the future and role of the Territorial Army? Will he clarify whether, as rumoured, there is to be a significant reduction in financial provision for travel to training? Does he realise that that would affect Territorial Army units in Northern Ireland? He must know that any impediment to better training would be disastrous, and likely to undermine the fitness for role of such units.

Mr. Rifkind: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his welcome for our conclusions on the Territorial Army. With regard to his question, we are examining the issue. I can assure him that I would not want to support any outcome that made it unreasonable or impossible for members of the TA in Northern Ireland to carry out their proper responsibilities.

Sir Archibald Hamilton (Epsom and Ewell): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that the contention that the world is a more dangerous place is, to put it mildly, debatable? There can be no argument about the fact that, since July 1990, when my right hon. Friend the Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King) announced "Options for Change", the threats to the United Kingdom have very much reduced. It is against that background that we must consider the desire, which is defensible, for savings in the defence budget.

My right hon. and learned Friend and his hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement are to be congratulated on their achievements. It is in no small measure due to the fact that so many suggestions came from the services that quite radical reductions have been made without any effect on our front-line forces. That is a great achievement.

I have to confess that there were doubters—I was among them. We knew that the ground had been trawled over so many times, and we doubted whether the savings were there. My right hon. and learned Friend must be congratulated, as so much has been done, and the fighting effectiveness of our forces has been maintained.

Mr. Rifkind: I thank my right hon. Friend, and I emphasise that I attach enormous importance to involving the armed forces in a series of proposals which affect them more than anybody else. More than 3,000 members of the armed forces and civil servants at the Ministry of Defence took the trouble to put their proposals to us, and many of those suggestions were found to be very sensible with regard to how we could deliver the same quality of product without having to use the same resources. It has been an enormously valuable exercise, and it is something on which we wish to build in the years to come so that we can maintain that confidence, relationship and trust.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Madam Speaker: Order. I shall let questions on the statement run for a little longer, but not for too long. It has been a long and complex statement, and I want the House to keep in mind the fact that I anticipate a two-day debate on the matter immediately after we return from the summer recess.

Mr. John Hutton (Barrow and Furness): I welcome the Secretary of State's announcement of replacements for HMS Fearless and HMS Intrepid, and also his statement that tenders will be invited for new batch 2 Trafalgar class submarines. Both announcements will be welcomed in my constituency.

Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman look again specifically at the contract for the batch 2 Trafalgars? Will he make it clear that his policy is to maintain 16 SSNs in the Royal Navy? If that is the case, why does the contract for the batch 2 Trafalgars specify an original order for five, and not the three plus two which I understand was the Government's proposal?

May I also ask about the armed forces medical services? On what basis does the Secretary of State classify the medical services as support services, and not as part of the front line? How many of the 1,600 doctors and dentists who are currently in the regular armed forces will be made redundant as a result of his statement?

Mr. Rifkind: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his welcome for the industrial orders which we have made. I cannot give precise details on the batch 2 Trafalgar submarines. That is essentially because we are entering into negotiations on price, and obviously there are matters which we will wish to discuss with those who are anxious to build the boats on our behalf.

As for the medical services, we must have military medical expertise available on the front line and in combat situations when required. The particular changes which we have announced are with regard to hospital establishments within the United Kingdom. Those are important, but they can be provided on a joint basis, rather than on a separate service basis, and together would provide military medical hospital annexes which will meet the requirements of the forces.

Mr. Ian Bruce (South Dorset): My right hon. and learned Friend and my hon. Friends will know that I set them a challenge at the beginning of the cost reduction study, which I fully supported, of reducing costs and not having to build a grandiose office block north of Bristol. They have cut civil service jobs by 7,000, but are continuing with that ridiculous project.

Can my right hon. and learned Friend confirm to the House that, despite the four separate studies during the past

[Mr. Ian Bruce]

five or six years into the air station at Portland moving to Yeovilton—each of which said that it would not be cost-effective—that move has now been proposed? The total job losses in Dorset, including the marines, will be 2,250. That is a very large number when compared with anything that Rosyth is currently suffering.

We will have an opportunity in Dorset to look at the figures which have been brought forward, particularly as there does not appear to be any consistency with reports which have come from people previously. Finally, what will be the effect of the third reconnaissance regiment within my constituency?

Mr. Rifkind: I can understand my hon. Friend's regret about the proposal for Portland, and I acknowledge his point. It is unfortunately necessary to propose the measure, because it will provide savings of some £40 million over a 10-year period, without operational cost. The proposal is to relocate to Somerset, which is relatively close to Portland.

The employment implications for the local community are that about 150 local people employed at the establishment and about 250 contracted staff will be affected. I acknowledge that some 1,200 service personnel will also be leaving Portland as a consequence of the proposal.

Mrs. Irene Adams (Paisley, North): In the light of the Secretary of State's statement, will he now tell the House whether there are any plans to reduce the number of MOD employees at Kentigern house in Glasgow? Will the original target for the numbers now be met?

Mr. Rifkind: As a result of the work that has been done, we have come to the conclusion that the proposal for the army personnel centre to be in Glasgow should be confirmed. As part of the overall changes in manpower, there is likely to be a reduction in the number of people who will work there, but we are still working on the precise figure. However, the work will go to Kentigern house.

Mr. Gary Streeter (Plymouth, Sutton): Will my right hon. Friend accept my appreciation for his skill in taking the opportunity to boost the front-line services in his announcement today? As he knows, the Royal Marines are a vital part of the cultural and economic life of the city of Plymouth. Will he assure me this afternoon that no hasty decision will be taken to relocate the Royal Marines to north Devon, and that not a single Royal Marine will relocate without the fullest possible consultation?

Mr. Rifkind: I appreciate that this matter must be considered carefully, and we shall wish to take into account the views of the Royal Marines themselves. The issue is being considered because city-centre sites in any city, including Plymouth, are much more expensive. As we have spare capacity in Chivenor, the Royal Marines could benefit considerably by moving to that location. No final conclusion has yet been reached and we shall wish to take account of all the relevant circumstances.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Does the Secretary of State realise that, far from portraying his announcement on Rosyth as a victory for himself, he should be thoroughly ashamed, because to most logical thinkers it is not a reprieve for Rosyth but a suspended sentence. A naval base without ships hardly fulfils the role envisaged.

On the aspect of a fishery protection service, which is extremely important in Scotland, does he realise that the Scottish Office has a contract with the Royal Navy, and the Royal Navy supports the protection service when any major incident occurs? What he has said today shows that he now intends to privatise that contract. The fishermen in my area and all maritime constituencies would like clarification on that.

Does the Secretary of State agree with Professor Greenwood, of the department of strategic studies at Aberdeen university, that, without a naval base at Rosyth, the oil and gas installations in the North sea will not be offered the full protection that they require?

Mr. Rifkind: On the first question, Rosyth is to become a naval support establishment because the Ministry of Defence believes that all the other activities that currently take place on the base need to continue. That is the basis of my announcement.

On the fishery protection service, there is one fishery protection offshore patrol vessel which the Royal Navy provides for the Scottish fishery protection service. That will continue, and will not be affected in any way by today's announcement.

On Professor Greenwood's article, which I read yesterday, he is obviously unaware that, every day of the year, a minehunter—an official patrol vessel—is in the North sea and available on first call should an incident occur in the North sea, so the operational requirement is not affected by today's announcement.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): I welcome my right hon. Friend's enthusiastic acceptance of the military value of British Army bands, whose high standard of excellence is the envy of the entire world, and who are trained at the Royal Military School of Music at Kneller Hall, Twickenham. Why is it necessary to set up yet another long study on musician training, which could have been done over the past year? Why cannot he now set up a joint services music college at Kneller Hall, which provides excellent value for money?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend need not fear that it will be a long study. It is important to see whether some of the facilities used by, for instance, the Royal Air Force to train its musicians might be relevant to other services. We are not starting out with presuppositions. The matter needs to be looked at, and I hope to be able to reach a conclusion on it in the relatively near future.

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): The Secretary of State will understand the deep disappointment in Pendine in my constituency, where 300 jobs will be lost in an area with no comparable alternative employment. There is also deep resentment that much of the work will move to Shoeburyness, despite the fact that Pendine has a long record as a centre of excellence and works efficiently and cost effectively. Why is there a bias for the south and against the regions?

Mr. Rifkind: Of course I acknowledge the quality of the work force in Pendine. My hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement visited Pendine and reported to me on that matter.

It is always a sadness when any establishment is closed, but we have had to review the overall requirements of the Army for ranges. Sadly, we have come to the judgment that we have a current over-capacity, so it has been necessary

to indicate certain closures—and I can assure the hon. Gentleman that they are not related to any one part of the country.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): Although the cold war has finished, the hot war in Northern Ireland is heating up. I am sure that the Minister is well aware of that. This week, we have had a cruel spiral of a new departure, where politicians are to be on the receiving end of the gun and the bomb. Already, my colleague the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea) has had his home attacked, and it was only by the mercy and providence of God that he and 11 people in that home were not murdered.

Another politician was shot dead in Lisburn; another councillor who has now finished his term and belonged to my party, in the Cookstown council, had his house bombed and destroyed; and a large bomb has been found. Thank God that it was found, for one can only wonder at what devastation it would have caused here on the mainland.

In keeping with that, I ask the Secretary of State, what will be the results of his proposals for the armed forces in Northern Ireland? Is it still his policy to do away with the full-time members of the Royal Irish Regiment?

Mr. Rifkind: No proposals in the documents published today will in any way reduce the contribution made by the Army, or the other security forces, to the protection of the people of Northern Ireland and the battle against terrorism. That is part of the front line, and it is part of the role of our armed forces as long as there is a battle against terrorism to be waged. Therefore, the hon. Gentleman can assume that that will remain one of our highest priorities.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): Is the Secretary of State aware that today will be regarded as a black day in the history of the Royal Air Force, and that he will be inflicting more damage on it than Goering and the Luftwaffe sought to do in 1940?

Does he appreciate that his anxiety for the privatisation of flying training affects the maintenance of the ethos and traditions of the service; that the quality of that training will be hard to match; that, while Britain remains a member of the Security Council, he and his colleagues will wish to ensure that Britain fulfils its international obligations in response to the growing instability in the world; and that, without an adequately sized Royal Air Force, our contribution cannot be guaranteed?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman is totally out of touch with the current views of the Royal Air Force and of the Air Force Board. If he had listened to my statement, he would have heard that we have made a major announcement about the upgrading of the Tornado, one of the highest priorities of the Royal Air Force; that we have brought a squadron of Harriers into the front line from the reserves; and that we have announced important orders for laser-guided bombs, which is a very important priority at present. We have announced decisions about a number of other important related issues of that type.

The hon. Gentleman should realise that the fighting capability of the Royal Air Force determines the contribution that it can make to our security and to our national interests, and that, if resources are not concentrated in the fighting and operational capability of the Royal Air Force, the kind of rather foolish prediction that the hon. Gentleman made would indeed come true.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): Why has music not been tackled on a combined school of music basis at Deal? Does my right hon. and learned Friend not conclude, therefore, that the IRA has now bombed the Royal Marines out of Deal? His quotation of a figure of £300,000 includes the security costs for three sites, when only one is needed for music training. Does he therefore accept that the Ministry of Defence figures are totally false and incorrect? Will he visit Deal, and meet some of the 12,600 people who signed a petition in favour of a combined school of music in Deal?

Does my right hon. and learned Friend recall that Margaret Thatcher told me in 1989 that removing the Royal Marines school of music from Deal would tear the heart out of Deal? Will he also accept that unemployment is greater in Dover and Deal than in many regions of the country whose military establishments have been saved?

Mr. Rifkind: I entirely understand my hon. Friend's strong feelings on that subject. Given the background in Deal, we have obviously considered that issue extremely carefully and tried to be as sensitive to those matters as possible. It is difficult to avoid coming to the conclusion that we have done.

My hon. Friend knows that the Royal Marines themselves believe that it is appropriate for them to move to another location. He knows that the cost of the Royal Marines school in Deal is about £6 million a year. He knows that only about 15 to 20 Royal Marine musicians are trained there each year. That position could not possibly continue indefinitely. Of course we have considered whether there were other options that would have allowed the Royal Marines to continue in Deal and make other uses of the excess capability there. We have not been able to identify any coherent or sensible alternative.

There is now a consultation period of about three months, and if my hon. Friend makes proposals that we have not considered, or can identify factors that we have not correctly assessed, we will wish to consider them. However, the subject has been considered very, very carefully. I do not believe that, if one is as objective as one has to be, it was possible to come to any alternative conclusion.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): With a son who has now served for some months in Gorajde in Bosnia, I should dearly like to be able to take the term "front line first" at face value, but front lines are dependent on reliable logistic supplies, and the Secretary of State has announced this afternoon that 17 depots are to close.

If I may refer to one specific depot, which employs many of my constituents, I have the report which says that many millions of pounds have been spent on that establishment in the past five years, and several millions of pounds allocated to the next two years' expenditure, making it the most up-to-date component handling centre in Europe, if not the world.

Madam Speaker: Order. I have not heard a question yet.

Mr. Cook: Is the depot scheduled for closure? If so, why, and how can the right hon. and learned Gentleman

[Mr. Cook]

justify it? I am speaking about Eaglescliffe. How can he justify having spent all that money in the past five years, and more to come, with that decision in mind?

Mr. Rifkind: Those are also difficult and painful decisions, but once it was established that we could meet our requirements with far fewer supply depots and stores, we had to identify the basis on which they should be chosen, and the strong opinion of the Royal Navy was that depots should be retained that were on coastal sites rather than inland. From an operational point of view, for obvious reasons, that is more appropriate to their needs. It was on that basis that, in the cases of Eaglescliffe and of Exeter, the decisions that we have announced today have been taken.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): Although the House as a whole will welcome this skilful package, will my right hon. and learned Friend accept that my constituents will be saddened at the closure of RAF Scampton, one of the RAF's most historic bases, currently the home of the Red Arrows, formerly that of the V bombers and of the Dambusters in the second world war? Will he reconsider that decision and pursue that matter with me?

My right hon. and learned Friend has told me in a letter today that he will retain the married quarters. If he has retained the married quarters, will the runway be retained? If so, is there any chance that the Red Arrows can be left at RAF Scampton? If the base is to close, will he pursue with me how as many jobs as possible, especially on the civilian side—the 250 contractor jobs, the 80 civilian jobs —can be saved and transferred to nearby RAF Waddington?

Mr. Rifkind: The background to that decision is the overall rationalisation of flying training, which will provide savings of about £40 million a year. It has inevitably led to the requirement to close several establishments, such as RAF Scampton. I will wish to listen carefully to any representations that my hon. Friend might wish to make, and to seek to ensure that, if Scampton closes, the assets there will be used in the most constructive way that can help lessen the difficulties that are experienced there and elsewhere.

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley): When will the Minister realise that the continual drive for cheaper civilian employees in the services has a deleterious effect on the service personnel left? I have two small examples. In some military establishments, it is almost impossible to raise rugby and football teams. Guard duties have doubled and trebled, so that the personnel are on guard most of the time. What happened to esprit de corps, which is developed through such activities?

Mr. Rifkind: Esprit de corps is overwhelmingly determined by the ability of the armed forces to carry out their primary role. That is why it is important to concentrate resources on that sector. If there are cheaper ways of providing some of the back-up services—civilianisation often provides a cheaper way of meeting some of the needs—we would be neglecting our duty if we did not explore them.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Madam Speaker: Order. We must move on to the business statement.

Business of the House

4.50 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): Madam Speaker, with permission, I should like to make a statement about the business for next week:—

MONDAY 18 JULY—Debate on the economy on a Government motion.

Motion on the Railways Pensions (Transfer and Miscellaneous Provisions) order.

At Ten o'clock, the House will be asked to agree the estimates and supplementary estimates for 1994-95.

TUESDAY 19 JULY—Opposition Day (13th allotted day) (2nd part). Until Seven o'clock, there will be a debate on "The Water Industry" on an Opposition motion.

Motion on the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations.

Motion on the Education (Assisted Places) (Amendment) Regulations.

Motion on the Church of England (Legal Aid) Measure.

WEDNESDAY 20 JULY—Motion for the Summer Adjournment.

Proceedings on the Consolidated Fund (Appropriation) (No.2) Bill.

THURSDAY 21 JULY—Debates on the Adjournment.

The House may also be asked to consider any Lords messages which may be received.

The House will also wish to know that the following European Standing Committees will meet at 10.30 am on Tuesday, 19 July:

European Standing Committee A, European Community Document 7073/94 relating to Development of the Trans-European Transport Network.

European Standing Committee B, European Community Document 5744/94 relating to Voting and Candidacy Rights in Local Elections.

[Tuesday 19 July

European Standing Committee A—Relevant European Community document: 7073/94, Trans-European Transport Networks: Guidelines; relevant report of the European Legislation Committee: HC 48-xxiii (1993-94)

European Standing Committee B—Relevant European Community document: 5744/94, Local Government Elections; relevant reports of the European Legislation Committee: HC 48-xvi (1993-94) HC 48-xx (1993-94).]

It may also be for the convenience of the House to know that the provisional business for the first week back after the summer Adjournment will be as follows:

MONDAY 17 OCTOBER—There will be a debate on a Government motion to approve the Defence Estimates 1994.

TUESDAY 18 OCTOBER—There will be a debate on a Government motion to approve the Defence Estimates 1994.

WEDNESDAY 19 OCTOBER—Consideration of any Lords amendments which may be received to the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill.

THURSDAY 20 OCTOBER—Consideration of any Lords amendments which may be received to the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill—there do appear to be a few.

FRIDAY 21 OCTOBER—Private Members' motions.

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): I thank the Leader of the House for that statement, and in particular for telling us the business that we can expect on our return from the summer recess. I also thank him for the Opposition day that he has announced.

The business that he has announced takes us up to the summer recess. This summer's heat makes air pollution, particularly in London, all the more unbearable. I think that hon. Members will be wondering what has happened to the Bill to take forward the environment protection agency promised in Her Majesty's Gracious Speech on 18 November last year. As this Session moves to a close, I ask the Leader of the House: what has happened to the Bill that was promised in Her Majesty's Gracious Speech last year?

In his rush to pack us off for the summer, I hope that the Leader of the House has not overlooked important announcements that might come from his ministerial colleagues, which I am certain that hon. Members would like to hear. May we have an assurance from the Lord President that there will not be a flood of bad news announcements or any important announcements from Government Departments immediately after we have risen for the recess?

Given the substantial pressure, both from the public and in the House, for reform of the Child Support Agency, is it possible for the Secretary of State for Social Security to make a statement on legislative changes and why they cannot take effect before 1996, before we depart for the summer recess?

Finally, I am sure that I speak on behalf of the whole House in wishing the Lord President an enjoyable summer recess. I hope that he fares well in the forthcoming reshuffle.

Mr. Newton: I forbear from commenting on the hon. Gentleman's last point. I am grateful for his good wishes for the summer recess, which are reciprocated.

I cannot hold out the prospect of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security making a further statement on the Child Support Agency before the break. Only a little over a week ago, we had a debate in which my right hon. Friend made a substantial speech.

As for announcements, there is no plot to hold things back. As one discovers in Government, timing can always slip, but we are planning to make one or two announcements before the recess, in a sensible and orderly way.

The hon. Gentleman will have heard what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said on air pollution and associated matters at Prime Minister's questions, although I acknowledge that he did not touch on the Bill. I would not wish to hold out any prospect of us trying to pass the paving Bill on the environment protection agency before the summer recess. We are looking carefully at that subject, as we are making such good progress on the main Bill.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): Does my right hon. Friend realise that the Select Committee on Procedure is pressing forward with consideration of Prime Minister's questions, about which there has been quite a lot of publicity? I thank my right hon. Friend for the evidence that he sent to us. Will he press other hon. Members on their ideas as, although there has been a great deal of heat, the Committee has received little other evidence of how we can improve the situation?

Madam Speaker: Order. With respect to the right hon. Gentleman, who chairs the Select Committee on Procedure, his points had little to do with next week's business.

Mr. Newton: I am not sure now whether I should upset you, Madam Speaker, by saying something or upset my right hon. Friend by saying nothing. I am sure that those present in the Chamber will have noted your remarks, and those of my right hon. Friend.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Does the Leader of the House accept that one statement that needs to be made before we rise for the recess is the long-awaited announcement on the future of the Forestry Commission? Does he agree that those who work in forests or are economically dependent on them, and those who enjoy public access to them during the summer holidays, need to know that the commission's future and its work will be secure?

Mr. Newton: I shall just say delicately that there is an inter-relationship between that question and my reply to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) about possibilities before the recess.

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): I believe that a Green Paper has been published this afternoon about the future of the dental service and charging for it. My right hon. Friend will be aware that there is great interest and concern about the subject, about which there has long been dispute in our constituencies. We have been waiting for a long time for the Government to make up their mind about the Bloomfield report. Will there be an opportunity to debate that important subject next week?

Mr. Newton: There will a number of opportunities to raise various topics next week, but I cannot promise a dedicated debate. My recollection is that my hon. Friend is an assiduous attender of the recess Adjournment debates, so I think that I can predict one topic that may come up. The document published today is a consultative document and a Green Paper, and the views of hon. Members and others will be welcome.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): We have just been discussing the concerns of the service people of today; but what about the boys of the old brigade, their widows and other dependants? The right hon. Gentleman will know from its organisations in Essex that the ex-service community is impatient for full implementation of the resolution approved by the House on 1 July about its problems and needs. May we have an oral statement next week about the steps the Government are taking to give full effect to that important resolution?

Mr. Newton: I was present that day and the right hon. Gentleman is right in thinking that I have had representations from my constituents—I discussed the subject with one of them only last weekend. I do not think that I can promise a statement or add to what my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement said at the time.

Mr. Jonathan Evans (Brecon and Radnor): Can my right hon. Friend confirm that his statement in relation to forthcoming business in October effectively means that my constituents, who have been waiting for the legislation contained in the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill, will not see it enacted during the summer and will therefore have to suffer the activities of new age travellers, summer raves and juvenile crime—all of which the measure was directed towards? If that is the case, will my right hon. Friend, through the usual channels, convey to those in the other place the concern of my constituents about the effect of the amendments passed this week?

Mr. Newton: I must confirm that my statement means that I do not anticipate the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill becoming law before the summer recess. I understand my hon. Friend's concern, and I shall certainly see that a message along the lines that he has set out is sent on his behalf. I would add that it is the usual—although not the invariable—practice for legislation to come into force only some months after it is enacted, to allow time for preparation, so I am not sure that the effect will be quite as dramatic as my hon. Friend suggests.

Ms Glenda Jackson (Hampstead and Highgate): Is the Leader of the House aware that the chief executive of the Royal Free hospital trust in my constituency has stated that, from September this year, patients with GPs in one geographic area of my constituency—Highgate—will no longer be accepted for treatment at that hospital as a result of Government cuts of £30 million in the district health authority's budget? As that action totally refutes the Government's oft-stated claim that the NHS reforms are working, not least in treating more patients, if the right hon. Gentleman cannot find time to debate the issue next week, will he at least find time to ask the Secretary of State for Health to come to the House to deliver a statement?

Mr. Newton: This is probably the second or third time that the hon. Lady has raised that point—I have certainly heard it once before. As I cannot promise a statement, the right course for me to follow is to make sure that her remarks are drawn quickly and specifically to my right hon. Friend's attention.

Mr. James Clappison (Hertsmere): I support the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans) and invite my right hon. Friend to consider whether it would be possible to save some of the time being set aside in October for consideration of Lords amendments by expressing to the other place the full force of our constituents' concerns about the mischiefs that the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill would remedy? Perhaps their Lordships, who do not always have the chance to consider the full force of our constituents' feelings, should bear in mind the extent of the latter's anxieties and their wish to support the good work being done by the police, whose success in reducing crime can only be enhanced by the necessary provisions of the Bill.

Mr. Newton: I have said that I very much understand the concerns of colleagues on both sides of the House who have experience of the problem, and the importance of tackling it. I shall, of course, add my hon. Friend's representations to those made a moment ago by my hon. Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans).

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): The business for next week is obviously affected by the coming three-month recess. Is not a Member without a Parliament rather like a consultant without a hospital, a naval base without ships, or a miner without a pit—redundant?

Mr. Newton: I rather think that constituencies—not just Parliament, which is certainly an important part of a Member's work—come into this point as well. The hon. Gentleman has had a running difference of opinion with me and the vast majority of hon. Members about that matter. A balance must be struck between people's ability to spend time in their constituencies and their ability to spend time here. We shall have to agree to differ about the length of the recess.

Dr. Liam Fox (Woodspring): Will my right hon. Friend arrange time for a debate on heart disease in the United Kingdom, given last week's report which shows our relatively poor national performance, particularly the rising prevalence of smoking among women? It would be nice if hon. Members on both sides could use our parliamentary time and our media coverage to send out a positive message to the whole of society.

Mr. Newton: I share my hon. Friend's view of the importance of the problem and the message. Even so, I am afraid that I cannot find time for a debate next week—although my hon. Friend might find a crevice in one of the debates that we are holding.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): When may we debate early-day motion 1482?

[*That this House deplores the failure of Railtrack over many weeks to respond to approaches from Gorton residents and from the Right honourable Member for Manchester, Gorton, regarding the need to provide safety fencing adjacent to Abbey Hey Amateur Football Ground and to secure the sub-station at Vine Street; notes that the failure of Railtrack to make any satisfactory response to such approaches, let alone to carry out urgently the required work, could place in jeopardy the lives of children and other local residents; is concerned to note this lack of concern about such safety issues displayed by this new and unaccountable organisation; and calls on Railtrack, instead of sending out wasteful and silly propaganda folders to honourable Members, to take speedy action to deal with what are, literally, vital matters.*]

It seeks to ban bull bars, which research has shown have almost certainly led to 34 avoidable deaths—mostly of children—in collisions. Is it not disturbing that the Transport Research Laboratory has said that it cannot carry out any more research on the subject because it does not have a sponsor? Is it not a reflection on what is unprivatisable in our society when an organisation such as the Transport Research Laboratory cannot fund such research, because no one has a vested financial interest in child safety?

Mr. Newton: I am afraid that my total recall of nearly 1,500 early-day motions has broken down on this occasion —*[Interruption.]* There seems to be a view that the hon. Gentleman may have given us the wrong number for the EDM. I shall take refuge in saying that I shall examine his words and consider what action I might take.

Mr. Oliver Heald (Hertfordshire, North): Will my right hon. Friend find time for an urgent debate next week on the rail dispute, which is continuing to cause concern to my constituents? That would give Conservative Members a chance to criticise a pay demand that is four times the rate of inflation and give Opposition Members, especially those sponsored by the Rail, Maritime and Transport union, the opportunity to explain why a restructuring package that could deliver 22 per cent. increases in basic pay is not even being discussed.

Madam Speaker: I heard all that last week.

Mr. Newton: That is helpful, Madam Speaker, but as my hon. Friend says, he is concerned precisely because the situation this week is the same. There is still a strike in pursuit of an 11 per cent. pay rise with no productivity or restructuring. Those pursuing it should reconsider.

Even without a debate, there is, as it happens, an opportunity to consider the matter on Monday, because my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport is due to be here to answer questions.

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): May I ask my right hon. Friend for a debate on early-day motion 1508?

[*That this House condemns the Right honourable Member for Copeland for stating during the second reading of the European Union (Accessions) Bill that he had 'shown constant support for the European Union', Official Report, column 700, and that whilst the Labour Party had changed on Europe his position had never changed; and notes that in October 1971 he voted against the principle of Britain's entry to the EEC when 69 of his honourable Friends, including the late John Smith, defied the Labour whip and voted in favour, that in February 1972 he voted against the European Communities Bill and that in April 1986 he voted against the Single European Act, along with the honourable Member for Sedgefield.*]

It highlights the extraordinary statement by the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), made in the House this week, that he had never changed his mind on Europe. A debate would give us the opportunity to remind the House that the right hon. Gentleman voted against the European Community in 1971 and 1972, and voted against the Single European Act in 1986, yet now wants to persuade the House that European monetary union and the surrender of the British veto in Europe represent a sensible and consistent policy.

Mr. Newton: My total recall system has now recovered, and has put into my mind the fact that, on top of what my hon. Friend says, the right hon. Gentleman presumably stood on the Labour manifesto for the 1983 general election, which stated:

"British withdrawal from the Community is the right policy for Britain—to be completed within the lifetime of the parliament".

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): May we have an urgent debate on the plight of rail commuters? The situation is not the same as last week's since, thanks to the selfishness of the union, long-suffering commuters will face two days a week of disruption in pursuit of an 11 per cent. no-strings-attached pay claim—this to be financed by commuting constituents whose commuting costs have already risen by 6 per cent. Those constituents have noted the decisive decision to make no comment on the dispute affecting them by the three contenders for the Labour party leadership.

Mr. Newton: I hope that the public have duly noted my hon. Friend's last point. I share his view that it is quite unjustified to hold the travelling public to ransom for the sort of increase being demanded.

Consolidated Fund Bill

Madam Speaker: I have announcements to make about arrangements for the debate on the motion for the Adjournment which will follow the passing of the Consolidated Fund Bill on Wednesday 20 July.

Members should submit their subjects to my office not later than 10 pm on Monday 18 July. A list showing the subjects and times will be published the following day. Normally the time allotted will not exceed one and a half hours, but I propose to exercise discretion to allow one or two debates to continue for rather longer, up to a maximum of three hours. Where identical or similar subjects have been entered by different Members whose names are drawn in the ballot, only the first name will be shown on the list.

As some debates may not last the full time allotted to them, it is the responsibility of Members to keep in touch with developments if they are not to miss their turn.

I also remind hon. Members that, on the motion for the Adjournment of the House on Thursday 21 July, up to nine Members may raise with Ministers subjects of their choice. Applications should reach my office by 10 pm on Monday next. A ballot will be held on Tuesday morning and the result made known as soon as possible thereafter.

Points of Order

5.9 pm

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I have given notice of this point of order to the hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Hain). Sadly, as you know, Madam Speaker, the hon. Gentleman cannot be present.

You will recall, Madam Speaker—who could forget? —the speech by the hon. Member for Neath last night. I draw attention to column 1124 of *Hansard*, where you, Madam Speaker, said:

"The hon. Member for Neath said that he would mention names, but that he had already let the Members concerned know that he was going to raise the matter. Is that quite clear? I have already been deceived once today in this House on that matter. Do I understand that the hon. Gentleman has informed Members?

Mr. Hain: I certainly have, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Thank you."

Shortly after that, the hon. Member for Neath mentioned my hon. Friend the Member for Erith and Crayford (Mr. Evennett), who, on a point of order, said:

"I was not advised by the hon. Gentleman that he would mention my situation. I think that he has breached the protocol of the House.

Madam Speaker: When did the hon. Member for Neath put the notices on the board?

Mr. Hain: I think that it was just after 10 o'clock, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Member has been long enough in the House to know that the board closes at 10 o'clock.

Mr. Hain: I put them on the board. I was not sure when the debate was coming up. I put them on the board at the earliest opportunity that I had."

By column 1129, the situation was slightly different. The hon. Member for Neath said:

"It is my fault that I did not put notice on the board until just after 10 o'clock. Although I have been a Member for three years, I was not aware that there was a rigid rule that the board closed at 10 o'clock. That is my fault. I came in and presented the notice to the board and found that it was closed."—[*Official Report*, 13 July 1994; Vol. 246, c. 1124-29.]

Those are two different versions, and it is difficult to see how both can be entirely correct.

Thanks to the diligence of our messengers, the board was open until 10.30 pm last night. If the hon. Gentleman's first statement was true and he went to the board at 10 pm, he could have presented his letters and they would have been stamped.

I have one of the envelopes, but I believe that the others are similar. It shows that it was stamped, not at the board but in the post office, at 1 am. Similarly, if the messengers say that they maintained the board until 10.30 pm, the statement that the hon. Member for Neath went there at 10 pm and found it closed also needs closer examination.

There is a distinct possibility that you, Madam Speaker, and the House deserve an apology from the hon. Member for Neath. I should be most grateful if you would look into the matter.

Madam Speaker: I thank the hon. Gentleman for raising that point. The entire House knows how anxious I am that right hon. and hon. Members inform other hon. Members about whom they propose to comment. I was most concerned by last night's exchanges and I will look into the matter that the hon. Gentleman raised.

During business questions, the hon. Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) made a remark about the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham). I take it that he notified the right hon. Gentleman that he intended to do so?

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): No, Madam Speaker, I did not. I apologise.

Madam Speaker: I take this opportunity to remind the House that I am proud to defend the robustness of exchanges in the House but I despair sometimes at the bad parliamentary manners and behaviour displayed by some hon. Members in all parts of the House. There is another week to go before the summer recess. I hope that, come Monday, I shall see some improvement.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You will recall the frequent attempts to establish better facilities for Line of Route visitors. One suggestion is that they could use some of the facilities available in the banqueting rooms. Yesterday, the serious allegation was made that a Member of Parliament was offered a sum in excess of £10,000 a year to book banqueting rooms in the name of an unidentified body.

In the past, I have tabled parliamentary questions asking for lists of all companies that use the banqueting rooms in the names of hon. Members. That information has always been denied to me and to other hon. Members. In view of the seriousness of the allegation made yesterday and of another—that American visitors were buying places at banqueting room functions—will your office, Madam Speaker, undertake to publish the details that I have sought to ensure transparency and so that we all know what is happening in respect of banqueting room bookings?

Madam Speaker: That is barely a point of order for the Chair, but it is a serious point that might be referred to the Catering Committee.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. During business questions, my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn), asked a question about bull bars. Today, in the European Legislation Sub-Committee on Road Safety, the Minister for Roads and Traffic gave the clearest sign that a statement about various traffic matters that is likely to include provisions relating to bull bars will be made next week. I am afraid that I did not get permission to mention his name.

Madam Speaker: Perhaps my remarks today will be taken to heart by all hon. Members present—and I hope that those who are not present will take the trouble to read *Hansard* and learn my views.

BILL PRESENTED

Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) (Wales)

Mr. Barry Jones, supported by Mr. Alfred Morris, Mr. Alex Carlile, Mr. Dafydd Wigley, Mr. Neil Kinnock, Mr. Ray Powell, Mr. Donald Anderson, Mr. Gareth Wardell, Dr. John Marek, Mr. David Hanson, Mr. Roy Hughes and Mr. Martyn Jones, presented a Bill to prohibit, in Wales, discrimination against disabled persons on the grounds of their disability; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 21 October, and to be printed. [Bill 153.]

Fishing Vessels (Decommissioning)

5.15 pm

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Michael Jack): I beg to move,

That the Fishing Vessels (Decommissioning) Scheme 1994 (S.I., 1994, No. 1568), a copy of which was laid before this House on 15th June, be approved.

It has become something of a modest tradition that, whenever I rise to speak on fishing matters, others seek to intervene to make their points. I shall be happy to give way to right hon. and hon. Members during the course of my remarks, provided that they will do me the courtesy of not attacking me at the end of the debate if there is not sufficient time for their own contributions.

Commercial fishing is an important industry. Last year, landings in the United Kingdom and abroad were worth £517 million. Its activities help to support our coastal communities through the direct provision of employment and indirectly, through processing, harbour and related industries. That income also helps to maintain the infrastructure and sheer attractiveness of many of our coastal areas.

Everyone connected with the fishing industry knows that its long-term future and viability are closely linked to the need to achieve a proper balance between the fishing effort represented by our current fleet and stocks of fish in the sea. The problem was brought home most graphically to me when I prepared recently for a Radio 4 interview on the state of fish stocks in the North sea. Probed by the interviewer, I was able to tell him that over the last decade the spawning stock of cod had dropped 58 per cent. and catch levels by 40 per cent., while fishing effort remained about the same. That emphasises all too clearly the problems that we face with all the main white fish stocks.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): Does my hon. Friend have any comment to make on press reports of European Commission proposals, particularly in relation to Spain and Portugal? All sorts of disturbing stories are flying around.

Mr. Jack: My hon. Friend anticipates my further comments on control of fishing effort. Only today we received by fax from Brussels detailed information on the Commission's proposals. Those details were presented to a technical committee meeting in Brussels this morning. Some comment has been premature, to say the least, and ill informed. I am an assiduous reader of *Fishing News*, and draw my hon. Friend's attention to a most statesmanlike and considered comment by Mr. Bob Allan, chief executive of the Scottish Fishermen's Federation. *Fishing News* reported that he

"was concerned at the proposals but stressed that as yet no detailed document had been issued. Caution was necessary until the full details and their likely effects could be evaluated, although the likelihood of an across the board days at sea regime being introduced had been foreshadowed at the April Council meeting on Spanish access."

I think that that is a very proper stance. Mr. Allan was right to caution us against jumping to conclusions: these are very early days.

The proposals respond to the wider issue of the control of the effort represented by the Spanish fishing fleet in the light of the removal, under the accession treaty, of the basic and periodic list system. They cover waters from the Shetland islands all the way around the western

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approaches, including the area known as the Irish box, and through to the English channel. They constitute a comprehensive package, but we shall want to examine them in the utmost detail. To that end, we have already arranged a meeting with the industry next Thursday, 21 July. It is unlikely that the Fisheries Council will discuss the matter in detail until its meeting on 23 November, so everyone will have ample opportunity to consider it.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Will all the papers be available to hon. Members representing maritime constituencies? These matters are of great concern to us all, and we should like to study them in detail before making our own responses.

May I ask the Minister, in his meetings with the Scottish Fishermen's Federation or any other organisation representing the industry, to ensure a faster response than that given by the federation in September 1993 in regard to reducing the fishing effort? In fact, no official response has yet been received.

Mr. Jack: I apologise for that. I have certainly done my best to keep the Scottish industry informed of developments. I assure the hon. Lady, and other hon. Members with fishing constituencies, that I shall be happy to discuss the proposals once we have had an opportunity to study them in depth. My door will be open. It is important for the proposals to be properly understood; when hon. Members have had time to consider them, they will be able to register their views on how their constituents will be affected with me and with my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland with responsibility for agriculture and the environment.

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford): The Minister said that he would meet representatives of the industry next Thursday. There is currently great concern in the port of Portavogie, which the Minister visited last year, about the reported decisions being made in Brussels. As the Minister said, these are still only proposals and we do not know the details, but can he assure me that the Northern Ireland fishing industry will be represented at that meeting as its representatives were clearly not aware of it when I spoke to them today?

Mr. Jack: At this very early stage, I shall be discussing the proposals with my officials. Representatives of the industry are not coming to see me yet, but I am sure that they will want to come and knock on my door—which, as always, will be opened with pleasure. I note what the hon. Gentleman has said, however, and I shall ensure that the views of Northern Ireland fishermen are taken into account.

I am, of course, aware that the proposals are as important to people north of the border as they are to those south of the border, and to all who fish the waters of the western approaches. I should point out to the hon. Gentleman that the door has been kept firmly shut in the past, certainly in regard to Spain and Portugal and the North sea. That has caused concern to many hon. Members, and the change of policy is, in its own way, good news.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): Will my hon. Friend give an assurance which I am certain he can give easily? Fishermen in the south-west fear that Portugal and Spain will always do better than Britain. Will my hon. Friend ensure that our industry in the south-west is properly protected?

Mr. Jack: My right hon. Friend has raised an important aspect of the whole question of effort control. Ours are Community-wide proposals, which will apply to all member states with rights to fish in the waters concerned. Underlying that issue is the question of enforcement. I am acutely aware of the sensitivities aroused, especially in the south-west, by the many reports of rule-breaking by other Community states. I give my hon. Friend this undertaking: along with the Commissioner, I will continue to press the point that, unless we have credible, uniform enforcement of the common fisheries policy, the policy itself will not be credible.

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): The Minister gave us a categorical assurance that Spanish vessels would not be allowed into the North sea. Does that mean that they will not be able to fish for either pressure or non-pressure stocks? The Minister's approach has been to concede the principle of full Spanish accession before the details have been worked out; from a negotiating point of view, that is barmy.

Mr. Jack: The hon. Gentleman made that point to me yesterday, with a smile on his face, when he came to see my right hon. Friend the Minister and me. I pointed out to him that when we discussed the point in the December Fisheries Council it was as a result of the United Kingdom's stalwart stand that the original Commission proposal was not implemented. That would have been a blank-cheque approach: it would have removed all controls. We did not have an iota of detailed information about what would have replaced the present measures to control access to waters around our shores. If it were not for the United Kingdom, we would not now be considering an excellent effort-controlling measure.

The hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) can smile as much as he likes, but the accession treaty has made it absolutely clear that at the end of 1995 the area known as the Irish box would go. To do nothing about that would have been a dereliction of duty. The hon. Gentleman should know me better. I felt that it was very important for us to press on to secure an agreement on the principles, which would then guide the Commission in working out the details before there could be any backsliding to weaken the controls that had been proposed to deal with the effort represented by the Spanish fleet.

This is a very sensitive matter. I think that we obtained an extremely good deal in the end, and I am glad to say that the United Kingdom took the lead in obtaining it.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. The debate seems to be going very wide of the scheme and the provision of grants for the decommissioning of vessels. Someone will have to explain to me very convincingly how the exchange that has just taken place relates to that subject.

Mr. Jack: The measures clearly relate to the way in which the remaining fishing effort of the fleet will be deployed after the decommissioning scheme has had its effect. I think that hon. Members have been probing to find

out how that effort would be controlled, and how those fishing around our shores would interact with other Community members. Part of the proposals relate to the achievement of Community-wide effort reduction programmes within what is known as the multi-annual guidance programme.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I assure you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that my intervention relates directly to decommissioning. I give you my word on that. I have some experience of the industry.

As a fishing nation, we are badly adrift in terms of our multi-annual guidance programme. Given that the measure by which it is defined—a reduction in fleet tonnage and power—is so crude, what progress has been made in Brussels to arrive at a sensible and effective measure of fishing capacity? Surely the Minister agrees that a reduction in tonnage and power does not necessarily lead to a reduction in fishing capacity.

Mr. Jack: The hon. Gentleman may have got his terminology slightly mixed up. We are talking about controlling fishing effort, which has a direct relationship with both the capacity of a vessel and its power. That is the formula to which the multi-annual guidance programme refers. We do not take a single approach to the controlling of effort: other measures are involved, which I shall outline shortly.

I highlighted earlier the difficulties involving cod stock and the rest of the whitefish stocks in the North sea and I made the point that it was a Community-wide problem. With that in mind, the Government sought in 1993 to introduce a series of measures to help to reduce the fishing effort of our fleet and to meet our share of the Community-wide reduction programme—the multi-annual guidance programme. A key part of the MAGP was the £25 million decommissioning scheme, with which hon. Members will be familiar from the debate on 7 July last year.

At that time, we made it clear that the scheme would be introduced over a three-year period so that we could closely monitor its results and, if necessary, adjust the qualifying criteria to ensure that the money available removed the maximum amount of effort possible, moved us towards meeting Community sectoral effort reduction targets and gave good value for money to the taxpayer. It is perhaps worth reflecting that in addition to the decommissioning scheme the Government spend on the industry some £16 million a year on fisheries research, about £12 million on vessel safety, grants for processing and port improvements, and a further £22 million on enforcement.

Mrs. Ewing: In the context of decommissioning, is it not true that only £11 million of the £500 million allocated for decommissioning schemes in the European Union between 1987 and 1992 has been taken up by the Government? How will they square that circle? If we are to have a decommissioning scheme, it must be effective to meet the requirements of the MAGP.

Mr. Jack: I hope that my remarks on this matter will illustrate clearly to the hon. Lady that we have an effective scheme, that we want to spend our total of £25 million, and that the scheme will—with other measures—make a significant contribution towards meeting our target.

Even with that in mind, the last time that decommissioning was debated in the House, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Dr. Strang) chastised me for the size of our decommissioning scheme and went on to try to outbid me. I noted at the time, however, that he broke the Labour party's first and only commandment—"Thou shalt not give any promise"—by making his outbidding a firm spending commitment. In so doing, he merely illustrated the Opposition view that every problem can be solved with money. That is classic short-termism and does not face the need to address, as the Government have addressed, the importance of having a package of measures designed to benefit stocks in the long term by further reducing fishing effort. Our effort reduction package deals with the current structural problems and helps to conserve fish stocks now and in the future. The package comprises technical conservation measures, licence penalties and decommissioning.

The industry has presented some useful suggestions on technical conservation. We have evaluated them and are now discussing them with the European Commission. It is our hope that those measures can contribute to achieving our MAGP target. In addition, we have a system of licence penalties whereby capacity must be given up whenever existing licences are transferred or aggregated—for example, by an owner who wishes to license a new, more powerful vessel. The industry has asked us to reconsider improving the scheme's operation and we have agreed to do so.

Decommissioning lies at the heart of our effort reduction policy. So far, the 1993-94 scheme has removed 135 vessels, about 4,800 tonnes of capacity, at a cost of £7.8 million. In a recent announcement, we made it clear that we now wished to deploy the remainder of our £25 million. The scheme represents the next step along that path for the year 1994-95. A total of £8.9 million will be available, a sum which incorporates the underspend on the 1993-94 scheme. The rules of that round will be familiar because the scheme is closely based on the successful 1993 scheme which, by using a tendering system, enabled us to remove the maximum amount of active capacity with the available funds.

In a nutshell, the scheme provides for owners of eligible vessels to submit tenders for the amount of decommissioning grant for which they would be prepared to scrap their vessel and surrender its licences. Details of the scheme were made public on 15 June and the closing date for applications is 15 August 1994. Applications will be ranked in terms of pounds-per-vessel-capacity unit. Successful applicants must submit proof of scrapping, deregistration and surrender of all licences in respect of a vessel before 1 March 1995.

The main criteria for determining eligibility have not changed. Vessels must be United Kingdom registered and licensed, more than 10 metres in overall length, more than 10 years old and seaworthy. We want to target active vessels, so we have also retained the requirement that vessels must have spent at least 100 days at sea on fishing trips in each of the past two years.

We considered carefully whether the scheme should be more precisely targeted—for example, by confining it to trawlers or beam trawlers—but we concluded that that would be too restrictive. There is a new requirement, however, that vessels applying should hold a full pressure-stock licence, thus focusing the scheme on vessels that fish the most vulnerable stocks. Moreover, the 100

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days at sea on fishing trips must have been spent in Community waters. The aim is to exclude vessels fishing primarily in distant waters where pressure on the stocks is less intense.

We are excluding vessels which were successful in the 1993 tender but were not scrapped. We included a warning to that effect in the 1993 explanatory leaflet to discourage withdrawals, and the current scheme implements that rule.

Application forms are available in local fishery offices and have already been sent to fishermen known to be interested in the scheme. We look forward to a keen response with realistic bids which will enable the 1994 scheme to be as successful and effective as the 1993 scheme in making a useful contribution to conserving stocks and achieving our MAGP targets.

Hon. Members will recall that the first round of decommissioning was linked to our proposals for days-at-sea restrictions, as the latter were intended to constrain the effort of the fleet which remained—a point which, I am glad to say, was acknowledged by hon. Members on both sides of the House.

Mrs. Ewing: Is not the average decommissioning grant about £60,000, so that by the time vessel owners have paid scrapping charges and other charges, and settled taxation bills, many of them are left with nothing? Is the Minister satisfied that the amount of money being provided for decommissioning is sufficient to meet the needs of our fleet? Can he tell us what other aspects of effort limitation have been used by other European Union countries, as all of them seem to have used decommissioning to meet the MAGP target?

Mr. Jack: On the figure that the hon. Lady quoted, it is misleading to look at average amounts per vessel because the size range is substantial. When we opened the doors last time, 433 vessels applied under the scheme, which showed that people thought it was effective. I believe that 134 vessels were ultimately decommissioned with the first tranche of money. We have since tried to refine the scheme and to focus it more carefully.

With regard to other European Union states, the Netherlands has relied on a days-at-sea scheme to assist in meeting its targets while others have put more weight on decommissioning to remove tonnage. The hon. Lady will note that I placed clear emphasis on the question of controlling effort, particularly that of the remainder of the fleet. Other Community countries have omitted to emphasise that aspect—perhaps to their cost. The effectiveness of the decommissioning scheme is determined not just by the capacity that is taken out, but by what the remaining capacity will do.

Hon. Members will recall that we suspended the introduction of our effort reduction measure—the days-at-sea policy—because the judicial review case of the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations was referred to the European Court of Justice. We always made it clear, however, that we wanted the decommissioning scheme to provide real long-term benefits to the fishing industry. The scheme will not achieve that if remaining vessels increase their fishing effort and thus undermine the impact of decommissioning. That would be unwelcome to the fishing industry and also to the taxpayers, who will want to know that expenditure is being used effectively and provides good value for money.

The industry claim that the current fleet is already fishing flat out. If that is the case, in spite of decommissioning, effort should not increase. As decommissioning progresses, we intend to monitor the fishing effort of the remaining fleet. We shall not want to be heavy handed about it, but if effort increases we shall have to take suitable effort-control measures to deal with the situation. I hope that the industry will collectively exercise restraint and so make the use of such controls unnecessary in the context of this scheme. My wish is to see a healthy, successful and responsible fishing industry. It cannot have a healthy and successful future without taking responsibility, and that includes ensuring that fishing effort does not increase.

I know from my discussions with industry representatives and with individual fishermen that they are willing to contribute to conservation and to achieving our Community targets. We are also working with the industry in other ways—for example, to improve the marketing of fish in order to improve returns. All of the measures that I have outlined are important factors in developing the long-term viability of the industry.

I look forward to continuing to work with the fishing industry, trying to chart our way through what can sometimes seem the difficult and detailed waters of complex Community schemes.

Dr. Godman: Does the Minister agree that if effort limitation is to be effective as a conservation tool there has to be a rough balance between the size of the fleet and stocks? How far are we from achieving such an objective?

Mr. Jack: We are some way from achieving it. I wish that we were further along that road, but it took us some time carefully to think through the question of controlling the effort of the remainder of the fleet. I have listened carefully to hon. Members with constituency fishing interests and to the industry. I had hoped that, in view of my emphasis on how we intended to deal with the remainder of the effort during this period of decommissioning, the hon. Gentleman would have understood that I have tried very hard to take to heart the messages that the industry has sent to me.

I also made it clear that we have a package of measures, such as licence aggregation. The industry has asked us about how that element of our effort reduction programme can be improved and I look forward to receiving its proposals on that subject. The hon. Gentleman will also know that we are actively evaluating technical conservation measures which the industry has sensibly put to us. They are in what could be called the appraisal stage. Once we ascertain how the decommissioning scheme, as it is now constituted, progresses, we can be clearer about the distance between that sum total of effort reduction and the target that we have to meet. The targets are now legally binding in the Community. We want to achieve those targets; if there is a gap, we shall have to examine other ways of doing so.

I hope that we are back on the right road, especially with the decommissioning scheme. We have made our intentions clear, and I commend the scheme to the House.

5.42 pm

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): We welcome the fact that we at least have an announcement to the effect that the second phase of the decommissioning scheme is going ahead. We also welcome the fact that the underspend from the first year's round of decommissioning has been included in the global sum. The Minister will appreciate that we have pressed him on that issue several times. We are glad to learn that the money has not been lost, but has been kept within the funds available.

Our only regret is that the scheme is still the same inadequate scheme and part of an inadequate fisheries policy, as the Minister will know from his contact with the industry. The Minister told us that he reads *Fishing News* assiduously, so I am sure that he read the editorial entitled "Bankruptcy of Ideas", which states:

"The resurrection of the decommissioning scheme is welcome but it falls woefully short of the positive policy for which the industry has been waiting.

Some will now be able to go ahead and leave the industry, but those who want to stay—the vast majority—still have not a clue as to where the industry is going."

That causes serious problems in terms of planning and investment and confidence in the industry—problems which one or two hon. Members have made clear to the Minister.

There is also a problem with meeting the targets set by the multi-annual guidance programme. I shall refer to that in due course, because that is the underlying issue in the matching of fishing effort to available fish stocks. We now know that the first round of decommissioning took out approximately 2.2 per cent. of fleet capacity. Even with the measures that the Minister has outlined, such as licence aggregation, we are looking at a reduction of only about 7 per cent. by 1996, when, under European Community law, the Government have to meet a target reduction in the region of 20 per cent., as my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) rightly said.

Our failure has already been criticised by the Commission in its report on the MAGP targets. It stated that

"figures show this country"—

the United Kingdom—

"significantly outside the intermediate objective for 1993."

It is, therefore, clear that, even now, we are nowhere near meeting our targets.

Although we need effort limitation—the Labour party has always made it clear that it recognises that that must go hand in glove with decommissioning—we need a much more generous and effective decommissioning scheme if we are to make progress towards meeting our MAGP by 1996. Of the £7.5 million spent on decommissioning last year, approximately £5 million was clawed back by the Government under the Fontainebleau agreement and, of course, fishermen paid tax on the money that they received. It is, therefore, a very minor scheme. The overall sum that the Government make available to the industry and to the primary sector in general can hardly be regarded as generous.

The failure to make progress in fleet reduction and give a clear policy lead has severe consequences for the whole United Kingdom industry in denying the UK structural aid to modernise its fishing fleet, which is aging rapidly. Again, the Minister is well aware of that issue. We are simply storing up problems for the future, as is mentioned in the Commission's proposals.

The UK's fishing fleet is being put at a severe disadvantage in the European Union. As has been said, in the six years to 1992, the European Union made £250 million available for decommissioning, but it was paid to other member states. Of the total of around £500 million, including construction and modernisation grants, about £11 million has so far come to the United Kingdom.

The fact that we have done so badly in getting a share of the available pot of money is a national decision, not a European Union decision. The Minister knows that. When I met the previous Fisheries Commissioner, Mr. Marin, he told me that he had repeatedly pressed the Minister's predecessors to bid for decommissioning funds because he recognised that, by not introducing a decommissioning scheme some years ago, we were building up to the problems that we now face.

The problem for the United Kingdom fleet is made worse by the Commission's proposals, although I admit that they are only proposals and we need to examine them in detail. However, if the Commission is taking on board the Government's ideas, which include a days-at-sea restriction, the logical conclusion—the introduction of standard vessel fishing days to replace the Irish box—has severe implications for the British fleet because if we have not made progress towards meeting our MAGP targets, our fleet will be far more restricted than that of other member states so that we can meet our targets. The same restrictions will not be applied to Spain and Portugal. They will be free to fish because they are nearer to meeting their targets.

Mr. Jack: A few moments ago, the hon. Gentleman mentioned investment in new vessels and where the money came from. He will be aware that, under the terms of the Fontainebleau agreement, the cost to the UK is something like 71 per cent. of any modernisation schemes. Will he outline in detail his own proposals? How much would he spend; on what would he spend it; and how would he judge the criteria for such schemes?

Mr. Morley: I shall be happy to answer that question. Indeed, I intend to deal with it in my proposals.

There is also the hypothetical situation—where we shall be in some years' time. I shall tell the Minister how we would find the funding for the schemes now. There are a number of ways of doing that.

The total decommissioning scheme is spread over three years; we have already had one of those years. The Labour party sees no reason why the total amount of money cannot be put into one year's allocation to achieve a greater reduction in the fleet rather than spreading it over three years. What is the point of prolonging the agony? It would make more sense to remove the overcapacity as quickly as possible rather than spreading the money over another two years.

Of course, the money has to be found within the global Government budget and I am happy to give the Minister a few pointers. For example, the Labour party could have found £350 million that has been wasted on management consultants—and their cars—in the national health service. We could have saved the £700 million that has been spent on British Rail privatisation and consultancies and the £500 million spent on the outside consultancies that saved only £10 million for the Government.

We could also have saved £3 million on the parents charter, which was sent to every house in the country whether or not any children lived there. We could have

[Mr. Morley]

saved £500 million on the national curriculum scheme that was abandoned after being introduced. There is certainly a few bob there that a Labour Government could have saved, to put into a more effective decommissioning scheme. If the Minister would like a bit more advice on where to find the money, I should be only too pleased to give him some, although I know that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, would call me to order if I did.

Mr. Jack: I have added up those sums and have reached £2 billion in firm commitments from the hon. Gentleman to spend on the fishing industry. I look forward to hearing what the Labour Treasury spokesman says about that.

Mr. Morley: Now we can see how Conservative central office reach all those ludicrous figures that Conservative Members sometimes throw at the Labour party.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): Will not two thirds of the money that this country spends on decommissioning probably be recovered from the Commission, anyway?

Mr. Morley: That is right. In all fairness and all seriousness, the £25 million being made available is a tiny sum. It certainly compares badly with the £3 billion a year spent on the agricultural sector. I appreciate that that is paid under European regulations, some of which are outside the Government's control. But when the question of the imbalance has been raised before, the Government's response is that farmers are used to such subsidies, so they are okay for the agricultural sector, but not for the fishing sector.

Moreover, presumably the Government put into their budget a sum for enforcing the days-at-sea measures, which will not have been used because of the delay caused by the court case. I should have thought that there were a few million pounds there, too—a budget that has already been committed and could have gone into the overall pool for the decommissioning scheme. So a fair bit of money could be found within existing budgets this year to enlarge the scheme and make it more effective.

The EC proposals will indeed have a severe effect on what will happen in the areas outside the Irish box, such as the south-western approaches. As I said, there is a threat of a new Spanish armada and we need more details of how the proposals will work. Certainly, we will examine them closely and consider the implications for the industry. We need a strong policy framework within which the industry can work—one that will give it stability and enable it to plan ahead.

I hope that the Minister will take into account the developments that the Opposition would like to see. First, the whole programme should be rolled into one year to try to enlarge the scheme, increase decommissioning and reduce the effort faster than the proposals suggest. We also want a far more effective decommissioning scheme, with more resources going into it—and I believe that those resources could be found.

The scheme should be more carefully targeted. The Minister touched on that subject, but it needs to be considered on a sectoral basis, where the pressure is. We also want more details about how the scheme is being monitored to evaluate its effectiveness.

There should be a stronger emphasis on the social dimension of restructuring. Of course the scheme is about decommissioning, but it does not benefit all the crews of the boats concerned. We want effective use of regional funding and the proposed PESCA programme, which the Minister has discussed with us. It is a modest programme, but it can be directed towards fishing communities and thus benefit a wider group of people.

We must consider again the disposal of decommissioned boats. As the Minister will know, I have written to him on behalf of a potential buyer from Sri Lanka, who has a firm and positive offer to buy decommissioned boats from the United Kingdom and take them to Sri Lanka. He is also prepared to obtain assurances from the Sri Lankan Government that those boats will not find their way back into the European Union fleet. I accept that we must take such possibilities into consideration, but there are ways of ensuring that the boats do not find their way back into the fleet—not least the fact that they need licences.

Approximately £8,000 of the money that owners get for decommissioning is spent on scrapping. If we could find a workable scheme, that would be to the advantage of all concerned. I hope that the Minister will consider the idea.

Mr. Jack: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for raising that matter. Of course I shall reply to his letter. However, I have raised the question of disposal of vessels through third world countries with the Overseas Development Administration, and there are genuine practical problems involved. So far, in spite of searching quite hard, I have not yet come up with a practical scheme that satisfies all the criteria—not least the logistics of getting vessels there. Many owners, in scrapping vessels, take certain equipment out to release additional sums. On the final point about the cost, that is of course tax allowable.

Mrs. Ewing: Only 25 per cent.

Mr. Morley: Yes; 25 per cent. is tax allowable, I think. I take the Minister's point; those are serious issues, but the people behind the scheme are convinced that they can satisfy the criteria. The fact that some of the more high-tech equipment in the boats will be stripped out is not necessarily a disadvantage in low-tech fishing industries in developing countries.

We also want a proper fund, through the European Union, for an early retirement scheme in the fishing industry. I know that the Commission has considered the idea and I believe that such an arrangement would be of benefit to the overall scheme.

As a matter of urgency, the Commission should be pressed to act on a proposal from the United Kingdom fishermen's associations—the Scottish Fishermen's Federation and the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations—to react to their detailed and sensible proposals for technical conservation measures and their suggestions on how those can be built into effort limitation and taken into account. Many of us are surprised that it has taken so long to receive a response from the Commission.

There has been far too much delay and indecision on fishing in this country. We need a stronger policy. The present approach seems to encourage decommissioning by bankruptcy. That is the implication of leaving the issue for so long and not having an adequate scheme. We need stronger action to build a secure and sustainable fishing industry and a modern and prosperous fleet. The present Government approach will achieve neither of those ends.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. I see that six hon. Members wish to catch my eye, and we have precisely 61 minutes left for the debate.

5.59 pm

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): For the reason that you have given, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall be especially brief —and I shall surprise the Minister by starting with warm congratulations. I have not always congratulated either him or his predecessor on the conduct of fisheries policy, especially over the vexed question of days-at-sea, but now I say thank you most sincerely to my hon. Friend for adopting what I consider is now the correct approach to the Government's relationship with the industry.

The Minister said that his door was always open and, as proof of that, he has agreed to see some representatives of the industry from the south-west next Tuesday on the vexed question of the monkfish quota. I have no doubt that, at that meeting, we shall also want to probe the whole issue of the proposed days-at-sea restrictions scheme, which has come, albeit in outline and preliminary form, from Brussels. I shall return to that.

My hon. Friend's attitude was summed up in his speech. If I correctly interpreted it, the latter part especially marks something of a change of approach by the Government on the vexed question of trying to bring about a better balance between fishing capacity on one hand and availability of stocks on the other. That, of course, is the central issue that has bedevilled fisheries policy for many years.

I am not sure whether I am interpreting my hon. Friend's words correctly, but I wonder what his attitude is now to the previous national days-at-sea restrictions scheme. Is he putting it completely on one side and, if so, I wonder whether he would go one step further and give a pledge that that legislation may be repealed, so that the case before the European Court could be dropped. That would be a very positive step forward in the light of his remarks, especially towards the end of his speech.

My hon. Friend said that decommissioning was at the heart of the Government's policy. That brings me to the scheme and the motion before the House. As my hon. Friend knows, I share the view of the Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley), that the decommissioning scheme is welcome, but that £25 million over three years is not sufficient. I was one of the Conservative Members who, for many years, pressed Her Majesty's Government to reintroduce a decommissioning scheme and I was delighted when that happened, albeit as part of a wider package. However, I still believe that £25 million is not sufficient, given the scale of the problem and the difficulty of meeting our multi-annual guidance programme.

My hon. Friend is right to chide the Opposition about where the money will come from and where the increase in the funding is to be found. I do not think that the Treasury will sanction an increase above £25 million. Unfortunately, that is the reality of the situation facing us, especially in the current public expenditure climate. However, I refuse to believe that, in the quite significant budget of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, there is not some scope —I shall develop the point—for increasing the £25 million allocation. I am sure that some more money could be found in the budget of the Department.

The Government must find that extra money because of the plight facing the industry. All of us who have fishing constituencies know the difficulties that fishermen face. I find that the most worrying aspect of the whole situation is when fishermen come to me and say, "David, we are being forced to cheat." They would not admit that before, but they are saying it now. To make a living, they are being forced to cheat through illegal landings and black fish. That is very worrying indeed and the fishermen do not like doing it.

I know of a number of people in my constituency who, because of the pressures that they are under and because of the particular pressure of having to cheat in order to survive, want to leave the industry. That is very sad. We must enable people who want to leave the industry to do so with honour and, indeed, with some financial recompense before the restrictions being imposed on them by Europe, and by our own Government for very good reasons, are implemented. Therefore, I earnestly urge my hon. Friend and other members of the Government to look again at the whole question of the adequacy—in my opinion, the inadequacy—of the allocation of £25 million and to bring about an increase.

I was very pleased to hear what my hon. Friend said about the topic of the day: the European Commission proposals—as he explained to the occupant of the Chair earlier, they are linked with the motion—which were publicised, probably in a truncated and, possibly, in an inaccurate form, last night and again this morning. Again, I welcome his words of caution that we should wait and see the details. I will certainly do that before passing final judgment, but I view what we already know of those proposals with hefty scepticism.

I opposed our unilateral days-at-sea restrictions and I shall also need much convincing over the European measures, for the central issue is the difficulty of enforcing such a system. We all know of the fears of the fishermen and their right to hold those fears. To put it succinctly, they fear that if such restrictions are ever introduced, they will be enforced on our fishermen, whereas the Spanish fishermen in particular, who are the biggest threat that we face in the south-west, will escape, because we all know that the enforcement of measures on fishermen in Spain is just a joke. We have seen it in all sorts of forms of so-called conservation measures. They are just not applied to the Spaniards, and they are not applied in any great degree, if I may say in passing, to many of the French fishermen either. That is, of course, the weakness of the common fisheries policy and I am afraid that it may be the weakness of the proposals from Europe.

However, I take comfort from my hon. Friend's comments on that matter and I know him well enough to know that he will be scrutinising the proposals with great care and that he will not go along with anything which is to the detriment of our own fishing fleet or which would treat our fleet unfairly.

I shall conclude my remarks, because I know that other hon. Members want to speak. I welcome what, as I said, I sense is a completely new approach by the Government and by my hon. Friend in particular. I urge him to listen with the greatest care, as he has done already, to the sensible measures being put forward by the industry. In proposing its alternative conservation measures—the technical measures to which my hon. Friend referred—the industry has made considerable advances. It has not gone for soft options, but has put forward measures which would

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hurt the industry because it knows that a certain amount of pain is necessary to bring about that absolutely essential balance.

One thing is certain: if any conservation scheme is to succeed, it must have the acquiescence of the industry. The scheme must not have the total opposition of the industry. A scheme has a far better chance of succeeding if it has been put forward in outline form, at least, by the industry than if it is imposed on the industry. I welcome the whole tone of my hon. Friend's remarks and I hope that, indeed, the industry can look forward to a better and a more secure future in co-operation with Her Majesty's Government.

6.7 pm

Mr. Paul Tyler (North Cornwall): I hope that I will not embarrass my near neighbour in Cornwall, the hon. Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris), by agreeing with so much of what he has said. I shall not reiterate the points, because we are obviously tied for time, but I hope that the Minister will take very seriously the hon. Gentleman's point about the repeal of the Sea Fish Conservation Act 1967. There would be a real sea-change in the atmosphere in the industry if the Government showed that that Act is behind them and that they would be prepared to look again at the technical conservation measures.

The Minister rightly outlined the context of the scheme. He outlined the conservation shortfall in meeting multi-annual guidance programme targets, especially in the United Kingdom, though not exclusively so, the economic state of our industry compared with the fishing fleets in competitor countries in the European Union, the extent of support from other member states for the industry, which is extremely relevant in the context of not only decommissioning but the whole package of support, and the new developments overnight in Brussels, which we have heard about briefly and which are extremely relevant.

Finally, he rightly paid a great deal of attention, as did the hon. Member for St. Ives, to discrepancies in implementation, monitoring and control. We all know that the United Kingdom has one of the worst shortfalls in meeting targets, though other member states are in a similar position.

I was struck by the engaging honesty of the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, who is in his place, in the Scottish Grand Committee earlier this week. He said:

"we reckon that the decommissioning scheme will take 2.2 per cent. to 2.5 per cent. over the three years, so it is not a very significant amount. If things go well, and depending on how the scheme works out in detail, it may be 8 per cent. or 9 per cent. That is of course a long way from our 19 per cent. target."

I suspect that that engaging honesty may be something to do with a Minister who is becoming somewhat demob happy. Later in the discussion in the Scottish Grand Committee, he said:

"Let me answer first the questions about fishing. I accept that it is not easy to determine at this stage how we can meet our multi-annual guidance programme targets . . . As I said, we might take out 2.5 per cent. or 3 per cent. a year and set the figure at 8 per cent. over three years. With the penalties on licensed transfers and aggregations, we hope to get to about 5 per cent. over the same period."

That is extraordinarily vague. It is honestly vague, but it does not alter the fact that we are a long way off the targets that the Government say that they are aiming for.

In the Committee, much play was made of the scale of investment in decommissioning, and how much was coming from the British taxpayer. As hon. Members have said, the decommissioning scheme amounts to £25 million gross over three years. It is calculated that 17.5 per cent. will be drawn down from Brussels under the arrangements to which the Minister has referred. So to some extent, that £25 million is bogus. It is further reduced by the tax take.

In the Standing Committee that considered the Finance Bill, my hon. Friend the Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) sought to exempt the payments from all tax penalties, but the penalties remain and the clawback in tax is considerable. The net figure for this scheme is probably only about £2 million a year. It is minuscule, I agree with what the hon. Member for St. Ives said about that.

In the Scottish Grand Committee on Tuesday the Minister admitted:

"the money has been wrung from the Treasury after a great deal of pressure and I have been blunt with the fishing industry that there will be no likelihood of an extension of that £25 million in the current three-year period.—[*Official Report, Scottish Grand Committee*, 12 July 1994; c. 10-37.]

That does not explain why the money cannot be found from within MAFF's budget, notably from the budget for the days-at-sea provisions, which would have been considerable.

What is so significant about the Minister's confession is that it was the Treasury which designed the policy so that there was no assessment of the industry's actual needs. There was no equation in terms of conservation targets. There was no attempt to match up to the MAGP requirements. Most important, there was no overall value-for-money strategy. It is the mad axeman of the Treasury all over again.

The opposition to days-at-sea made it clear that, from Newlyn to Lerwick, fishermen have been, and continue to be, on the brink of economic collapse. Decommissioning in those circumstances can only be part of a larger package. Even if it were more generous, it would not be enough on its own. Decommissioning men, for example, involves huge social and economic costs in fragile economies all round our coastline, in Cornwall as in the north of Scotland. As the take-up shows, it is not sufficient in itself to achieve a dramatic reduction in the take.

Decommissioning by decrepitude in vessels is probably what the Government have in mind. It is more likely to happen than decommissioning by generous support. As I said earlier, the Minister was right to see the decommissioning package within the overall package that other member states make available to their fishing fleets. I take the example of Spain, for the obvious reason that in the south-west our fishermen find themselves in direct competition with Spanish fishermen.

For permanent decommissioning of vessels from 1987 to 1992, Spanish fishermen received 80.46 million ecu. That is discounting any cash that they received from their national Government. For temporary lay-up, they received 36.12 million ecu. In addition to that, for new vessel construction during that period, Spanish fishermen received 66.38 million ecu and for vessel modernisation they received 38.64 million ecu. That is a total of 220 million ecu from the European Union, or European Community as it then was; from the European taxpayers; from us. During that period, under only the vessel construction and modernisation programmes—because we did not have decommissioning—all that our industry

obtained in draw-down from the European Community was a paltry 15 million ecu. That is a critical part of the equation that the Minister must face. One cannot divorce the decommissioning sum from the rest of the programme.

Is it any wonder that our fishermen throughout the United Kingdom believe that their competitors benefit from huge subsidy, paid for as much by United Kingdom taxpayers as anyone else, to outfish us in our traditional waters with our money? It is worth noting that, during the same period, 72 new boats were given subsidy for construction in Spain, while only two achieved that in the United Kingdom.

I do not wish to refer at length to the proposals that we heard about overnight, but it is important to identify that the western approaches and Irish box proposals seem at least to put a question mark against some of the pledges that the Minister made early in the year.

The House will recall that the Minister gave us four pledges. The first was that the North sea would be excluded. As we understand it—so far, so good—it is. Secondly, relative stability would be a principle right across the policy. Much will depend on enforcement, but we hope that that is in place. Thirdly, no extra effort would be involved in the proposals. We have to hope that that will be so. Critically, the proposals that we have heard about overnight fly in the face of the fourth pledge that we were given about the integrity of the Irish box. As we understand it, it is to be substantially modified and reduced to reflect only area 7b. If that happens, it will be damaging to the interests of west country fishermen.

Mr. Jack: The hon. Gentleman is in danger of building an edifice with no foundation. We have been cautioned that these are a first set of proposals. The regulation on which the measures draw defines clearly the Irish box as an area of particular sensitivity. One of the matters that we shall want to look at is just that proposal. The proposals are a first shot. If the hon. Gentleman knows anything about negotiating within the Community, he will realise that there is still a great deal of discussion to go. The reservations and fears of all fishermen whose waters are affected by the proposals, some of which he expresses clearly, will be fully taken into account.

Mr. Tyler: It is precisely because I understand the process of negotiation that I am strengthening the Minister's arm for the coming fight. I hope that he will go to the discussions with a reminder to his colleagues that hon. Members throughout the House intend to hold him to his pledges. We wish to see an Irish box that has the integrity that the Minister has given an undertaking to fight for. That brings me to the other point that I want to draw to the Minister's attention.

We understand that the new concept of standard vessels days, which looks very much like days-at-sea in a different guise, will be administered and monitored on a multi-national basis. For the reasons that the hon. Member for St. Ives gave, we do not believe that the proposal that has apparently come from the Commission that the scheme should be administered by the Government of member states would be anything like sufficient to ensure the right level of enforcement. Subsidiarity on this matter would cause acute anxiety among many other member states.

The crux of this debate and of the scheme is that for many of us, however welcome the decommissioning scheme is, it is but one block in the foundations of a substantial strategy for the industry. It is not a strategy in itself. It will not meet even the immediate conservation targets. It will not secure long-term targets without even more vigorous MAGP requirements being set, perhaps in the comparatively near future. It will not offset the failure to invest structural funds—European funds, not merely British funds—in the modernisation of our fleet. It will not put the United Kingdom fleet on an even keel to meet new competition.

In reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Orkney and Shetland, the Minister said:

"Currently we are moving towards our targets via decommissioning and licence penalties. We are also having discussions with the Commission on the possible contribution to effort reduction from technical conservation measures."—[*Official Report*, 7 July 1994; Vol. 246, c. *280-81*.]

Significantly, the Government are not having discussions with the industry on the substance of the proposals. That is regrettable.

The Minister referred in glowing terms to *Fishing News*, which we all read with great interest. I shall simply add an extra paragraph from its leader on the subject of the decommissioning scheme. It says:

"The inescapable conclusion is that the government is bereft of ideas beyond that of squeezing large chunks of the Industry into bankruptcy, and that it hopes (knows perhaps?) that forthcoming EU measures will do its dirty work for it."

At present, there is no strategy for fishing. There is no strategy to meet the conservation targets. There are real fears of effort limitation by the back door. Whatever is the maritime equivalent of an uneven playing field is what we now have in the fishing industry, and we will suffer from it.

6.20 pm

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford): This is not the occasion for a wide-ranging speech on the fishing industry in the United Kingdom, so I shall make three brief points on behalf of the fishing industry in Northern Ireland.

First, I welcome the measures proposed by the Minister. As he well knows, there was a good uptake in the first year of the decommissioning scheme in Portavogie, Ardglass and Kilkeel in Northern Ireland. I must quickly add that I fear that the uptake on this occasion will not be so good because, obviously, those who were in dire circumstances were keen to take advantage of the scheme in the first year, whereas there are no people in such dire circumstances now, so there is a serious possibility that less interest will be shown in it.

Secondly, there is a relaxed attitude in Portavogie and our other fishing ports in Northern Ireland about the arrangements for Spain and Portugal. The Minister will understand that. The fishermen in Northern Ireland do not have the anxiety that other fishermen in the United Kingdom will understandably have.

Thirdly, while we do not have the details of the news from Brussels tonight, none the less we have some information which one feels is accurate and which, if it is accurate, is most alarming for the United Kingdom fishing industry in the Irish sea. As I understand it, the Commission proposes that there should be a restriction within the Irish sea of 8,270 days at sea for the entire United Kingdom fishing fleet. In practical terms, that would mean that only about 80 United Kingdom fishing vessels will be allowed to fish in the Irish sea.

At present, we have 400 United Kingdom vessels in the Irish sea, 240 of which come from Northern Ireland. If the

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proposal advances to a conclusion, the number of United Kingdom vessels will be reduced from 400 to only 80. That would be disastrous for Northern Ireland, where 2,000 people are employed in the fishing industry in the rural parts of County Down alone.

Mr. Jack: It is early days, but I draw the right hon. Gentleman's attention to the fact that the Commission has confirmed that its effort control proposals under the permit scheme and the arrangements to which the right hon. Gentleman alluded will not prevent quotas from being taken. We must examine the detail, but I think that that reassurance is important to fishermen, who are anxious to know whether they can prosecute the stocks to which they are entitled.

Mr. Taylor: I very much welcome that intervention. I shall conclude on this subject. As the Minister said, there is understandable anxiety about the reports which have come out in the first 24 hours. They must be clarified and explained—not that I like using the word "clarification" in Northern Irish politics these days.

Today's news has caused alarm and concern within the fleet based in Portavogie. The resentment—I ask the Minister to pay attention to this point—is made worse by the further news that, whereas the United Kingdom fleet in the Irish sea is being given only 8,270 days at sea, the southern Irish fleet is being given more than 11,000 days. That distortion in favour of the southern Irish fleet seems to arise from the exercise of the Hague preference based on cod quotas.

Effectively, the Republic of Ireland, with only 120 boats in the Irish sea, gets 11,000 days at sea, whereas the United Kingdom, with 400 vessels in the Irish sea, gets only 8,270 days. The fishermen do not understand that. I hope that the Minister will carry out his promise to meet the Northern Ireland fishing industry. Certainly, I will be keen to go with him, and hopefully support him, in getting the proposals amended in Brussels.

6.25 pm

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): The Minister gave his usual energetic and ebullient display—a characteristic for which he is becoming known in the industry—of making something out of nothing. The fact is that our fishing industry is in decline and severe financial difficulties, its market receipts are not at a level to keep it profitable, investment is being frightened away and the Minister is hanging all sorts of threats over it, such as Spanish accession and all the long-term possibilities of restriction of effort. That is the state of the industry on one side.

On the other side, frankly, the Government do not have a policy on fishing. The policy they had, to which they attached all the importance they could, has effectively been shot from under them, and they have not developed a new policy to replace it. It is desperately urgent that the Government develop a policy on fishing to give the industry the confidence it needs to sustain itself through to the better future which must lie ahead, despite the effective limitation of effort.

The problem is that the Government's policy was a twin track one. The first part of the policy was decommissioning —the scheme is part of that policy. However, it was too little, too late. The scheme was not adequate, and it came in much too late. To reduce the effort, the decommissioning scheme was coupled with the days-at-sea limitation, on which the Government set their heart and to which they devoted all their efforts. That is the second half of the policy. Effectively, it has been shot from under them. They will not concede that the policy is dead. They want to hang on to a policy which cannot work. Even if the European Court rules in their favour, the policy cannot come in for well over a year—certainly not early enough to have any substantial effect on the effort.

As I told the Minister yesterday, the Government's days-at-sea policy is essentially necrophilia—the more dead it is, the more they love it. They must admit that it is a goner. It will not work. It should never have been introduced, because it is a monstrous measure—it is unfair and unreasonable. Only officials in their ivory towers apportioning catches as though they could deal with things in that sort of rational way could develop it. The Minister should not have introduced the policy, and he should now concede that it is dead.

When the Minister concedes that the policy is dead, it will become clear that the present decommissioning scheme is too small; it must be increased. The National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations has suggested £40 million as a decommissioning scheme. I would put the figure higher. It is clear that the thinking behind the Commission's previous report is that we must have a bigger decommissioning scheme.

It is wrong for the Minister to quibble about where Labour would get the money to pay for the scheme. Most of the money comes from Europe in any case. If we recognise that the days-at-sea limitation, with all the attendant framework of regulation and supervision, is going, that would save about £6 million to £7 million—I do not know the exact figure. The Minister could take the first step by bringing forward all the decommissioning money in one splurge to put some money into the industry, because that is what it desperately needs.

Other European countries are in a much healthier position, vis-a-vis their multi-annual guidance programme targets, simply because they brought forward and implemented earlier bigger and better decommissioning schemes, coupled with rational restructuring of the industry.

Between 1987 and 1992, £250 million of European funds, to which we contributed, were spent by all the other countries on decommissioning their vessels. That is why they are in a much better position than we are. That is why we must go down the road they have shown us, which the Minister, or his predecessors in the Department, should have taken some years ago.

Now, we have been forced down it and the Minister should say, "I'm sorry, we got it wrong. We tried the twin-track approach. One track won't work and we must therefore place more emphasis on the decommissioning scheme." As the Minister's hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) suggested, the Minister should drop the policy. He should withdraw it. Let us have a reconciliation with the industry, which will be adamantly opposed to it, even if the policy ever comes back.

The Government should introduce a decommissioning scheme. They should couple it with a restructuring plan to bring finance for new building into the industry. We have an aging fleet. Some vessels are 25 or 30 years old and the

industry desperately needs new vessels, as does the construction side of the industry, which will be decimated if the present lack of building continues.

The Minister should stop the slump—stop foreign flag ships buying licences and their use by other nations. He should show some confidence in the industry, so that it can get other outside finance. The Minister should recognise that there must be new build, which need not necessarily increase the effort as it can be carefully structured so as to ensure that it does not do so. He should couple that with a proper decommissioning scheme.

The Minister should go ahead with the technical conservation measures suggested to him by the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations. There was some good cheer yesterday. He said that he accepted those recommendations, which cheered me up, and that he was putting them to the Commission, which is very good. It is a learning process, and I hope that it will continue, as it is so welcome. We must approach the conservation of stocks through such effective technical measures, as it is much the best way to do so.

If the Minister does all those things, will we be able to reduce effort on the scale that is necessary? We need a 19 per cent. reduction. With decommissioning, we have so far achieved 2.2 per cent. If we spend all the money, it will probably result in a 6 per cent. reduction in effort. What will the conservation measures achieve—a 3 or 4 per cent. reduction? Perhaps the Minister can give us an estimate. Decommissioning and conservation will together add up to a 10 per cent. reduction in effort, which leaves 9 per cent. of the reduction that we must achieve by December 1996 outstanding. That is a 9 per cent. gap—half the reduction.

I fear that the Government are placing their hopes on a Europewide reduction of effort through a limitation on days at sea. Perhaps I have too suspicious a mind, but Ministers could be thinking that there will be such a limitation and that it will save their bacon. That will save them from having to introduce an unpopular measure. They might think,"We'll get away with reducing effort in that way."

The proposals for the alternative for the Irish box seem to envisage some limitation on days at sea on that basis, which is what makes me think that those proposals might be the thin end of the wedge for a European scheme. If that is the Minister's view, I hope that he will come clean.

A European limitation of effort will hit this country disproportionately hard. Our deficit is greater than that of the other fishing nations. If the European Community, rather than the Government, introduce such a scheme, it will bear most heavily on this country. Secondly, a Europewide limitation on days at sea will reduce British effort to allow Spanish effort in. We shall all be making some sacrifices as a consequence of the decision to allow the Spanish full accession to the common fisheries policy five years early.

As we have heard in every speech in this debate, hon. Members do not trust the regimes in other European countries to administer restrictions. There is a difficulty in Spain, because of the problem of Basque separatism. The Spanish central Government dare not bear down too heavily on the regional administration, which is financing much reconstruction.

Mrs. Ewing: That is good coming from Grimsby.

Mr. Mitchell: The hon. Lady would like a similar regime in Scotland. Everyone knows that the Spanish are not going to enforce what is necessary on the Basques.

A European days-at-sea limitation will not work, and it will not save the Minister's bacon. He has to do something. He must produce a British national policy along the lines I have suggested. He was wrong to mutter as he did in his speech that, unless the industry behaves responsibly, the Government will have to return to limitation of effort.

Having been defeated on his original policy, it is his responsibility to go back to the industry and say, "We want to work out a national plan for fishing with you." He should tell the industry that the Government want to develop a new industry, which can inherit the future, and that they want to work together to restructure the industry to ensure its survival as an effective, efficient and well-organised fishing force.

6.35 pm

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): I must, of necessity, be extremely brief, so I shall not rehearse some of the arguments that I mentioned in interventions on the Minister.

The fishing industry is a critical industry in Scotland in particular, and it is important in my constituency. Debates on the fishing industry seem, however, consistently to be downgraded. I do not mean any criticism of the important statement that had to be made earlier today. Obviously, defence is also a major issue in my constituency and in Scotland.

There is a feeling, however, that we debate the fishing industry either late at night or in short debates. The Government must study our mechanisms for considering the issue, especially since the common fisheries policy is of great importance as we look forward from the Maastricht developments to the accession of four additional states, although not all of those will be fishing nations.

We are working in a policy vacuum. The Minister mentioned the vagueness of the present proposals, said that we are moving forward to a Fisheries Council, said that he would then report back, and so forth. That leaves the industry in a state of uncertainty.

If we are to consider the framework regulations that the Commission is developing in Brussels, we need clear Government guidance on how they will relate those regulations back to the industry and to its representatives in this House—Members with maritime constituencies—and how they will ensure that clear guidance is given on how any agreement reached will be monitored, controlled and honoured.

The key issue and centrepiece of the whole debate is a policy on fishing effort. Decommissioning is a part of that policy. Spanish accession, the North sea, the Irish box and the maintenance of relative stability are all fundamentally important to this great industry, which we all respect so much.

If we achieve a level fishing playing field within the European Union for all our fishing communities—perhaps that is not the correct analogy when we are talking about fishing—I want clear guidance from the Minister on how the Government will ensure that such agreements are monitored, controlled and honoured exactly.

For fishermen in my constituency, one of the most important issues is that they feel that they are not on a level playing field. Can we have some more details? I know that

[Mrs. Margaret Ewing]

the Minister wants to jump to the Dispatch Box, but perhaps, in light of the time available, he will cover that question in his closing speech or in a letter.

On the recommendations made by people in the British industry, there are differences between the Scottish and British industries. Can I have clarification of whether the Scottish Office is considering the serious recommendations, relating to square mesh panels, made by the Scottish Fishermen's Federation? The recommendations being made by the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations are not compatible with the species which are caught in the North sea.

The PESCA scheme is very important, because at the moment there is no guarantee that crewmen will have any share in the decommissioning, and it is often dependent on the owner's attitude. Will the Government ensure that any pressure which comes to bear on the PESCA funds ensures that our crewmen will be treated the same as crewmen elsewhere within the European Union, because it seems that every other member state is pushing in that direction?

Is there any way in which Ministers can reduce the bureaucracy which fishermen have to face? It seems that, every time they turn around, there are more and more regulations and forms to fill in. That is a part of the irritation which is felt towards the common fisheries policy and towards the Government's regulations. May we have some guidance on how that can be reduced?

6.40 pm

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): It seems that we in the fishing industry suffer from the law of diminishing returns. The more we shout that we need more time for a debate on the industry, the less time we get. I do not want to waste time on that, as fortunately the industry is not in an absolutely immediate crisis.

We welcome the scheme so far as it goes. The fact that we have argued that it is not enough and that we are 50 per cent. under the multi-annual guidance programme target is not a matter of mathematical certainties or equations. The longer that we do not meet the target, and there is no obvious way of making the target, the more likely it is as we approach 1996 that even greater effort limitation will be forced upon us. Prices will become more severe, and we do not know how that will be met.

In view of the time, I shall be extremely brief. The Minister said that the Government will be monitoring the fleet's fishing effort and that it would not be done with a heavy hand. But the opposite of a heavy hand is not necessarily a light touch. We need a clear explanation as to how that monitoring will take place. A balance must be struck between the bureaucratic rules and proper effective monitoring. The Minister must try to strike that balance.

I want to emphasise, as the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) did, the importance of the PESCA scheme and of looking at compensation for crewmen who have lost their jobs. Will the Minister have a word with his colleagues in the Department of Employment which is currently running a voluntary scheme for trawlermen who have lost their jobs?

The Department says that someone can qualify for compensation only if he has had two years' continuous employment with the same employer. In Aberdeen in particular—I know that similar things happened elsewhere in the country—all trawlermen were employed by the Aberdeen Fish Vessel Association, and one could not get a job unless one was registered. The association told the crewmen on which boats to sail. If they transgressed, there were subsequent disciplinary proceedings which were jointly operated by the owners and the trade unions.

The Department of Employment is saying that that association is now an agency and, since it is an agency, the men do not qualify. In going for the PESCA scheme, and after having a word with the Department of Employment, the Minister should not be too rigid. These people have had their livelihoods taken away and there is no prospect that they will be restored. I ask the Minister to please go for the PESCA scheme and to look at the way in which the rules are applied. He must ensure that the Government apply compassion and flexibility because that is necessary for people who have served the industry well.

6.43 pm

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I shall be very brief, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As I pointed out earlier, if effort limitation is to be effective as a conservation tool, the fleet must be in some kind of rough balance with the sustainability of stocks. To believe that effort limitation, even when it is based on a permanent system, equals capacity reduction—this is the point that I made to Minister, who claimed that I had my terms mixed up—flies in the face of history and experience.

Applying effort restrictions while the fleet is well over capacity will lead inevitably to hardship and, in many cases, to bankruptcy. That is the fact of the matter, especially where I come from where we have an aging fleet. The communities, as the Minister well knows, are utterly dependent upon the fishing industry, and the industry is part and parcel of the culture of the communities.

Effort restrictions do nothing to produce an efficient and well-balanced United Kingdom fishing fleet, and the Minister must face up to that. In my view, we need an effective and larger decommissioning scheme to achieve that rough balance, but I think that we are a long way from that.

I have mentioned the multi-annual guidance programme criteria that the Minister used, and those relate to a reduction in the fleet's tonnage and its horsepower. I believe that the European Community is attempting to arrive at a scheme by which we can measure fishing capacity. That is an enormously difficult task, but, in the long run, it is better than the crude criteria which underpin the MAGP.

The decommissioning scheme must allow for the renewal and reinvigorating of aging fleets. Many of the fleets from the Western isles and from some of the fishing communities near where I live, such as Campbeltown, Tarbert and Greenock, have very old boats. The fleets need to be replenished and the scheme must allow for the rebuilding of the fleets.

I have been given strict instructions to sit down at a specific moment, and I sometimes obey orders; not always, but sometimes.

We must look at the people who crew the vessels. Fishing, as the Minister has said on a number of occasions, is the toughest and harshest occupation in the United Kingdom. It is much too tough an occupation for me. I tried it as a kid of 15 and I happily acknowledge that it

needed only one north Atlantic gale to put me ashore for ever. I have been to sea since, but I am always glad that it is not my occupation.

I have brothers who work on trawlers so perhaps I should declare an interest. It is important that the crewmen are protected along with the skipper-owners of fishing vessels. As the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) and my hon. and old Friend for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) said—*[Interruption.]* These men, their families and their communities must be protected. It seems to me that representing a maritime constituency—*[Interruption.]* I could do without this heckling from my hon. Friend.

Mr. Robert Hughes: My apologies.

Dr. Godman: I represent a maritime constituency which has been helped to some extent by European Community structural funds to aid those areas suffering because of declining industries. For example, the Renaval programme assisted constituencies such as mine which have suffered from the decline in the shipbuilding industry. Why should not there be a similar scheme for fishing communities?

Why should not there be a scheme which allows for compensation to be paid to the men who crew the vessels? That should be a part of the European Union scheme for giving protection to those communities. In many of those scattered communities, such as Portavadie—or even Grimsby—and some of the other communities which my colleagues and I represent north of the border, there are very few alternatives for those men who have been put ashore, perhaps permanently. The men must be looked after and the scheme must allow for refreshing the fleet. An aging fleet is no good to anyone as it presents additional safety hazards to the men who crew the vessels. The decommissioning scheme must not obstruct the renewing of those fleets.

6.49 pm

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): May I sum up the debate briefly and pick up a few points that hon. Members have made?

In an intervention in the Minister's speech, my hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) asked for an assurance that the Spaniards would not gain access to precious and non-precious stocks in the North sea. Will the Minister deal with that matter when he winds up?

In his speech, the Minister said that, if necessary, the Government would take measures to monitor the fishing effort of the remaining fleet after decommissioning. Given that they wish to restrict the efforts of the remaining fleet, how will they go about that with no days-at-sea scheme?

On the question of how we shall meet the shortfall of what the present decommissioning scheme takes out, the Minister spoke about capacity, aggregation and conservation measures. But how does he propose to fill that gap? In the Scottish Grand Committee the other day, the Under-Secretary of State at the Scottish Office, the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), said that over the next three years the scheme would take out 2.2 to 2.5 per cent. and that, on a good day—when have the Government had a good day in the past few years?—it would take out 8 per cent. That still leaves 11 per cent. As the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) said, the Government are being extraordinarily vague. That point must be clarified.

The Government keep mentioning £25 million. In the Scottish Grand Committee the Minister was pressed on that matter and I said that the Government would recover approximately £17.5 million from Brussels, leaving a net bill for the Exchequer of £7.5 million. That amount will be further reduced by the taxation paid by fishermen in the form of decommissioning grants. Ultimately, therefore, the total sum could be £5 million, which is small beer by any means and shows that the Government are not considering the matter seriously. More resources are definitely needed.

The Minister mentioned the Commission. At what stage are the Government's discussions with the Commission about substituting conservation measures for days at sea? The industry feels that the Government are getting nowhere with that issue and that the Minister hopes that this scheme will fill in part of the multi-annual guidance programme gap. If that is true, the Government's argument does not hold because, to date, the Commission has not said that it will accept conservation measures as part of effort reduction. How, then, will the Government make up the shortfall in effort reduction? Will it be made up by extra restrictions on the United Kingdom fleet? Is that the Government's secret agenda? Do they want the Commission to do their dirty work so that they do not get their hands dirty?

The days-at-sea measure is currently being examined in court. If I may draw an analogy, the Government have just one golf club—one policy—on this matter. While the court case prevails, they should discuss a range of measures with the industry and decide how to proceed. It will be another year before we know the outcome of the court case, so it is inadequate for the Government to have no alternative strategy in the meantime. One can only conclude that their policy is to let the British fleet fade away while our modernised rivals wait over the horizon to take up the fishing opportunities which the Government, because they lack a decommissioning policy, are in danger of denying our fishermen.

It is also inadequate for the Government to wait for the Commission to rescue them. They spout anti-European rhetoric, yet they wait for the European Community to rescue them. They should be up front with the industry and discuss a range of measures to show that they are concerned about the matter. That is the least that they should offer while we accept the measure on offer tonight.

6.54 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Sir Hector Monro): I agree with the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) that it is sad that we do not have more time to debate fishing. All hon. Members have had to curtail their speeches, as I will in summing up the debate. However, I shall try to answer a number of points that were raised.

I thank my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) and the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) for welcoming unreservedly our decommissioning proposals. They are a valuable step forward and I am glad that we are continuing the decommissioning scheme for this year and next. At least it is clear to fishermen that there are two decommissioning tranches to apply for. Given the number of applications for the last scheme, which will finish in April, I have every confidence that there will be a number of applications and that those will be distributed fairly throughout the country, as they were last time. Each

[Sir Hector Monro]

area has a fair amount of decommissioning. It is unfortunate that fishermen must destroy boats but that step is definitely necessary because, all too frequently in the past, if boats were not destroyed they somehow worked their way back into the fishing fleet.

Throughout the debate Opposition Members have uttered their usual cry that the Government are not doing enough and have implied that they would spend their way out of the problem. No one was more emphatic about that than the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell), who said, "£40 million? No, higher still. Spend, spend, spend." If Governments took that attitude whenever a problem arose and simply bought their way out, it would result in higher inflation, higher interest rates and, inevitably, higher unemployment. One must look at the overall picture before demanding huge sums of money from the Treasury. The hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) was kicking to touch when he was challenged about the total to which he has committed the Labour party, but I shall not push him on that as I am sure that it was slightly tongue in cheek.

The hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) asked about the PESCA scheme. We are anxious to proceed with that scheme and I shall take up the point that he raised with the Department of Employment. If a misunderstanding or failure has occurred within the agency for training, we shall endeavour to help and improve the situation.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House spoke of the uncertainty that has been thrown into the pool by the Commission's announcement today. We were all surprised that it was made today. We have officials discussing the matter in Brussels and shall make an announcement as soon as we can. However, it is wrong to create fears and despondency before the matter has even been discussed and before we have consulted the industry. Fisheries Councils will take place in September and November, when the matter is likely to be discussed in detail. It is wrong to think that a decision has been taken today in Europe; it has not. They are simply proposals that we must consider in much greater detail.

We have continuing discussions with the fishing industry. I am glad to have such discussions as often as possible with the Scottish Fishermen's Federation. The constructive views of the federation are extremely valuable when we have discussions in Europe. Its representatives and those of its English counterparts usually attend the meetings and we are able to speak to them while discussions are going on in the chamber.

I am glad that the hon. Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler) read what I had to say in the Scottish Grand Committee yesterday. Perhaps my addition was not very obvious to him, but 2.2 per cent. a year for three years is not far away from about 7 per cent., plus the percentage that we hope to obtain from licensing. The hon. Gentleman is wrong to say that it is very approximate, because it is the closest that we can get. One does not know how many boats will come forward this year for decommissioning. One cannot possibly tell to within half a per cent. the amount that we shall be able to take out of effort this year until we have—

It being Seven o'clock, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Order [11 July]*

Question agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Fishing Vessels (Decommissioning) Scheme 1994 (S.I., 1994, No. 1568), a copy of which was laid before this House on 15th June, be approved.

London Docklands Development Corporation Bill [*Lords*]

As amended, considered.

Clause 2

INTERPRETATION

7 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 2, line 38, after 'areas"', insert

', subject to any order under section 31 (Alteration on limits of jurisdiction) of this Act,'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): With this, it will be convenient to discuss also the following amendments: No. 3, in clause 31, page 11, line 21, leave out 'limits of jurisdiction', and insert

'designated areas, as defined in section 2 (Interpretation) of this Act,'.

No. 4, in page 11, line 26, leave out from 'area' to end of line 29.

No. 5, in page 11, leave out lines 30 and 31.

No. 6, in clause 34, page 12, line 38, leave out subsection (7).

No. 7, in page 12, line 40, after 'section', insert '31 or'.

Mr. Spearing: May I, as a preliminary, seek guidance from you, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Since the grouping was put together earlier this week, certain events have happened which I hope to describe. I hope, therefore, that it will be possible, if necessary—I hope that it will not be necessary—to have a vote on amendment No. 4 and perhaps on amendment No. 6. I very much hope that the reply which the promoter will be able to provide will not provoke that, but it is a point which I would wish to raise with you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, at the outset, which is the proper time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker *indicated assent.*

Mr. Spearing: Thank you very much.

The Bill has had a long and complex path through the other place and this House. There was a two-and-a-half-hour debate in March, when the Members of Parliament for docklands constituencies gave the Bill a cautious welcome, heavily hedged with qualifications, before it went to the Unopposed Bill Committee upstairs.

One of the main objections of docklands Members of Parliament was that the Bill was being promoted by a public body, in effect wholly controlled by the Secretary of State for the Environment, which was due to disappear in two or three years' time. Upstairs in Committee, we obtained an amendment by the Unopposed Bill Committee that where the area of designation in this area for byelaws under the Act was to pass from the London Docklands development corporation to other organisations, unspecified—private or public, perhaps as yet unfounded, and perhaps the proposed royal docks management authority in the case of my constituency—it would need a parliamentary affirmative resolution before the power to make byelaws passed from the LDDC. Happily, that was achieved.

However, docklands Members of Parliament were worried about other matters, both procedural—in terms of power and law-making powers—and in terms of substance. Those have been grouped in the selection which you have made, Mr. Deputy Speaker—amendment No. 1, and amendments Nos. 3 to 7. If it would be convenient for the House, as they are grouped together, I think that I had better discuss all the matters as they arise. I have no doubt that the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) will be able to reply to the group en bloc.

Amendment No. 1 relates to clause 31. Clause 31 gives power for the Secretary of State, by an order which does not have to come before the House—in the jargon of our House, a negative order, which means that it does not have to come to approval but it can be disapproved of, if necessary, by motion—to change the areas for which byelaws can be made.

The first query that we had about that clause—rather late in the day, but that is what parliamentary scrutiny is about—is that it was entitled,

"Alteration of limits of jurisdiction".

That is ambiguous, because anyone reading it might think that it was the jurisdiction of the LDDC over its own statutory area. That was the first reading of many people, including some people well versed in reading law.

However, the area with which we are concerned in the power to make byelaws is not the area of jurisdiction. In practice, it is the area which in the definitions clause is called "the designated areas". I was shown those on a map, which is upstairs in the Private Bill Office, and no doubt also in one or two places in docklands. I thought that that was not very clear, and that it might be the subject of court action later. That is what we are here for. This is not a Government Bill: it was initially drawn up by people outside the Government.

I drew that matter to the attention of the LDDC and its advisers—admittedly, late in the day—and they took the point at once. They said, "Yes, of course it does not mean the only jurisdiction; it means the designated area, and we shall change it." At their suggestion—indeed, in their wording—amendments Nos. 1 and 3 were tabled, which make it absolutely clear. I am happy to start on that note of happy accord. Let us hope that it continues.

I have not read out the amendments, but no doubt *Hansard* has got it all down because I am speaking to those amendments.

Having got off to that good start—I know that the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey will probably agree because there has been some conversation about that matter—I shall discuss a rather more difficult matter, relating to amendment No. 4. It relates—I had better read it—to a rather controversial part of section 31, which defines the areas of land which, in the future, the Secretary of State can expand or expunge. The one to which I take special objection—I think that that is not too strong a word—reads as follows. I shall summarise section 31(2).

"The Secretary of State may by order made under this section alter the limits of jurisdiction so as to—"

and in (a) there is a description of any land in Newham, Southwark or Tower Hamlets, which is situated within or adjacent to the development area, and then:

"(2)(a)(ii) adjacent to any land which, not being situated within or adjacent to the . . . development area, is adjacent to any land for the time being comprised in the designated areas".

That is a lot of jargon, but constituency Members of Parliament will be affected. I confess that during the months that the legislation has been in both Houses I did not look at it sufficiently closely. It says, in ordinary east London English, that, on the designated map, or in schedule 1 to the Bill, which sets out the dock areas, which,

[Mr. Spearing]

in words, are the designated areas for which byelaws can be made, those areas do not have to be inside the area of the LDDC.

The area of the LDDC is on the map. It was in the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980. It was the area in which the LDDC had tremendous powers over all the boroughs—planning powers, money powers, you name it. Some of the officials there and some of the chairmen and some of the board were quite nice. Anyway, they have been appointed by the Secretary of State.

I am glad to see my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Timms) in the Chamber. He has spent many hours as leader of Newham council in discussions with those powerful, albeit very polite, people. However, we are discussing an Act of Parliament which invites us tonight to authorise, not simply the LDDC, which is to some extent accountable to the Secretary of State, but any of its successors—heaven knows who they will be, to expand the area in which they can make byelaws to outside the existing LDDC.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East said when discussing it with me earlier this week, that area will include the whole of Newham. I have no doubt that the Secretary of State would say, as would Ministers in Committee, that the hon. Gentleman's imagination was running away with him, and that no Secretary of State would ever do such a thing. That does not matter—the law would permit him to do it.

Is it good law? I am not sure whether it would be good law even if it were introduced by a Government, even one that I might support. It is certainly not a good law when it is introduced by an organisation that is to disappear in two years' time and is a creature of the Secretary of State. Moreover, if those powers are transferred to someone else, he or she will be able to take that action.

It is ironic that that extension of authority was discovered only by chance. There is only one region in the so-called designated areas that is outside the LDDC. It is a bottle-shaped dock, which is not on the Thames and is not part of the Port of London authority group. It is on the River Lea in Bromley-by-Bow gasworks. It is perhaps a good thing that coal is not used for gas now, but when the gasworks operated barges used to come up and take away tar. It is sometimes known as the balancing lagoon—I do not know why—or Bromley dock, although it happens to be in Newham. It is a useful dock and would make a lovely little marina. Some people from the Mayflower centre, Canning Town, built a good boat there of concrete and metal—a useful thing for east Londoners to do. It is not used at present.

On one side of the dock is the Cody road industrial area which the LDDC has developed. It has provided employment, which has helped to make up for the enormous job losses elsewhere. On the other side of the dock is the gas board—Bromley-by-Bow, huge gasometers, warehouses and maintenance areas.

Earlier this week I received a telephone call. The caller asked, "Mr. Spearing, do you realise that there will be 200 redundancies in your constituency from the Bromley-by-Bow works?" I said that I did not understand. The caller said that the gas board was thinning out its staff and might go. I am not saying that it will be sold—it involves acres of land—but perhaps it will be. After the telephone call I thought to myself that the subject was covered in the Bill. I must confess that, but for that timely warning, I would not be making this speech.

Is it right that an area of land that is outside the LDDC area can not only be subjected to byelaws, albeit in the public interest, but can be enlarged? Byelaws can be made by an unspecified person or organisation at an unspecified time in future, by a stroke of the Secretary of State's pen —someone in whom I might otherwise have confidence. I do not think that that is right, which is why I have tabled amendment No. 4. I originally tabled the amendment as a probing amendment. Amendment No. 4 suggests that subsection (2)(*a*)(ii) of clause 31 should be deleted.

Subsection (2)(*b*) gives the Secretary of State power to

"remove from the designated areas any land for the time being comprised in those areas."

I do not like that because, although it is unlikely to happen, it can be done by the Secretary of State at the stroke of a pen. The royal docks contain much important land in the designated area. In amendment No. 6 I suggest that the matter should be subject to an affirmative resolution of the House.

7.15 pm

The Committee required the LDDC and, in effect, the Government to ensure that, if the power were transferred to someone else, that would require an affirmative resolution. I am saying that the powers to change or extend the area of designation should also be subject to an affirmative resolution. In other parts of the country with byelaws relating to parks, commons and national parks, that might not be necessary, but we are talking about east London —an urban area—where water facilities are important. They are lungs; they provide areas of potential recreation and commercial development may not be fully in the public interest.

The power to make byelaws works in two ways. It can promote the public interest in terms of access, recreation and use of the water for different activities or it can be collared for other purposes. That is why it is important to protect the land, which was originally in public ownership —most of it under the Port of London Authority. It would be appropriate for the promoters of the Bill to agree that that measure should also be subject to an affirmative resolution. Future problems that may arise could be massive.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar (Ms Gordon) may wish to talk about the West India docks, which contain Canary wharf. The Royal docks contain 250 acres of water and 1,000 acres of land. The area is almost as big as the combined areas of Hyde park and Kensington gardens. There are two miles of clear water from the west end of the Victoria dock, through the Connaught cutting. The Royal Albert dock is about one mile long and is used for six-lane rowing. It would be possible to turn it into an olympic rowing course, although it would cost a bit of money.

The Victoria dock is one of the finest stretches of open water in London—comparable to or even bigger than the Welsh Harp. It is an area where young people from Newham and Tower Hamlets sail, sailboard, row and learn. It was originally launched by the London borough of Newham and is now held in trust as the Victoria dock project. Next door to the Victoria dock, people surfboard, which is an important activity. I did not know until last

week that the gentleman who runs the activity, Mr. Chilvers, was responsible for introducing surfboarding. He even holds some patents for it.

In east London we have a gentleman and his enterprise who were in at the beginning of an extremely important worldwide sport. Yet, horrible as it may seem—I do not want to introduce a negative tone, but I must put it on record—there is planning permission for the north side of Victoria dock which would extend the land 20 or 30 yd into the dock itself. The plans of the LDDC contain the possibility of a bridge. I have suggested that a chain ferry might be better because otherwise the magnificent marine resource might be jeopardised. I have no qualms about putting to Londoners and to the House the importance of the marine tradition of London—and I am talking about an area that represents just that. It is an area of heritage, with a dockland museum; ships may sail into it from outside —all will be subject to the byelaws.

A so-called urban village is to be built on the side of the dock. I understand that next week the LDDC will decide on the contractors. I shall not go too deeply into the merits of that project as it would not be right, but the area lies on the border of the designated areas and the remit of the byelaws. Only a quarter of the village is designated for the construction of reasonably priced houses to rent. That replicates the mistakes that some of us believe were made previously along the river to the west. It has also been rightly said that the place is in any case more urban than village-like.

The point is that, unless the amendment is agreed to, the Secretary of State in his Whitehall office will be able to alter byelaws in the area without getting them approved by an affirmative resolution of this House. That is why I think it necessary to secure the future of the area.

Last Friday some far-sighted local business men—this should appeal to the Minister, the hon. Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry)—headed by a Mr. Bulgin and his firm in Barking put some money into the kitty for a new sort of flexible rowing craft. It has many uses—camping, cruising, training, and so on—and it is to be known as the Buccaneer Cutter. There may be more to come. Given a fair wind in the media, people will cry, "Hurrah! Why wasn't this done before?" The Victoria dock project, under way within the designated area, is living a hand-to-mouth existence at the moment—containers, prefabricated buildings and all sorts of bits and pieces. No one knows what lies in store for the area.

That part of London and these powers are far too important to be left to Whitehall, even in the hands of good Secretaries of State, who usually find themselves harassed by all sorts of other matters. The powers should be subject to approval in this House; if they are good powers, they will probably go through on the nod. I am asking for the sort of safeguards that citizens look to Parliament to provide them with. I hope that the promoters of the Bill will agree.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I am glad that I managed to anticipate most of the speech by the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing). We have enjoyed a helpful dialogue on the amendments in question. As the hon. Gentleman pointed out, two of them were proposed to him, to meet his concerns, by the Bill's promoters. To be honest, they were negotiated between us.

I had never promoted a private Bill before this one, and this has seen us engaged in a process of law making in the raw. This is not about making inflated speeches: it is all about looking at the dots and commas to find out what the Bill means. I hope that I shall be able to meet the concerns that the hon. Gentleman quite properly expressed.

Amendments Nos. 1 and 3 were, as I have just explained, actually drafted by the promoters. The hon. Member for Newham, South wants to be sure that anyone reading the Bill will be able to distinguish between the area of jurisdiction of the development corporation and any successor body and the area in which the corporation or its successor can make byelaws. In theory at least, and perhaps in practice, there is a difference. For instance, the development corporation's area may include parts of three boroughs—but it might want to make byelaws in only two of them.

The problem that the hon. Gentleman has spotted is that phrases like "limits of jurisdiction" are not abundantly clear. Do they refer to the limits of jurisdiction of the development corporation, with all its powers, including as the planning authority, or to the limits of jurisdiction for the purposes of this Bill, which is all about making byelaws?

Amendments Nos. 1 and 3 clarify the position. Amendment No. 3 removes the phrase "limits of jurisdiction" and replaces it with

"designated areas, as defined in section 2 (Interpretation) of this Act".

Clause 2 says that "the designated areas" mean

"the harbours or former harbours, docks or former docks, waterways and other lands described in Schedule 1 to this Act, together with the jetties, all of which are designated by and situated within the limits of jurisdiction, but does not include the waters lying beneath Rotherhithe Street bridge in the London borough of Southwark".

On behalf of the promoters, I accept the amendment, and I hope that the House will do likewise. In effect, the hon. Member for Newham, South has made certain that when, in respect of clause 31, we talk about the alteration of limits of jurisdiction, we are clearly describing alterations in the limits of the designated areas. I agree with the view of the hon. Gentleman, which I strongly expressed to the parliamentary agents—that the sooner the world of parliamentary drafting can get away from all those cross-references and say what it means in plain language, instead of sending us around a Bill for definitions, the better. Certainly, I did not manage to achieve such a revolution in the course of negotiating those amendments.

Amendment No. 1 would add the words

"subject to any order under section 31 (Alteration of limits of jurisdiction) of this Act"

after the word "areas". Anyone wanting to find out where the designated areas are should be aware that, once the Bill is enacted, they may have been altered because clause 31 provides the power to alter them.

I hope that I can now help the hon. Gentleman with his exploration of those extended powers. I can quite understand his anxiety on looking at the map in the course of his research and discovering that an area falling outside the confines of the development corporation was to be included in the remit of byelaw-making powers which the Bill will give the development corporation and its successors.

Clause 2 lists the types of land covered by designated areas, and refers us to schedule 1 for a complete description of all the places to be included. There is a sting in the tail of this explanation, but first I refer the hon. Gentleman to page 14 of the Bill. Schedule 1 lists in full the extent of the

[Mr. Simon Hughes]

areas covered by the phrase "designated areas". Some of them are in his constituency, others are in the constituency of the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Ms Gordon), I suppose that some of them are in the constituency of the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), and some are in my constituency. There are 13 groups in all. For the record, I shall read them out so that people who read the debate will know exactly what we are talking about: Hermitage basin, Western dock canal system, Shadwell basin—including Brussels wharf—Surrey Water, Thames Link, Albion canal, Albion dry dock and Canada Water, Greenland dock, Steelyard cut and South dock—both south of the river; the next ones are north of it—West India north branch dock, West India centre branch dock and West India south dock, Blackwall basin and Poplar dock, Millwall inner dock, Millwall outer dock and Millwall cutting, East India dock basin, Royal Victoria dock and Royal Victoria pontoon dock, Royal Albert dock, King George V dock and Albert basin.

The perceptive reader, including the hon. Member for Newham, South, will notice that the piece of water to which he referred does not appear in that list. That is a mistake, but happily not one that need thwart the hon. Gentleman's objective. I was relieved to learn that, because otherwise the Bill would have required redrafting, and that could not be done tonight. The list should have included the Cody road balancing lagoon—the area to which the hon. Gentleman referred—because uniquely in the territory in question, that land is owned by the LDDC but is outside its boundaries. That is the dichotomy. There is LDDC land within which there are byelaw-making powers, but there is extra-territorial LDDC land in the form of the lagoon that should be in the designated area and in the schedule. As it was not included in the schedule, I asked those who advise the promoter what should be done. They advised that if something is not in the schedule but is on the map Upstairs, that map takes precedence—and the lagoon is on the map. Therefore, even if in future days people do not find Cody road balancing lagoon in the schedule, they will find it on the map.

7.30 pm

The authority for stating that it will be covered by the Bill is clause 3(1), which defines the extent of the measure:

"The limits within which the Corporation shall have and may exercise the functions conferred on it by this Act"—

and we are only talking about byelaw-making functions—

"and within which the powers of the manager may be exercised, shall comprise the designated areas."

That clause confronts the fact that a mistake may be made one day by stating in subsection (2):

"If there be any discrepancy between the deposited map and the descriptions in Schedules 1 and 2 to this Act, the deposited map shall prevail but, for the avoidance of doubt, the designated areas do not extend to any part of the bed of the river Thames below the level of mean high water from time to time".

Where there is a conflict, the deposited map prevails.

It is not intended that a universal power for making byelaws should be given to the docklands corporation or to any successor authority. Having examined this as a lawyer, I accept that the powers are limited to the areas set out in the list in the schedule or shown on the map—and that, where there is a discrepancy, the map takes precedence. The powers cannot therefore be exercised in the constituencies of the hon. Members for Newham, North-East (Mr. Timms) and for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) because they are not in the schedule or on the designated map—with the exception of the balancing lagoon to which the hon. Gentleman referred.

Mr. Spearing: The gas board owns many acres of land north of Cody road basin, right up to the District and Tilbury line railways. By virtue of the pressures of statute, the gas board may wish to dispose of that large area of land in the not-too-distant future. Bearing in mind that the western side is on the banks of the River Lea, is it not likely that someone may apply to the Secretary of State in future to include large parts of that land, particularly that adjacent to the water, in the byelaw area? That may be a good thing. Is that not possible?

Mr. Hughes: That is possible, but I will deal first with the agreed amendments and then with the other amendments. We do not agree that those others are necessary, but they raise the issue of whether there ought to be the power change that relates to extending or reducing the Bill's jurisdiction.

I have not visited the Cody road area, but I understand that it is a short distance to the north of the urban development area but still within the hon. Gentleman's constituency. It is situated at the Cody road industrial estate and just off the banks of Bow creek, which is part of the River Lea. It is owned and operated by the British Waterways Board, and was built to serve the existing adjacent coal-fired gas power station. It is quite a large area of water—more than 500 ft long by 100 ft wide, and 20 ft deep. It is called a balancing lagoon because, like gasometers, its level goes up and down. Sometimes there is no water in it and sometimes there is.

There is no public access on two sides of the lagoon because the land owned by the development corporation is fenced, and another side has a British Gas boundary fence. However, it can be reached from the creek. The logic of including it is that the Bill is about being able to regulate by byelaw, and particularly to make the dock safe for the public. I know that the hon. Gentleman accepts that the difference between now and when the byelaws were last altered is that they then served the purposes of the Port of London Authority, when the docks were used for commercial purposes. Today, sadly in many ways but realistically, they are used for different purposes and the public have extensive access. Among the purposes of the Bill is to prevent, for example, children falling into the water. One reason that the promoter is keen, and the House should be keen, to complete the Bill tonight is so that it can be on the statute book for the summer, when the prospective danger of docklands waters not being regulated is at its greatest.

The lagoon is included in the Bill because it is a large area of water which the public can access from the creek, and which could be dangerous—particularly because there is operational equipment at the mouth of the lagoon. Also, given that the Bill intended to include all areas of water owned by the docklands corporation, it would have been illogical not to include it—even though, territorially, it was outside the LDDC's boundaries.

The corporation has no intention of using its powers to extend the designated areas in the vicinity of the lagoon. It is prepared to give undertakings—at this stage, that would best be done in writing—to that effect. In any event, such a proposal would also have to be justified and would be

subject to resolutions in the House. As the hon. Member for Newham, South pointed out, where there is a designated area—the lagoon is one—the LDDC could come along and say, in relation to land next to it, "We want to take byelaw-making powers." As he also rightly pointed out, a successor could have the same motivation and intention. I can tell the hon. Gentleman that, at the moment, the LDDC specifically states that it has no intention of extending the areas—and it would have to return to the House if it wanted to do so.

Ms Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar): I am particularly concerned to get an assurance about King Edward memorial park, which is adjacent to Shadwell basin. Various developers have had their greedy eyes on that park, which was given to the community in perpetuity. One company wanted to use the jetty for tying up craft. People wanting to use their boats would have arrived in cars, so most of the park would have become a car park. The next company wanted to set up a tennis centre. Developers keep making proposals involving large areas of that park or the whole park, which would deny to the community the use of a park that it has enjoyed for many years. I want an assurance that the powers will not be extended outside the designated area to Shadwell park, which is a desirable bit of waterfront and one of the few parts that are open to the public, who can sit and relax there. I want to know that that area will not be gobbled up.

Mr. Hughes: I hope to deal with that point, ideally in our debate on this group of amendments but, failing that, in that on the next group. I have been able to give the hon. Member for Newham, South a similar assurance in relation to the lagoon.

I do not honestly think that it is possible for the sponsor of a Bill promoted by a corporation such as this to give an assurance that will bind a successor authority. The hon. Lady has a safeguard in the Bill, however—the only safeguard available to us. The next two amendments deal with this. As we see on page 11 of the Bill in its present form, any change—an extension of the kind referred to by the hon. Members for Newham, South and for Bow and Poplar—intended by a successor authority must be made first by order of the Secretary of State. That applies regardless of the identity of the successor authority. The power will not be transferred to, for example, Newham borough council, a trust or even a private company. It will remain with the Secretary of State. Secondly, the change must be made by order of the House. The question is, what kind of order will be involved?

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Greenwich): The hon. Gentleman said earlier that the promoters were keen for the byelaws to be effective by the summer because of the danger in the water areas. If that is to happen, the timetable seems extraordinarily tight. I have always assumed that byelaws must be published for consultation purposes before they are implemented.

Mr. Hughes: I understand that, even if the Bill completes its passage tonight, it will still have to go back to the other place because it has been amended in Committee. If it becomes law before the summer recess, it is intended that, during the summer—I do not say before the summer—at least some of the powers contained in it should be used to create byelaws, but of course consultation must take place.

Some of the community groups in our three boroughs are exerting pressure for byelaws to be created. By definition, that will be the subject of discussion with the local authorities; but the corporation tells me that it wants byelaws in place this summer to protect the public. It is not certain whether that will be achieved. If the Bill is not passed before the summer recess, it will not be on the statute book until the autumn at the earliest, and any opportunity of legislating in time for the summer will be lost.

Mr. Spearing: Will the hon. Gentleman confirm that he is resisting a move to the use of an affirmative order in relation to Cody road because he considers a so-called negative order—which is made notionally; it is "laid upon the Table"—adequate for the purpose? Although it is theoretically a parliamentary procedure, it is really more a stroke of the Secretary of State's pen.

7.45 pm

Mr. Hughes: As I remember the quotation, I shall now say, "I was coming to that"—which is, I believe, a quotation from "Alice in Wonderland"; or is it "King Lear"? I am sorry, I do not mean "King Lear"—I mean Edward Lear. There is a slight difference in tone. It must be the heat. I have not yet dealt with the relative benefits of negative and affirmative resolutions, but I want to do so. It is a perfectly proper subject for debate.

The hon. Member for Newham, South makes two more proposals in amendments Nos. 4 and 5. Amendment No. 4 proposes the removal of the power to include in the areas designated for byelaws land—this is in clause 31(2)(a)(ii)—

"adjacent to any land which, not being situated within or adjacent to the urban development area, is adjacent to any land for the time being comprised in the designated areas".

At present, that could apply only to the balancing lagoon.

Ms Gordon: It could apply to Shadwell park.

Mr. Hughes: No, it could not. Amendment No. 4 would remove lines 27, 28 and 29 of clause 31. Let us take it from the top. Clause 31(2) states that the Secretary of State may, by order, alter the designated area to

"include within the designated areas for the purposes of this Act any area of land in the London borough of Newham, Southwark or Tower Hamlets which for the time being is . . . adjacent to any land which, not being situated within or adjacent to the urban development area",

and so forth. The land about which the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar is concerned would be covered by subsection (2)(a)(i), being

"situated within, or adjacent to, the urban development area".

Her park is within that area. I am sorry that all this is a bit technical, but that is not my fault.

As I have said, outside the LDDC area, the byelaws can apply only to the lagoon, and I have given an undertaking about that. I hope that I can satisfy the hon. Member for Newham, South in relation to amendment No. 4, which in its present form deals only with the land in question and land adjacent to it.

Amendment No. 5 would remove lines 30 and 31—subsection (2)(b), which allows the Secretary of State to

"remove from the designated areas any land for the time being comprised in those areas."

The promoters resist that for what they describe as pragmatic reasons: they say that the boundaries of the byelaws—not those of the development corporation, which is dealt with by a different procedure—may need to be

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changed. I am no more of an expert than any other hon. Member, but it is clear to me that over 10, 20, 30 or 40 years—however long the Act will be on the statute book—the area where a particular set of byelaws may be wanted can alter.

The argument is both simple and general. For example, if a piece of water within a designated area were to be filled in so that it was not dock but housing land, planning permission would be needed, but there would be no need for byelaws governing what is needed in the area of a dock. The promoters want the power to reduce the area that may, at its greatest extent, be covered by byelaws.

Let us take a notional example from the borough and constituency of the hon. Member for Newham, South. Let us suppose that the outer limit of the areas covered by the byelaws, and listed in the schedule and on the map, included a particular piece of water and land, and the land around it, and it was decided to introduce a pontoon, or bring a piece of land forward by 100 m so that the dock became a smaller area of water. It might then be thought appropriate to bring the byelaw nearer to the water, as it were. Those are only pragmatic considerations. I am not saying that the hon. Gentleman will view them as overwhelming, but the Bill will give a pragmatic power.

The issue is whether the hon. Gentleman can do anything about it if the Secretary of State suddenly says, "I want to change the limits of the byelaws." That leads to the argument whether we should have affirmative or negative resolutions. The Secretary of State cannot do anything unless he or she comes to the House, but is that procedure adequate as a control?

That leads to amendments Nos. 6 and 7. Amendment No. 6 would leave out subsection (7), which states:

"An order under section 31 shall be subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament."

In shorthand, we call that the negative resolution procedure. Amendment No. 7 seeks to replace it with an affirmative order procedure by inserting section 31.

I have rehearsed the argument on this issue with the hon. Gentleman and it is up to him whether he accepts it. The hon. Member for Bow and Poplar is also concerned about the matter. I understand, and I can see, the logic of the promoter's argument; it is a matter of judgment as to whether it is appropriate. With affirmative resolutions, the Government have to find time in their business for a debate.

Mr. Spearing: The hon. Gentleman knows that, time after time, affirmative resolutions appear on the Order Paper at 3.30 pm and that, sometimes, Madam Speaker takes orders together. If the House is satisfied with an order and 20 hon. Members do not rise, or if it is decided through the usual channels that it should not go into Committee, it does not take much time for the order to be passed—it requires only that the Clerks call its name and the occupant of the Chair puts the Question. It can take five seconds.

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Gentleman is right, but the order must come to this place and we have a chance to consider it. If we do not get our act together, such orders can go through quickly, as many do. Statutory instruments were in existence long before I was elected and probably before you, Madam Deputy Speaker, were elected—I do not mean that disrespectfully, but you have been here longer than me. Two sorts of protection on statutory instruments exist. One gives us better protection than the other—it is what the hon. Gentleman seeks. Protection through the other is more difficult to achieve.

For the pragmatic day-to-day byelaw changes, it is argued that it is unlikely that the Government would find time—given the pressures on their timetable—or have the political will, to place an order on the Order Paper that would introduce the pragmatic, day-to-day changes in byelaws that the docklands corporation seeks. If it asked the Government to change the byelaws, the Government might say, "We are sorry, but it is not worth it. We have far more pressing things to do."

The argument is whether to accept the procedure in the Bill or that proposed by the hon. Gentleman. Is it better to have a mechanism by which the Government do not have to introduce an order in this place to change byelaws, or should we have a more difficult mechanism by which the Government have to introduce an order, with the disincentive that follows? The promoters say, "Please give us the flexibility because we are talking not about the constitution of Britain, but about the byelaws of an area of east London."

Mr. Raynsford: The hon. Gentleman has accepted the point that was effectively made by my hon. Friend the Member for Newham South (Mr. Spearing) that only a short time is required to pass an order. Clauses 31 and 33 allow for byelaw-making powers to be changed in respect of the area in which byelaws apply, and in respect of the body that has byelaw-making powers. If it is accepted that it is appropriate to have the affirmative resolution procedure for one of those, it is nonsense not to accept it in respect of the other.

Mr. Hughes: I respect the hon. Gentleman, but I thought that he was going to make a really good point, with which I would have difficulty dealing. In fact, his point was not as good as I thought that it would be. As a docklands Member of Parliament—and the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) is nearly a docklands Member of Parliament—I say that changing the boundaries of the docklands corporation or any other development corporation is a substantial matter because they involve planning controls and other rules, but byelaw-making powers are not in the same league.

I should like to deal with the traditional way in which it is decided which procedure should be used. The hon. Member for Greenwich may or may not accept what "Erskine May" says on the matter. It states on page 546 that the affirmative resolution procedure is

"used principally for substantial and important portions of delegated legislation, on which a high degree of scrutiny is sought."

It is a matter of judgment as to whether we think that the byelaw-making powers are in that category.

I can justify the difference. Changing the boundaries of the development corporation comes within the definition of substantial, important delegated legislation, whereas byelaw-making powers are not in the same league or of the same importance.

I want to give a pragmatic example. In some parts of the London Docklands development corporation area, development has not yet taken place, especially in the Royal docks, which are located in the constituency of the hon. Member for Newham, South. Therefore, the demarcation of designated areas for byelaws has been drawn in a manner that anticipates what the final built development

will look like. We have to guess what planning permissions will be sought. The byelaws are meant to reflect the best guess of the people who have dealt with docklands planning since the corporation came into existence.

That guess may not correspond with the actual built development that either the LDDC or its successors may agree to. It may be necessary, because the physical layout of the docklands may change, to make alterations of the byelaws. The argument is that, when planning procedures and development of the royal docks and other parts of the docklands are complete, only technical alterations to the boundaries may be needed—literally a tight redrawing. A cumbersome procedure that required going to the Government, seeking an affirmative resolution and winning an argument to place it on the Order Paper could discourage the docklands corporation or its successors from proposing such orders and the byelaws could gradually less accurately represent the areas for which they are intended.

There is other protection, even though the hon. Member for Newham, South would like a stronger form of protection to be in place. This perhaps is the best assurance that I can give to him—clause 34(6) requires the LDDC and any successor to consult local authorities before any order is made. Of course, having consulted, the corporation can ignore representations, but I hope that the LDDC will take on board the views of democratically elected local authorities.

I add this to the promoters—there is no reason why, for the remaining life of the docklands corporation or during the lifetime of its successors, any change to the byelaw-making areas should be made without the agreement of local authorities. Their agreement is vital and local authorities must have confidence that they are in the right place. They may become in due time the planning development control authority.

I hope that that was the longest intervention that I shall have to make this evening. It dealt with the largest batch of amendments. They are technical, but substantive arguments have been advanced. I hope that the hon. Member for Newham, South is persuaded. I shall leave him to speak for himself. There is a justifiable distinction between byelaws and corporation boundaries. It is entirely credible to argue that requiring a complex, burdensome and formalised procedure will be a disincentive to appropriate change. Therefore, the easier procedure, the short route, is preferable.

8 pm

Mr. Spearing: The length of the very thorough speech of the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) is, I think, justification for the tabling of the amendments. I am grateful to him for the content of his speech and for the spirit in which he spoke, and I shall comment briefly on his remarks.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned the drafting of the Bill. I agree that it was a difficult Bill to draft because the LDDC cuts across this country's customary habits of power and law-making. In a case such as this, where byelaws are required, a complicated Bill is required, and I appreciate some of the problems faced by the officials. However, it certainly provided a lesson in law-making.

It is correct that the Cody road basin is not in the schedules. A relevant amendment was tabled in Committee and, as the hon. Gentleman said, it had to go back to another place. On a point of procedure, the Government or anyone else could, when tidying up, move an amendment to the relevant schedule to have the Cody road lagoon, or the Bromley dock—whatever one likes to call it—included in the Bill once again.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey says that we should not strike out such a provision because to do so under amendment No. 4 would mean that the areas in question would be excluded. He thought that it could mean only extending them improperly, so the areas would not go as far as Forest Gate or up the road to Plaistow because there would be no reason to do so. I understand the hon. Gentleman's argument, and he is probably right. It could be extended up the River Lea to Riverside walk—perhaps with moorings or a boatyard—in which case the retention of flexibility might be advantageous, although I go no further than saying "might be".

I hope that the London borough of Newham, the British Waterways board or a combination of the two might have the law-making powers. That might be the best solution. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey has managed to persuade me that to remove the Cody road basin from the ambit of byelaw-making as a whole might be to the public's disadvantage. The problem is that, used in the wrong way by the Secretary of State, such a provision could be to the public's disadvantage.

The hon. Member also referred to amendment No. 5, which seeks to prevent the reduction of the areas in question. Whether in the Royal docks or anywhere else, inside or out, it should not be possible to reduce the area without putting the issue before the House, which brings us to the substance of the hon. Gentleman's argument. He said that it will be all right on the night and that we do not need the affirmative procedure because a negative one will be adequate.

I must say that never in my life have I heard or read such an eloquent half-persuasive justification for the suspect negative procedure as opposed to the affirmative procedure which most of us would prefer. However, I then remembered that the hon. Gentleman has an occupation that has given him enormous skill in advocacy, which was why his argument sounded so persuasive.

I hope that I highlighted some of the faults in the hon. Gentleman's argument by pointing out that the negative procedure does not require much of the House's time. If it is passed on the nod, it can be can be dealt with in less than 30 seconds—in fact, in 10 seconds—at 3.30 pm. As far as I know, there is no Privy Councillor here. In any event, I do not think that the mumbling takes much longer in the Privy Council—it has to go before the Privy Council, whether under the affirmative or negative procedure.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey did not mention the great virtue of the affirmative procedure, which is that it acts as a template. If an order is not good enough, the Government know that there will be a bit of a kerfuffle, perhaps involving even some of their own Back Benchers. This is not a party issue; it is an amenity issue, and other development corporations across the country might be going out of existence. The Government will avoid any trouble not by using a negative procedure but by ensuring that the affirmative procedure is all right. I remember reading a text book about this written by Mr. Jennings in the 1930s. The mere threat of opposing the affirmative procedure was enough to get an amendment withdrawn and retabled. Alas, those days are gone—we have what I call a procedural slippage.

[Mr. Spearing]

We must consider the practicalities. The alternative open to me is to press the matter to a Division. The extension for which the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey was so stretched to justify a rather dodgy procedure can, I hope, always be prayed in aid by anyone who thinks that any extension or reduction of the areas in question is unreasonable. I am, therefore, not really content because the balance is not right.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I apologise for intervening, but I thought that the hon. Gentleman was getting to the end of his remarks. Before he finishes his remarks, I should like to give him an assurance and, if he will allow me, I shall use this intervention to say that I can expressly give the same assurance to the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Ms Gordon) in relation to King Edward memorial park. I assure her that the LDDC will not extend in the way that she feared, not only because it has no intention of doing so but because Tower Hamlets owns it and would, in all certainty, have to agree. I therefore hope that the two hon. Members can be reassured in a practical rather than a theoretical sense.

Mr. Spearing: I was about to say that there had been limited assurances, but, as the hon. Gentleman knows, the LDDC will disappear. However, when that happens, the affirmative procedure will be needed to decide who will succeed it. In that instance, a debate will be in order.

The hon. Gentleman did not raise this point and I am almost arguing against it myself, but it would be in order to debate how powers are exercised, provided of course that there were sufficient people present to ensure a debate. I hope that my proposal would ensure that there would be a debate, even if it resulted in byelaw-making powers going to the London borough of Newham. My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Timms) is still a councillor, so perhaps we could have a debate to ensure that the trusteeship of byelaw-making powers was in the right hands. Even if those hands did not have the full confidence of all hon. Members, we could be sure that they would exercise those powers responsibly.

I shall not press the amendment to a Division, despite the mass of hon. Members of all political persuasions who would come flooding in having been transfixed and persuaded by the proceedings on television that they have been watching avidly. I shall therefore withdraw the amendment.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Will the hon. Gentleman clarify that he is seeking leave to withdraw amendment No. 1?

Mr. Spearing: I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 5

GENERAL DUTY AS TO DESIGNATED AREAS

Mr. Spearing: I beg to move amendment No. 2, in page 4, line 23, leave out subsection (4).

We cleared a great deal of ground in our debate on the first set of amendments. This amendment relates to clause 5 which I believe is perhaps the most important clause. I should perhaps read clause 5(1), which is the pith of the whole clause. It states:

"It shall be the duty of the Corporation, in formulating or considering any proposals relating to its functions under this Act, to have regard to the desirability of securing the use of the designated areas for a diversity of purposes which may include sporting, recreational, cultural, commercial, energy-related and navigational purposes."

That clause was not in the original Bill. It was put in by the LDDC after discussion and representations. As time goes by, we realise more about the advantages of recreation in the dock areas, not only in Newham, but in Millwall —the LDDC is proud of its centre there, although it does not cater for as many people as the Vic does—and in the Greenland dock and the South dock.

However, the commercial operations there have not been quite as successful as some people hoped or assumed. There is little money in water sports and recreation. They are, above all, rather like our public parks—something which costs a bit of money to keep up, and ought to have no revenue charge, or at least only a notional charge, especially as people living nearby can get to them so easily. The docks are a wonderful water resource for sport; the surface never wears out and they are relatively cheap to maintain.

However, in connection with clause 5(4), which I am about to discuss, there is a cost in keeping up the docks. We do not know the cost; it is not mentioned in the Bill, but we must pay great attention to it. There is maintenance for water areas—the locks, the dredging, the walls, the patrolling and policing, the people who open the swing bridges, those who lay down the buoys and so on. That all represents an ongoing cost, and when the Government introduced the LDDC they did not think much about it.

Subsection (4) looks a little ominous on the face of it. It says:

"No legal proceedings shall be brought, with regard to any byelaw under this Act, in respect of any failure or alleged failure by the Corporation or the Secretary of State to comply with the duty imposed by subsection (2) or, as the case may be, subsection (3) above after the expiration of a period of 72 days beginning with the date upon which the byelaw is confirmed."

We can probably reach an accommodation, but anybody reading that would think, "Good Lord. You mean that they can make the byelaw, and if something has gone wrong, after 72 days we cannot go to the court? Finished?" If people tried to go to court, the solicitor would say, "Sorry, mate, you can't. The Act says that's it. And you can't appeal against it."

Some people reading that would be a little suspicious, because the governing subsection (1) does not give much protection. It does not say that rowing, sailing, surfboarding, sub-aqua diving and so on are a priority in the area. I believe that they should be. The area is unique. We would not think of building on Hampstead heath, or putting an airport in the middle of Hyde park, any more than we should think of filling in the Royal docks—but that is what some people once wanted to do.

Subsection (1) gives no priority. It says simply:

"It shall be the duty of the Corporation . . . to have regard to the desirability of securing the use of the designated areas for a diversity of purposes".

It does not say that one purpose will have priority over another. I argue that the docks are a unique resource for the young people of east London, the rest of London and even further afield.

A regatta was held on the Albert dock not long ago in which there may well have been more boats and more competitors than at Henley. In my view, it was more important than Henley, because there were more ordinary people and more young people rowing there on that one Sunday than there would have been at Henley. Nobody knew about it; nobody was there to photograph it, but in toto I believe that it was more important. However, that fact does not give those activities priority, much as I should like it to.

If someone decided to challenge a development in the court, after 72 days, their chance would be gone. I want to know why that restriction is there, and what sort of protection we have. In expressing what I believe the priorities under subsection (1) should be, I hope that I have advertised what I should like to happen in future. I want to know why we cannot do anything after 72 days. No doubt the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey will tell us why.

8.15 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes: I can speak much more briefly on this amendment, Madam Deputy Speaker. As I have informed the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), in one sense there would be no problem in accepting the amendment, but there is no need to do so. Indeed, there is merit in not doing so.

If the Bill goes through unamended, clause 5(4) will state:

"No legal proceedings shall be brought with regard to any byelaw made under this Act, in respect of any failure or alleged failure by the Corporation or the Secretary of State to comply with the duty imposed by subsection (2) or . . . subsection (3) . . . after . . . 72 days beginning with the date upon which the byelaw is confirmed."

In lay terms, it says that if somebody wants to challenge procedurally at law the making of the byelaws, that has to be done within 72 days. That gives some certainty for the corporation, as the promoters, and the Government, as the authority within the Act, but also for members of the public.

We could do without the provision, but if it were not there it would be possible for someone to use the normal rules of court. There would be no statute expressly governing the procedure, so the normal rules of court would be used. I know for a fact what those rules say, because we have just been involved in considering them in connection with a prospective legal challenge to the Secretary of State for Health over her announcement on 10 February about Guy's hospital. The same issue arose for the people who want to keep Bart's hospital open. Because of his experience in his previous career, the Minister, too, will know what those rules say.

The rules of the Supreme Court say that someone who wants to take out judicial review proceedings has no more than three months. But that is an outer limit. Even if people apply within the three months, the courts may still rule that they have not come as quickly as they could have done. Therefore, if someone sought to challenge after 71 days, 70 days, 69 days or even 60 days, he could be told, "Sorry, you are too late. You could have come earlier." Out of the theoretically available three months—that is about 90 days—the provision in subsection (4) gives the absolute certainty that within the 72 days one can go to court and challenge the byelaws by way of judicial review if one wants to.

The normal reason for a challenge to the byelaws is the fact that certain procedures have not been carried out. For example, perhaps there should have been consultation and there has not been. I tell the hon. Member for Newham, South that the 72-day rule is actually a better safeguard, because it is a clearer safeguard, for his constituents and mine, and for the constituents of the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Ms Gordon) and those of the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore)—for everyone in the four docklands constituencies. It means that our people in the three local authority areas concerned could challenge within 72 days and know that they could get into court, and no one would say that they were too late.

I ask the hon. Member for Newham, South to accept that that is a better protection. In theory, there would be 18 more days without the provision, but in practice there could be far fewer days. As the clause is written, there will definitely be 72 days. So long as people act within that period, they will definitely get through the door of the court. That is clear on the face of the Bill. I hope that the hon. Gentleman's proper concerns have been met by my explanation, and that he will be able to withdraw his amendment.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for that helpful explanation. I am grateful that it will be on the record because, as he rightly says, despite appearances, the provision is there for a purpose contrary to that which some people may assume. I shall therefore accede to his suggestion that I withdraw the amendment. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 31

ALTERATION OF LIMITS OF JURISDICTION

Amendment made: No. 3, in page 11, line 21, leave out 'limits of jurisdiction', and insert

'designated areas, as defined in section 2 (Interpretation) of this Act,'.—*[Mr. Spearing.]*

Order for Third Reading read. *[Queen's Consent, on behalf of the Crown, signified].*

8.29 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes: I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

The Bill has had quite a long life. Like many private Bills, it has crossed over more than one Session of Parliament. It began its passage at the beginning of 1993, so it has taken about a year and a half to consider. Since it came to this place at the end of last year, it has been changed a little. It was changed a little on Report, thanks to the efforts of the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), but it was also changed in Committee. I want to say one or two things about the changes so that the House is clear about them, because we have not had a chance to report them and I especially want to deal with a matter which may be of concern to the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Ms Gordon).

The purpose of the Bill is to allow the corporation to catch up, as it were, with the real world and to give the byelaw-making power for the docklands area to the people who are running it at the moment and their successors, rather than to people who ran it in the past. The purpose of the Bill is for the benefit of the community, especially

[Mr. Simon Hughes]

those who visit the area, as well as those who live there. The changes made since the Bill received its Second Reading in the House of Commons are as follows.

First, there have been revisions to the Bill to make it clear that the Secretary of State's power to transfer functions of the corporation relate only to functions created by or under the Bill and not to the transfer of, for example, land or assets. Secondly, charges which can be imposed by virtue of the Bill, especially under clause 8, will be reasonable. Thirdly, the transfer of functions, pursuant to clause 33, which is the matter that has most exercised the mind of the hon. Member for Newham, South as well as my own and that of other hon. Members representing the docklands, including I am sure the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford), who speaks for the Labour party, are subject to affirmative resolution procedure. That was not the case when we began discussing the Bill, but it is now the case. The Bill has been made tougher in that respect.

Fourthly, the Bill has been changed to ensure that concerns raised by people during its passage should be met. Those concerns were met by amendments to protect landowners or occupiers of land lying in the designated areas, or to protect those who have private rights of navigation.

Finally, protection has been provided for a variety of affected statutory bodies, such as the National Rivers Authority, the Port of London Authority, Billingsgate market, the fire authority and the Port of London health authority.

Since the Bill last appeared, there is also one obvious, significant and substantial change. If the House considers the way in which the Bill is laid out, it will see there is a new part III. Under the new part III, there is a list of protected provisions. I shall spend a minute explaining why they are in the Bill, because they were not listed when the Bill originally came to the House. I was alarmed to discover an issue that the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar rightly raised with me yesterday. Suddenly, I discovered that parts of the Bill exclude Canary wharf. It struck me that if a byelaw-making Bill about the docklands excluded Canary wharf, it was very odd, since the biggest building in the whole of the docklands is on that site. The hon. Member for Bow and Poplar may well want to make points about that matter, but I shall first deal with what has happened as the Bill has proceeded through the House.

The new part III gives protective provision for people who have private landownership interests in the designated areas. Everybody who is not a docklands corporation landowner—all the other owners in the area—have the same protection. So if the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar owned her house and I owned a house there, we would be assured that we would receive the same protection.

Mr. Raynsford *indicated assent.*

Mr. Hughes: I see that the hon. Member for Greenwich is nodding. He is welcome to intervene, but, perhaps, he will want to deal with that point in his speech. The important matter is how we reached that position.

Part III lists the other big landowners, which are Canary Wharf Investment Ltd., *The Daily Telegraph*, Clippers Quay (Millwall) Management Company Ltd., Billingsgate market, the London City airport, the port health authority, the fire authority, the Crown and telecommunications operators, which, I am told, means, in effect, Mercury Communications plc. Part III means that either the provisions of the Bill or byelaws made under the Bill will not apply in the areas in which those companies have landownership interests, without their consent in writing.

In some cases, as part of the negotiations over the clauses, the docklands corporation did, I am told, enter into private agreements relating to how the consent of the bodies would be given and the circumstances in which consent might be withheld. When the Bill was drafted, it was thought—it was a negotiating tactic as much as anything else—that it was a good idea to include the privately owned land, such as Canary wharf, as well as land owned by the LDDC. I have not checked, but it sounds right that, in the area of the three boroughs concerned, and in the LDDC area, about 95 per cent. of the territory, which is mainly water, is LDDC owned, and about 5 per cent. only is owned by other people. Canary wharf may seem big, but it is mainly upwards and not along the ground.

I am told that the LDDC had hoped that it would receive the agreement of those other landowners so that the byelaw-making powers could apply to their lands, too. However, the Bill has now reached Third Reading, those other landowners have not given their consent and, therefore, they have to be taken out of the Bill because they will not be governed by the byelaw. Therefore, the Bill does not seek to interfere with or take away the pre-existing rights in law of the owners of the land in the LDDC who are not the LDDC itself.

The vast majority of the land is owned by the LDDC or by one of its subsidiaries. All land and waters owned by the LDDC adjacent to LDDC waters, even in private ownership, were originally included in the designated areas shown on the map, as the hon. Member for Newham, South said. That land has now been taken out of the Bill and we are left with the LDDC-owned territory alone. Had that not been done, I understand that there would have been a large fight and the private owners would have not allowed the Bill to get to this stage. That is the history of the addition of part III.

I shall deal with one or two other matters concerning what has happened between Second Reading and Third Reading.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): Briefly.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Of course I shall be brief.

The hon. Member for Bow and Poplar specifically raised matters which were not do with the technicality of the drafting, but real matters of substance and concern. I hope that it is not betraying any confidence—I am sure that it is not, because she has said it many times outside the House as well as inside it—to tell the House that the matter that she had at the top of her list was that she believed that her constituents were effectively promised that the extension to the docklands light railway would include a station at Island Gardens. She made it clear that they were effectively told that that was guaranteed. When the Bill was last before the House, that had not been delivered.

The hon. Member for Bow and Poplar raised a few other issues of equal importance, such as the lack of affordable housing on the Isle of Dogs, the lack of jobs for locals in the activities of the LDDC—a matter which I raise regularly on behalf of my constituents and which I am sure

that my two colleagues do on behalf of theirs—delays in starting the Jubilee line extension and the specific local matter of the lack of access by the Docklands sailing club to a slipway.

I do not seek to persuade the hon. Lady of the unmitigated merits of the LDDC. She knows that that is not my view of it. I shall tell her the facts and leave her to decide whether what could have been achieved has been achieved. As she knows, on the key issue of Island Gardens station, outside forces have intervened—we hope, to help us all.

I am told that the corporation has contributed to the provision of 315 social housing units—homes, better called—in the hon. Lady's constituency at Timber wharves and 187 at Masthouse terrace. The corporation has also facilitated—I do not know quite what that means—65 self-build units at Maconachies wharf.

Ms Gordon: It is only fair to point out that the 300-odd houses that were provided at Timber wharf were built to replace 500 houses that were destroyed to make way for the Limehouse link. So that is not a fair way of putting it.

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Lady is right. I was not seeking to pretend otherwise. I remember that debate. It was extremely controversial.

Schemes have apparently been set up that would produce another 68 homes on another three sites on the Isle of Dogs. I should add from a personal point of view that there is a huge remaining need for affordable homes in Tower Hamlets, as there certainly is in Southwark and Newham. Affordable homes are needed to rent, for shared ownership and to own. We need many more of them. If we were led by need rather than demand, we would do better.

I will tell the House what the brief says about jobs. It says:

"It is not possible to quantify among the jobs created on the Isle of Dogs those which have gone to pre 1981 residents."

To be fair, I do not think that the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar was asking about pre-1981 residents. She was asking about residents whether pre-or post-1981. All that the corporation is clear about is that before 1981 there were 9,000 jobs on the island and now there are 20,000. Unemployment in Tower Hamlets is almost as bad, if not as bad, as unemployment in Southwark and Bermondsey. I know that many of the jobs that have been created in Southwark have not gone to people who live in Southwark, let alone to people who live in Newham or Tower Hamlets. Many people have been brought in and continue to be brought in. The hon. Member for Bow and Poplar and other colleagues must keep pressing within the law for much more commitment to delivering local employment possibilities for the remaining life of the LDDC.

Mercifully, the Jubilee line extension has now begun and work is well advanced. I welcome that, as I am sure the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar does. I am told that the Docklands sailing and watersports centre has permanent rights to the slipway. It is not a matter for the corporation. The sailing club is entitled to make arrangements with the watersports centre. I understand that Lord Cocks has written to the hon. Lady on that matter. I hope that she will be able now to facilitate the conclusion of that for the purpose that she wanted. That is perfectly reasonable.

The Chairman of Committees in the other place determined only last week in private business that the docklands light railway had given an undertaking to Parliament to build a new underground station at Island Gardens when the docklands light railway extension to Lewisham was built to replace the existing terminus station there. Docklands light railway and the corporation had proposed that Island Gardens station and Cutty Sark station on the other side of the Thames in the constituency of the hon. Member for Greenwich should be omitted from the scheme to reduce the capital costs of the project and ensure its financial viability.

The new station must now be built as part of the project. If it is not, docklands light railway will be in breach of an undertaking given to Parliament in 1992 when the enabling legislation was before the House. That means that £3.5 million of capital costs cannot be cut from the project as originally proposed. The conclusion is that if the docklands light railway extension goes ahead—we await an announcement—it will do so only with Island Gardens station as part of it. I know that the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar welcomes that confirmation of the undertaking and what the law says. All that we must do now is press the Government to make the DLR extension go ahead.

It would be wrong of me to take up further time to put my views about what is needed in docklands. I put them fairly succinctly on Second Reading. As long as there is a London Docklands development corporation—I did not support its creation—it is important that it responds to the needs of its community. The Bill seeks to give it the power to regulate safety within its area.

I hope that, on that basis, the House will support the Bill on Third Reading and allow it to go on its way towards the statute book soon. I have no doubt that we shall continue having debates about the merits of development of the docklands in London and about the best way forward, long after tonight. That is justifiable. I hope that that will not prevent our saying tonight that the Bill is a good thing which the House can support.

8.36 pm

Mr. Raynsford: On the face of it, the Bill, which empowers the London Docklands development corporation to make byelaws to regulate the former docks area, should not be a complicated or controversial measure. There is wide agreement that new byelaws should be made that reflect the dramatic change in the character and use of the docks in the past 25 years.

In his speech on the Second Reading on 14 March, my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) described the transformation of the docks from a heavily policed working area surrounded by high walls, dock gates and high security to an area predominantly given over to leisure, public access and recreation. Other hon. Members who represent the docklands area, including my hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar (Ms Gordon) and the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), who has sponsored the Bill, echoed that view.

The new role of the docks calls for a different system of regulation or byelaws. On that point there is unanimity, but that is about as far as the unanimity reaches. The progress of the Bill through the House and the other place has been marked by controversy. It has raised many more questions than answers. It has unlocked an extraordinary number of skeletons, which have taxed the ingenuity of the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey when he tried to give us answers not only tonight but on Second Reading and in the intervening period.

[Mr. Raynsford]

The first question is whether it is appropriate to give the powers to regulate the docks to the LDDC. It has specific and special powers for the whole docklands area, but it is an unelected and unaccountable quango. Perhaps even more to the point, it is due to go out of existence within the next four years. Why we should go to such lengths—the Bill has taken an extraordinary time grinding its way through the parliamentary process—to give byelaw-making powers to a body which is about to be wound up is a cause for some astonishment.

Mr. Spearing: May I suggest to my hon. Friend that there is a simple answer to that. The Bill is not about giving byelaw-making powers to the LDDC. It is about giving such powers to its unnamed successors, albeit by affirmative order of the House, not the promoters of the Bill.

Mr. Raynsford: My hon. Friend makes a valid point. Indeed, I was about to say that the whole question leads immediately to the issue which has rightly exercised many hon. Members. It is the curiously worded—indeed, some might say injudiciously worded—clause 33 as it now is, previously clause 32, relating to the transfer of functions from the LDDC to its successors.

As previously drafted, the clause gave sweeping powers to the Minister to assign the functions of the LDDC with regard to the management of the former dock areas, and possibly much wider powers—not only management powers—to anyone chosen by the Minister, without any reference to Parliament.

On Second Reading, the Minister put forward an interesting and fascinating defence. He said that we should not get worked up about these draconian powers, because he already had them under existing legislation, and the clause was unnecessary. If that is the case, the question arises why the Government allowed their creature, the LDDC, to waste parliamentary time promoting an unnecessary clause. We never had an explanation for that one.

Clause 33, as it now is, is indicative of the whole sad, sleazy approach which the Government take to issues of public interest and accountability. It is born of the Government's enmity to democratically elected and accountable local authorities, which would naturally be the appropriate bodies to make byelaws and manage these areas for public recreational use. That would ensure not only consistency with the byelaws applicable in other local parks and recreation areas but continuity of management because, unlike the LDDC, the local authorities—the London boroughs of Tower Hamlets, Southwark and Newham—will continue to be there after 1998.

If the Minister contributes to this debate, he will undoubtedly argue that local authorities have not opposed the provisions giving those powers to the LDDC. The truth of the matter is that the local authorities would undoubtedly have been more than happy to assume responsibility for the management of the former dock areas if they had been given the resources to meet the potentially high costs of maintaining the docks, the dock walls and the dock gates.

The Government have given them no option. They squeezed their budgets year on year while lavishing £1.6 billion on the LDDC. If the three dockland boroughs had received a fraction of the sums paid to the LDDC, they would gladly and willingly have taken on responsibility for managing the docks—and I am sure that that is the case today.

What will happen when the LDDC is wound up? On Second Reading, the point was expressed most forcibly both by my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) and the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey—I quote my right hon. Friend:

"the logic points to the return of not merely the land in docklands to the boroughs of which they are part, but to the management of the water and of the docks in whatever local authority boundary they fall."—[*Official Report*, 14 March 1994; Vol. 239, c. 678.]

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey made clear his preference—he has echoed it tonight—for the democratically elected local authorities to be the successor bodies. At the same time, he confirmed his inability to assure us that that would happen. He reported to the House that the Bill does not stipulate who should be the successor, because no decision has yet been taken. He expressed the hope that that might be clarified during the later stages of the Bill's passage. Those stages are now being completed, and we are no wiser.

Clause 33 makes it clear that the Secretary of State may, on an application from the LDDC, transfer these powers to any person. I am sure that the Minister will find the freedom to hand over these powers to whoever he wishes very convenient and agreeable. Indeed, who knows who he will propose? Those of us who have watched the lamentable way in which the Government sold out the public interest to Tory placemen and a few Tory placewomen, as well as rewarding contributors to Tory party funds, will rightly feel concerned that this could be yet another example of the confusion of public and private interest which has become such a hallmark of the Government.

The nub of the matter is that the management of the former docks area should be undertaken not by bodies which are not publicly accountable and do not have a responsible position, unlike democratically elected local authorities. The management of these areas and the byelaw-making powers should be given to bodies which can recognise the distinction between public and private interest, and which will be acting in the public interest.

The Minister, from a sedentary position, frequently quoted Lord Cocks, who is a member of the London Docklands development corporation. He will recall that I was not talking about the LDDC; I was talking about the successor bodies. If the Minister will give us an indication who the successor bodies will be, and whether they will be publicly accountable—whether they will be democratically elected—I will willingly give way to give him an opportunity of doing so.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tony Baldry): I do not intend to engage in this debate, for the simple reason that this is the second time that we have debated the issue. As the hon. Gentleman acknowledged, this is a Bill within a narrow compass. It has taken up a considerable amount of time not because of any of the complexities in the Bill but simply because Opposition Members have dreamed up a number of fantasies with which they have wished to detain the House.

The Bill is more about Labour Members wishing to vent their spleen on the London Docklands development

corporation. If the hon. Gentleman reads *Hansard* tomorrow, he will see that his points seem to suggest that LDDC could not distinguish between public and private interest. I challenge the hon. Gentleman to give any instance when the LDDC has not acted in the public interest.

Mr. Raynsford: The first instance that I shall give is the extraordinary way in which it has lavished large sums of public money on bankers, property developers and people who have contributed considerably to the personal profits of individual shareholders, many of whom are contributors to the Conservative party, but who have failed to meet their responsibility to meet the needs of the people of the Isle of Dogs.

If the Minister had gone to the Isle of Dogs in the local elections earlier this year, he would be only too well aware of the dangerous consequences of the neglect by the LDDC and his Government of the legitimate concerns and grievances of local people who have seen little benefit for all the sums of money which have been lavished on the LDDC.

I note that the Minister, in his response, sought immediately to change the subject of the debate. He did not want to answer my specific question whether there would be an undertaking that the successor body, which is what we are talking about, which would assume these byelaw-making powers, would be a democratically elected and accountable body. I note, and the House will note, the Minister's silence on that point.

The Minister claims that the delay in the Bill going through the House is because of Opposition Members. That is an absurd suggestion. The delay has been entirely to do with trying to sort out some of the technicalities which even now—even tonight on Third Reading—still have not been sorted out. How the Government can allow their creature, the LDDC, to bring forward legislation which includes a map identifying the Cody road balancing lagoon as one of the areas but cannot get a mention of it in the Bill is simply one more indication of the problems.

The issues of jurisdiction and areas of responsibility under the Bill are technicalities which rightly and properly should be identified by the House as part of parliamentary scrutiny. It is far from satisfactory, as we have recognised tonight, to have to allow a Bill to go through which is in some ways defective—some of the language is dubious, and there are discrepancies between the maps and the schedules—purely because there is no further opportunity to do anything about it if the LDDC is to have its powers in time for the summer.

As I have said, the nub of the matter is that management of the former dock areas should have been undertaken by democratically elected public authorities. At the very least, the three local authorities concerned—the London boroughs of Southwark, Tower Hamlets and Newham—should be given the first option of taking over these responsibilities from the LDDC.

I understand that the London borough of Tower Hamlets recently made representations to that effect, and I hope that the Minister will give a commitment to the House that the three local authorities will have the right of first refusal when the LDDC comes to transfer those powers. I look forward to hearing the Minister's response to that point.

While that issue has remained unclarified during the Bill's passage, other changes have been made which suggest that the Government's thinking points in a very different direction. I am referring to clauses 18 to 27, all of which have been inserted at the promoter's instigation in the last stage of the process under the heading "protective provisions". The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey was somewhat coy about those provisions and said that he had sought a briefing at the last minute on the reason for their insertion. In his usual elegant and carefully argued fashion, he gave us some sort of defence of those provisions. It was entirely unconvincing. Other than clarifying the position of certain other public authorities—the Port of London Authority, the City corporation and the Crown—the provisions merely grant extremely wide-ranging exemptions to certain commercial interests, in particular, Canary Wharf Investments Ltd. and its associated companies.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey said that there was no distinction between the benefits offered to the various companies identified in the clauses. Clause 19, which is for the protection of Canary Wharf Investments Ltd., Canary Wharf Ltd., or Heron Quays Developments Ltd., has three subsections. Subsection (2) states:

> "The provisions of this Act and of any byelaw under this Act shall not apply to any land in which the company has . . . interest, or an entitlement to such an interest, without the consent in writing of the company."

Subsection (3) states:

> "Subject to any consent given under subsection (2) above, nothing in this Act or any order or byelaw made under this Act shall affect any rights, powers or privileges which are vested in, or enjoyed by, the company",

and so forth.

Clauses 20 and 21, which deal with the protection of the Telegraph plc, West Ferry Printers Ltd., Mercury Communications Ltd., and Clippers Quay (Milwall) Management Company Ltd., contain much more restricted provisions. They apply only to byelaws, not to the provisions of the Bill, and there is no third subsection, as there is in the case of Canary Wharf Investments Ltd. Those people responsible for briefing the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey were economical, at the very least, in their briefing if they implied that the clauses contained similar treatment for similar organisations.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I hope that I have not misrepresented the views of those who briefed me. The negotiated position is certainly different for each of the landlords, and each clause deals with them differently. None the less, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will accept that the general rule still applies. It was hoped that all those organisations will sign up to the byelaws. They clearly did not, and the clauses in the Bill contain what they did not sign up to. It is certainly true that that is different for the different organisations.

Mr. Raynsford: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for confirming that. It shows that whatever Canary wharf wants the LDDC will bend over backwards to offer.

As we know only too well, the Canary wharf venture has been the great totem of the LDDC's activity. It proved only too clearly that throwing large sums of public money at private developers is not a guarantee of success. The Government frequently say that throwing public money at a problem is no solution. Heaven knows, they have thrown enough money at Canary wharf, and the building is still half-empty. It also proves that, because of the status and

[Mr. Raynsford]

prestige associated with Canary Wharf Ltd., the LDDC will accept just about anything it requests to try to keep it happy. The Bill contains a clear sign of that.

Clause 19 provides that any byelaws made under the Bill shall not affect any land in which Canary Wharf Ltd. and its associated companies have a freehold or leasehold interest or an option without their agreement. The company has an absolute veto over any byelaws proposed by the LDDC, or its successors, which affect any of the land that the company controls.

As we know, that represents a substantial area, as it includes not merely the base of the huge 50-storey tower, but also the surrounding area and the Heron Quays site. The democratically elected local authority is not given any such power of veto. We already know the measures that Canary Wharf Ltd. has taken to restrict public access to the areas it controls. Roads are closed, and private security patrols abound. What hope is there for any rights of public access to those parts of the docks and the adjoining land surrounding Canary wharf owned by Canary Wharf Ltd. and its associated companies?

How can that position be reconciled with clause 7, which sets out a principle with which almost all hon. Members would agree? It specifies:

"Subject to the provisions of this Act, it shall be the duty of the Corporation, in formulating or considering any proposals relating to its functions under this Act, to have regard to the desirability of securing and maintaining public access to the waterside."

That is a fine principle, but will it extend to Heron Quays and Canary wharf?

What guarantee can the Minister give that the private businesses that have received huge public subsidies to construct the half-empty offices that stand on their sites will not be allowed to put up the barriers and the "No entry" signs, thus entirely flouting the principle of "securing . . . public access to the waterside"?

The Canary wharf opt-out—that is what clause 19 allows—sets a very bad precedent indeed. As the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey said, there are similar, but not identical, opt-outs for other commercial interests—the Telegraph plc, West Ferry Printers Ltd., Mercury Communications Ltd. and Clippers Quay (Milwall) Management Company. If that is a blueprint for the future of docklands, it is a blueprint with which we are becoming all too familiar—a blueprint in which the public interest is always subordinated to the interests of the property developers, bankers and other private financial interests.

That is why, despite the £1.6 billion in public money that has been pumped in by the Government, docklands remains a tragically divided community, which is badly hit by poverty, unemployment and bad housing. It is an area in which the conspicuous consumption and glittering office blocks of those who have done well out of the LDDC stand in marked contrast to the unmodernised, bleak housing in which too many of the Isle of Dogs residents still have to live.

Sadly, that is why the evil of racism has been able to raise its ugly head in recent years, feeding off the justified resentment of long-standing local residents, who have received little or nothing from the huge cornucopia of riches lavished on the LDDC.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey referred to the limited number of social homes provided by the LDDC in recent years. Those homes are obviously welcome, but in an area with such an enormous need for housing, where housing has become an important catalyst for social and racial conflict, any responsible organisation, exercising the sort of powers that the LDDC exercises, should study all the sites it controls to find out how many could be made available for local people in need of rented housing.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I recognise the hon. Gentleman's sincerity, but we are discussing the Third Reading of the Bill. He seems to be going well beyond the purposes of the Bill.

Mr. Raynsford: I shall return immediately to the provisions in the Bill. I was simply putting it in context and describing the LDDC and its failure to meet local needs, which gives rise to the suspicion that measures such as the Bill essentially provide yet further advantage for certain private interests, rather than serving the public interest or providing proper protection for the needs of local people. That is why, despite the fact that the monuments of the work of the LDDC have so markedly changed the landscape in east London, the body responsible remains profoundly unloved by local people and will be, when it is wound up, unlamented.

The Minister ought to ponder those points. After all the public money and the dramatic transformation of the physical appearance of the area, why is the responsible body treated with such suspicion and hostility by local people?

The tragedy is that opportunities have been wasted to secure the regeneration of the docklands, which was urgently required in the interests of the whole community, not just of one section. The Bill is in every respect typical of the whole process. There was an opportunity to create a new framework for the management and use of the former dock areas in the interests of the whole community, but sadly the opportunity has been squandered through the failure of the Government and the LDDC properly to distinguish between public and private interest, and by their unforgivable bias in favour of the latter.

We will not vote against Third Reading of the Bill, because we want to see the byelaw-making powers in place. We see, as everyone does, the advantage in having byelaws which will provide protection for public safety and will hopefully ensure better use of the water areas. It is not our intention in any way to delay that process. I am somewhat sceptical of the claim that the byelaws will be in place by this summer, and we will all look to see whether that pledge is honoured.

We will not oppose the Bill tonight, but we will look on it with sadness. Yet another opportunity has been missed by a body which has received so much public money and so much opportunity to change the landscape of east London for the good, but which, in practice, will disappear in two, three or four years' time, unloved and unlamented by the local residents.

9 pm

Ms Gordon: The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) referred to many of the points which I made on Second Reading. I do not want to reiterate those points or to answer many of the questions which the hon. Gentleman raised regarding my Second Reading speech, except on the question of Island Gardens. My

constituents were very glad that the hearing which took place before the Lord Chairman of Committees decided in their favour. We hope that the docklands light railway and the London Docklands development corporation will not try to find a way of wriggling out of their commitment again, and that the DLR extension will go ahead with an underground station at Island Gardens.

I wish to emphasise some of the points which were made by my hon. Friend the Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford). The Bill has too many vague clauses. It concerns the management of a very large area—400 acres of water and 25 miles of paths. The Bill gives the LDDC powers to make byelaws, and to control dockside paths, the movement of vessels, pollution, parking and the landing and taking off of helicopters. In other words, it will have the same powers to make byelaws as local authorities.

The important difference, which has already been pointed out, is that local authorities are democratically elected and are subject to public pressure. The LDDC—as we know from our bitter experience—is not. It ignores public pressure and ignores the needs of the community. Clause 33 originally empowered the Secretary of State to transfer the "assets" of the LDDC, but the wording has now been altered to "functions". That is still too vague.

It is clear to me that the best body to ensure public enjoyment of the docks area and the best use of that great area of water which is now available for the benefit of the community is the local authority. The local authority has changed hands. The Liberal Democrat-controlled authority which existed before last May did object to the Bill but, after certain assurances, withdrew the objection.

The new administration feels that it has the best people to ensure the public enjoyment and the development of the area for the community, but it is wary of the cost of maintaining the docks. It does not want to take on the liabilities without any of the assets. It has been told that the dock walls, which are deep under the water and 100 years old, will cost a great deal of money to repair if they start to crumble. A study should have been done well before the presentation of the Bill to find out how much money would be needed to put the docks in good repair and what funding would be needed to maintain the walls.

I feel very much that, in two years' time when the LDDC ceases to exist, the local authority should have, as my hon. Friend the Member for Greenwich said, the first chance to take over the control of the designated area and of the byelaws. But it must be assured that the designated area will be endowed, so that it will have the money for maintenance. The question of funding is the only thing that would stop the local authority from wanting to take democratic control, as the area should be controlled. It must have the money to do the maintenance and development.

The Bill says that reasonable endeavours to secure local representation on a successor body must be undertaken, but that is not clear enough. Tonight we have not been told who the successor body should be. My constituents and those of other docklands areas will certainly want the powers to be handed over to the local authority, together with the money to carry out the development needed to maintain the docks and create a good environment for the enjoyment of local people and also to develop tourism, which would create jobs and benefit the area.

I am particularly worried about how the LDDC will manage the area. The answer on Shadwell park was not good enough. Nothing will stop the successor authority from swallowing Shadwell park for commercial development. The position is quite different for rich and powerful companies like Canary Wharf Investments Ltd. As I entered the Chamber tonight I saw that decisions were being made on the hoof under pressure from those rich and powerful companies. I was handed a document explaining why there should be protective provisions for those with private land ownership interests. It says:

"there would have been a substantial risk of compensation being forced to be paid against those whose private rights were adversely affected by the provisions of the Bill."

Mr. Spearing: I have not read the document, although I believe that it is publicly available. If those people thought that their private rights were affected by the terms of the Bill, it was open to them, if they thought fit, to petition. While I do not blame them for not doing so, that would have been the right procedure. Were not they informed of what was involved?

Ms Gordon: I do not know what went on behind the scenes. I was simply handed a document, which I assume comes hot off the press from the promoters. Those who are rich and powerful can request last minute changes to the Bill without going through the relevant procedures, but members of ordinary working communities can get no such guarantee about a park that is precious to them.

Mr. Simon Hughes: May I deal with the point raised by the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing)? Had the Bill not been amended, those in the protected provisions place, being fully aware of what was going on, would have had to petition. Had they petitioned, there would have been the mother and father of all battles because their private rights would have been affected and massive amounts of money would have had to be paid out. So the LDDC, thinking discretion the better part of valour, pulled back from making provisions in the Bill and decided that its original intention would be better avoided and thus a quieter life would be achieved for all.

Ms Gordon: I shall return later to the exemption of private companies, particularly relating to pollution. In the meantime, I am concerned about what charges will be made under the byelaws. After my speech on Second Reading, I received a letter from National Car Parks Ltd informing me that the LDDC wanted to charge it £1,175 per annum simply for putting up a sign directing motorists to its multi-storey car park at City harbour. After some discussion, the charge was reduced to £940 but NCP decided that it was not worth while. Consequently, many motorists do not know where the car park is.

If National Car Parks has been asked to pay such a large licence fee—in no other area has a local authority ever asked the company to pay a fee to put up a sign to direct motorists to its car park—what other charges will be made? What assurances have we that charges for water sports, for fishing rights, possibly for bringing one's chair —as the LDDC has refused to put down benches around the dock so that people can sit and enjoy the water, although I have asked many times—for use of a vessel, for use of the steps and for use of the jetties for landing, will not be made prohibitively great by the market-minded LDDC? If such large charges are made, only those people with a lot of money in their pocket will be able to use those facilities, whereas poorer people, pensioners, and youth

[Ms Gordon]

—to whom the enjoyment and the development of water sports is especially important—will be forced out of the picture because they cannot afford them.

We have no assurance that access to the water and access to facilities will be affordable, and that the LDDC will develop facilities on the water and along the dockside. It has, in the past, given money for capital programmes —for building the docklands sailing centre, for instance —but the revenue to run them is never forthcoming. We want assurances that market forces will not lead whatever happens on the dockside.

The LDDC also has control of the landing and taking off of helicopters. If that will be profitable, will there be some type of floating landing pad on the docks, which will create more noise and more pollution for people in the area? I should like assurances that that will not happen.

To return to the subject of the private companies, one of the private companies is Westferry Printers, and I remind the House that it is stated that the powers of the LDDC over that area will include pollution. My constituents are so worried about pollution of water and air from printing works that they have formed an organisation called Londoners Against Media Pollution. The council, in the Wapping area, is conducting a very large study, carried out by the South East Thames health authority, on volatile organic pollution. I have met Westferry Printers staff. They assure me that they are doing their best to ensure that pollutants do not go into the water and that everything possible will be done, but I do not know how much is possible and how much is being done, and I do not think that a printing works, or any other company, should be exempted from any byelaws that seek to prevent pollution.

All in all, there are far too many question marks about the Bill. Far too many questions have not been answered. After years and years of the docks being industrial centres, we have a chance to make that area a wonderful place, where people can enjoy the water and water sports, which tourists can visit, and where developments that will benefit the whole community can take place.

We are putting those powers in the hands of an organisation that has already shown that it will not do that. It has shown that it does not develop things in the interests of ordinary people. The succession of those powers when the LDDC winds up is very much in the air. We have been given no assurance, and we do not know whether there is any chance of the local authorities obtaining the endowment and the powers to control the docks and paths, as I believe should be the case.

9.13 pm

Mr. Stephen Timms (Newham, North-East): On its foundation, the LDDC embarked on its regeneration remit with an approach that, in its early days at least, largely ignored the local communities where it was based. There were several instances of brick walls being built to keep apart the existing community and the new development and its incoming occupiers, who were the intended beneficiaries of it. That created enormous resentment, and two of the three local authorities withdrew their limited representation on the board of the LDDC in response.

In those early days it was a model of regeneration that excluded and ignored the local community and was not effective. In the middle of the 1980s, in Newham and elsewhere, there was a sea change in the approach. My predecessor as hon. Member for Newham, North-East was chairman of the Select Committee on Employment, which produced a report pinpointing the need for regeneration to provide demonstrable benefits for existing local communities. Others also made that point at the time, which led to changes in Newham.

In 1987 the council, with the corporation, drew up a memorandum of agreement about the benefits that would accrue to the existing communities as a result of what were at that time expected to be major developments. They included a commitment to secure 1,500 homes for rent as part of the development in the Royal docks, a target of 25 per cent. of all jobs created to be taken by local residents, towards which the local authority with the corporation and others would work.

The recession intervened and the developments have not yet materialised, but I believe that they will ultimately. It is essential that the commitments entered into and the targets set then are honoured. Occasionally we receive signs from the corporation that it may wish to renege on some of them, but I hope that that will not happen. The commitments were given and accepted on the basis that existing residents must benefit from the regeneration process. The position remains unchanged and it is important that those obligations are met.

From 1987 until a couple of months ago I chaired the negotiating team that worked with the corporation on behalf of the borough. There has been a change in the way that the corporation has approached its task—a change for the better. There is a good and constructive working relationship between the borough and the corporation. The borough has not objected to the Bill, despite some of its regrettable features, which have been drawn to our attention this evening. I shall not object to it, but I want to make a couple of observations.

Earlier this week I was delighted to read in the *Evening Standard* some comments by the chairman of the London Docklands development corporation which I endorse. He drew attention to two key Government decisions that are awaited and that will determine how quickly the corporation is able to get on with its task of completing the work in docklands. He said that the two decisions were "whether Stratford is chosen as the intermediate station for the Channel Tunnel rail link and which of the two proposed sites for a river crossing, Blackwall or the East London river crossing at Beckton"—

which he favoured—

"are built."

I agree with him on both those points, but I particularly want to draw attention to the importance of the decision on the location of the channel tunnel station. The verdict is not yet in—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Before the hon. Gentleman continues, I should say that, while a certain amount of background is acceptable, the hon. Gentleman's remarks must home in more closely on the Bill's Third Reading.

Mr. Timms: I shall gladly do that, but I was glad to put on record my agreement with the chairman of the LDDC.

I was surprised to read in the Bill the long list of organisations and private owners who have opted out of the byelaws. The local authorities have accepted the pressing need for the byelaws to be drawn up in order to safeguard the public interest around the dock areas. My hon. Friend

the Member for Bow and Poplar (Ms Gordon) mentioned that one of the major polluters has been able to avoid the byelaws. That is alarming, and a great worry and disappointment.

Ms Gordon: I did not say that it was one of the greatest polluters. I said that constituents were concerned that the print works in Wapping were sending out pollutants and effluence, and that a study was being done to find out whether that was true. There are also print works in the designated area that are exempt from the byelaws.

Mr. Timms: I am grateful for that clarification. Certainly, exemptions undermine the Bill.

My point is that I believe that there is growing anxiety among Conservative Members about the damage being done to our social fabric by the fact that the market has been allowed to rip in a number of areas, including the development of docklands. The hon. Member for Havant (Mr. Willetts) concluded, in an interesting pamphlet on civic conservatism which he wrote recently:

"The crucial Tory insight is that a community has to be embodied in real institutions which are essential to sustain traditions, values and patterns of behaviour. A concern with the strength of Britain's institutions, both national and local, is at the heart of the Tory tradition. Addressing that concern is essential to representing the values of the quiet majority of the British people."

The London Docklands development corporation started out from a strain of thinking in the Conservative party that was firmly opposed to this outlook, but it is now gaining favour—

Mr. Oliver Heald (Hertfordshire, North): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the special measure, in the form of the LDDC, had to be taken because the councils surrounding the area, which had run it since the war, had neglected it and huge areas of docklands were lying waste? Going down Salter road in Bermondsey is a revelation these days compared with what it was like in 1978. Surely the hon. Gentleman will allow some credit for that.

Mr. Timms: I do not for a moment suggest that little has been achieved: a great deal has been achieved, although we might debate the mechanisms that may have led to those achievements. I repeat my point—increasingly recognised by Conservative Members—that it is extremely important that democratic institutions, locally acknowledged, play their proper role.

This Bill will give byelaw powers to the LDDC, but the crucial question that has been asked concerns what will happen once the LDDC goes—what will happen to the powers? Will local authorities continue to be sidelined, or will, as I hope, the powers be passed on to local authorities so that the vital role that local institutions play in our community of east London can be sustained?

9.22 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tony Baldry): I congratulate the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) on his promotion of this private Bill and on the manner in which he has dealt with the points raised this evening. I also congratulate the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Timms) on what I think the whole House would consider to be a balanced and reasonable speech —standing in stark contrast to some other Opposition contributions on other occasions. One of the difficulties has been the seeming impossibility of Opposition Members ever giving credit for the many achievements that the LDDC has brought about in its part of London.

The Bill turns on a very narrow compass. It is generally agreed that it is a worthy Bill, worthy of a speedy passage. It has taken quite a long time to pass through its stages in the House, for a number of reasons. It should be delayed no longer, and I hope that the House will give it a speedy Third Reading.

9.23 pm

Mr. Spearing: The Minister has referred several times to how long this Bill has taken to proceed. In an exchange with my hon. Friend the Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford), he even suggested that the motivation behind the speeches made by Opposition Members on these technicalities and amendments was "political". I remind the Minister of the technicalities that we dealt with tonight and the procedural matters dealt with largely on Second Reading. Of course there was an element of politics. My hon. Friend the Member for Greenwich dealt with those, correctly, from the Front Bench whereas some of us—notably my hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar (Ms Gordon), and myself on procedural matters—eschewed those aspects and dealt with procedural and legal matters that would be dealt with by the Minister if they were being applied to Banbury or Oxfordshire. Why not? That is what Parliament is about.

Although the LDDC has been successful in certain respects, we had difficulties dealing with the right sort of byelaw, procedure and schedule because the measure cuts across the grain of our historic, civic control of public amenity. What could be a greater public amenity than the docks of London?

I remind the House that the docklands light railway was initially agreed in principle by everyone—from Ken Livingstone to Sir Horace Cutler, and by every borough councillor of every party. It still does not run on Sunday.

Mr. Simon Hughes: And it still breaks down.

Mr. Spearing: It does not run on Sunday even when it does not break down—and if one travels from Beckton to the Bank, one must change twice.

A Bill that is ostensibly for the future should not raise more questions than it answers. Of course there must be byelaw powers to fill the vacuum left by the Port of London Authority, for a totally different function for the docks— but speaker after speaker has shown, not on a party basis but purely on a legal basis, what will happen in two years. Who will make the byelaws then, and what will be the areas? The Bill does not say. It allows flexibility in delineation of the designated area and flexibility of the determining authority. I will not say that it is non-legislation, but it is almost delegislation.

If the LDDC were a permanent body, we would know the answers to the questions that I suggested—but it ain't and we don't. I could hear in that phrase the voice of my former hon. Friend, Ian Mikardo. What a wonderful speech he would have made on such an issue.

The Bill does not take us far—two years ahead at most, and then it will be left to the Secretary of State. It is not a very satisfactory Bill.

The Bill had a rocky passage in both Houses. Some hon Members—I do not see many of them in their places tonight—talk about Parliament's arcane procedures. We

[Mr. Spearing]

have spent five hours today debating in the Chamber—never mind in Committee—a Bill which should not need debate of that sort.

We are told that parliamentary procedure is able to deal with an elephant and to pick up a pin. It is much better than people think. Even this little Third Reading debate, which revealed the procedural and political vacuums that exist, would have been impossible had not one hon. Member entered the Chamber at 2.30 pm a few weeks ago and said "Object." Of course that power can be abused, but it shows that there is goodness in procedure. It has allowed Members of Parliament representing east London to express the genuine concerns of their constituents and try to bring vision to the civic administration that is temporarily—I hope very temporarily—taken away from properly elected representatives, whether for Greater London or the boroughs concerned.

We hope that the vacuum will be filled after two years and that the questions will be answered largely by civic accountability, civic enterprise and the return of democratic government in east London.

9.29 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes: With the leave of the House, Madam Deputy Speaker, I shall reply.

The hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) made a valid point about public access throughout docklands, and planning permission. I think I am correct in saying that, in granting planning permission, the corporation has required public access wherever possible: that has been its policy.

I checked to find out whether special treatment was given to the companies listed in part III of the Bill, and the answer is no. Anyone with a private interest who is in business has a right over the land along Waterside.

There is no public access there, but it has been granted in every other area owned by the corporation where such access is possible. So far, if the owners of land have not wanted public access to be granted, they have always been able to insist that it should not be granted. I agree that in some cases it should have been granted, but at least the arrangements have been consistent.

Local authorities have not been included in the list of protected organisations, because they do not now own any land in the designated areas: whether they liked it or not, it was all vested in the development corporation. Clause 9(4), however, states:

"Byelaws shall not be made under this section which relate to—

(a) land forming part of a highway maintainable at the public expense, without the consent of the highway authority"—

which is the local authority—

"or

(b) land which is a walkway"

within the meaning of the current legislation,

"without the consent of the borough council".

In no circumstances can byelaws override the local authority's rights as highway authority or council.

I have dealt with the specifics of the argument advanced by the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Ms Gordon) about private companies, and also checked the point about private homes, as opposed to big developers. Apparently, no private, individually owned homes were given rights where a walkway existed. The hon. Lady rightly mentioned areas that management companies own where there is a walkway; the protected list in part III includes some management companies which go on to let individually owned homes with a freehold. Clippers Quay (Millwall) Management Company Ltd. is an example. However, I understand that no individually owned home has been given a walkway to which it has been able to withhold public access.

I also entirely share the hon. Lady's view about charges. The Bill goes as far as Bills normally do—we can only hope that it goes far enough—in saying:

"The Corporation may make, demand and recover"

only such charges as are reasonable. We must ensure that it never imposes charges that are unreasonable for our constituents and other users—and that includes even nine-year-old kids. We would have the right to challenge any such charges.

I agree with the hon. Lady that we do not want a floating helipad, and I understand that the corporation does not want one either. The proposal does not seem to be floating very well itself! I am sure that we all hope that it will not come to anything. If it does, it will not be because the corporation wanted the helipad; to be fair, it has opposed them in the past, and my constituency, at least, has never had one.

I know that pollution is an important issue in the hon. Lady's constituency. In general terms, it is not intended that the byelaws should deal with pollution, and the exemptions for Canary wharf and, more importantly, the printing companies listed in the protective provisions will in no way be to the detriment to the hon. Lady's constituents. Those companies are not exempted from the general provisions governing pollution.

It has been brought to my attention—and I hope that the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar will be encouraged by this—that clause 14 states:

"Section 161 of the Water Resources Act 1991 (anti-pollution works and operations) shall have effect in relation to the designated areas as though references to the Authority included references to the Corporation."

The statute law, therefore, will still govern the area. The hon. Lady's constituents and mine, and those of our colleagues, have the right to turn to the law and instigate proceedings under different environment legislation; they do not have to get someone else to do it for them. There is no reduction in the right to control pollution. Whether that legislation is good enough is a different question and the corporation does not intend to introduce byelaws.

Mr. Raynsford: If I heard the hon. Gentleman correctly, he said that the byelaws were not intended to be made for the control of pollution. May I refer him to schedule 3, which lists the purposes for which byelaws may be made and which includes at least three paragraphs that seem to be directly related to pollution? Paragraph 5 deals with the prevention of nuisances, which have always been interpreted as pollution. Paragraph 13 deals with the control of noise, which again is a pollutant. Paragraph 24 relates to the removal of rubbish and sewage, which is certainly a pollutant. I had understood that the byelaws would at least be concerned with such pollutants. I was somewhat surprised that he indicated that they were not a matter for the byelaws.

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Gentleman is right. I hope that the record will show that I said that, in general terms, the byelaws are not intended to deal with pollution. He is right —noise, nuisance and specific forms of rubbish are in the

schedule and so, for example, leaving rubbish bags out and industrial dumping of rubbish will be governed. It is not intended, however, that general anti-pollution legislation should be made under byelaws. Air pollution and water pollution are governed by the general law of the land.

I was trying earlier to assure the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar that the people have the right to challenge air and water pollution by a local firm. They do not need the National Rivers Authority or anyone else to take a local discharger of polluting materials to court. The hon. Lady, the hon. Member for Greenwich or I and anyone else could do that. The hon. Member for Greenwich is right—some express purposes are included in the Bill and, in a wide sense, noise and nuisance are a form of pollution.

The hon. Lady dealt with the endowment when power is handed over from the docklands corporation to successor authorities. I am told that surveys have been conducted into the condition of various parts of the dock estate in Tower Hamlets, as well as in Newham and Southwark. The local authority in Tower Hamlets has received all such surveys —I trust that the information that I have been given on that is correct—and negotiations are taking place in Tower Hamlets, Newham and Southwark on the succession. Those in Southwark are the most advanced.

It would be impossible to hand over control to an authority that was unwilling to receive such powers unless a deal were struck and another quango were set up, which the Government could tell to take over the body. This is an important matter and may deal with the points made by the hon. Member for Greenwich. I am instructed that there is no intention that another quango will be set up to replace the docklands corporation. The hon. Member for Greenwich says, "Thank God for that".

Mr. Spearing: Although we are on Third Reading, questions remain. Obviously, a residual authority is required to tie up the ends—one was required with the Greater London council. Some coherent, public authority will be needed to manage dock areas, whether they be the west or the south, the Greenland dock or the Royal docks. The Royal docks management authority has been mooted. Surely that will be an offshoot of the borough council and not a quango.

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Gentleman is right to raise that issue. I am not seeking to read the mind of Government or that of the corporation, but the prospective successor authorities include in some places the local authority—that is certainly the intention in Southwark and I know that the matter is being negotiated this year. It could be a private owner, something that I understand is being debated in some areas north of the river; or it could be a community trust; and there may well be other agencies such as that to which the hon. Gentleman alluded.

My point is that, unless the successor authorities are the creatures of Government and the Government can tell them what to do, they will not—unless they are mad—take on the responsibility of enforcing the quality-of-life requirements in Tower Hamlets, Newham and Southwark unless someone gives them the money to do so. Therefore, the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) and the hon. Members for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) and for Bow and Poplar need to ensure that the necessary deal is done. I am sure that the hon. Lady's local authority and Newham and Southwark local councils will also be active in ensuring that it is.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Timms) asked what would happen to the byelaw-making powers after the corporation has gone. The answer is that they will remain—their life will be much longer than that of the corporation. If the Bill is passed, the corporation's successor authorities will be able to change byelaws, but those byelaws will last longer than the corporation.

In response to the Minister's points, I must point out that the Bill has not been before both Houses for an excessively long time. It was in another place from January to December 1993 and has been before this House since December, which is a relatively short time for a private Bill.

The hon. Member for Newham, South spent a few minutes talking about the nature of the Bill. I suppose that, after all these debates and all these words, it is only an enabling Bill after all. However, I hope that even so the House will give it a Third Reading.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read the Third time, and passed, with amendments.

M25 (Noise Pollution)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

9.41 pm

Sir George Gardiner (Reigate): I have been a Member of Parliament long enough to remember when between junctions 8 and 10 there was no M25 at all. When its opening was delayed because the concrete surface cracked, there was considerable impatience among my constituents, so the partial opening in 1985 was greatly welcomed. It linked up with the further section to junction 7, and so took a great deal of heavy traffic from the A25, weaving its way —to the detriment of our environment—through the towns of Reigate and Redhill and the villages in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, East (Mr. Ainsworth).

However, no sooner was this section of the motorway in use than complaints rolled in about the noise generated by its brushed concrete surface. They came not only from those living within a 300 m band on either side, such as the populous Merstham estate and the relatively rural area of Mogador to the south and the nearer reaches of Walton-on-the-Hill to the north, but from whole communities beyond, which complained of the constant whine, or hum, from the motorway. Their case is well documented in letters to me from Tadworth's local councillor, John Chiles. As the volume of traffic using the motorway has increased over the years, so too has the constant background whine, day and night.

There were public demands for the concrete to be replaced by tarmac, which everyone judged to be quieter. At first, the Department of Transport claimed that there was no appreciable noise difference—brushed concrete just seemed louder to those driving over it, officials claimed. But that argument did not hold water for long, and it is now generally recognised that porous asphalt produces less noise than hot rolled asphalt, and far less noise than a brushed concrete surface.

At the risk of using technical language, I must get this point on record. The use of porous asphalt, as compared with brushed concrete, achieves a reduction of 6 decibels in dry road conditions and a reduction of 10 decibels in wet road conditions. In human subjective hearing terms, a 100 decibel reduction would be perceived as being half as loud. That is the penalty that those living nearby have to pay for the use of a brushed concrete surface. Small wonder that the call to switch to porous asphalt is growing all the time.

In this debate, I am concerned with noise pollution, but there are other advantages in using porous asphalt. For drivers using the motorway, it decreases spray production in wet weather, cuts down glare, and decreases the risk of aquaplaning. All these are road safety factors, which I know loom large in the mind of my hon. Friend the Minister for Roads and Traffic. Porous asphalt is also increasingly being used in a wide range of climates in continental Europe. Yet in Britain its considerable advantages seem not yet to have been accepted.

So what is the argument against using porous asphalt? The principal argument over the years has been that it is much more expensive than brushed concrete. As recently as 10 June this year, the chief executive of the Highways Agency claimed to me in a letter that porous asphalt "is a more expensive type of road surfacing".

Yet that myth had already been exploded by my hon. Friend the Minister himself, in a written answer to a question from the hon. Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall) on 7 March 1994, which is recorded at column *1* of the *Official Report.*

Asked to compare the cost per mile of surfacing a four-lane motorway with porous asphalt with that of surfacing it with concrete, my hon. Friend replied that the approximate cost per mile of laying a typical concrete road was £1,750,000, and of laying porous asphalt only £345,000. In other words, porous asphalt is more than five times cheaper. I hope that by now that information has filtered down to the Highways Agency.

In fact, the case that porous asphalt is quieter has already been accepted by my hon. Friend's Department, yet, because of the mythical "high cost" factor, its use has been authorised only for sections of the motorway that pass through highly populated areas. Thus, the use of porous asphalt has been agreed near the more densely populated Ashtead in Mole Valley, and a short stretch alongside Merstham in my own constituency. Unless a change is announced by my hon. Friend tonight, those living within audible reach of the remaining sections will continue to suffer from the brushed concrete surface.

Yet all that section will shortly be expanded from three lanes in each direction to four. That will be with the blessing of Surrey county council, and indeed with my blessing, too. What a marvellous opportunity the widening presents to scrap the concrete surface altogether and replace it with quieter—and cheaper—porous asphalt.

The Highways Agency recently announced its proposal to widen the M25 between Sevenoaks—junction 5—and junction 7, with the M23. I understand that no concrete at all is to be used on that section. The Department has also decided to replace concrete with porous asphalt on a 12 km section of the M23 south of its interchange with the M25. I welcome that decision, but ask how it can be squared with a decision not to lay porous asphalt over the sections of the M25 with which I am concerned.

The total number of houses within the 300 m band over that 12 km section of the M23 is 271, which works out at a density of 23 houses per km. Let us compare that with the sections of the M25 between junctions 8 and 10, which under present plans are not to have porous asphalt. We find that the density of houses per kilometre is identical—23. Thus, the rationale for providing porous asphalt is the same for the M25 as it is for that section of the M23.

Even more telling is the fact that, when that density of houses along the section of the M23 which is to be given a porous asphalt surface is compared with the density of homes which are not benefiting, so far, from porous asphalt between junctions 7 and 8, we find that the density of homes in the 300 m band is 80 properties per kilometre as compared with 23. Thus, the case for giving the noise benefit deriving from porous asphalt to that stretch is overwhelming.

I can understand my hon. Friend setting his face against the logic of the case if there was no immediate question of rebuilding the highway, but that is not the case. The motorway must be reconstructed anyway to provide four lanes. So, in the interests of all those residents, not to mention the thousands who live just beyond the 300 m band, I urge my hon. Friend to seize this opportunity and to make a major contribution towards easing the level of noise pollution emanating from that section of the M25.

9.50 pm

Mr. Peter Ainsworth (Surrey, East): I congratulate my hon. Friend and constituency neighbour the Member for Reigate (Sir G. Gardiner) on securing this debate, and also thank him for enabling me to make a brief speech.

He has chosen to focus on the widening proposal for a section of the M25 between junctions 7 and 10. A small part of that stretch falls in my constituency. I have corresponded with my hon. Friend the Minister over the concerns raised by the White Hill residents association and others, who have already argued for the use of porous asphalt to protect their homes from the increased noise which will occur as a result of the widening scheme.

A much greater number of my constituents are concerned with the Highways Agency's proposals for the stretch between junctions 5 and 6. My hon. Friend will know that a number of local representatives are seeking a meeting with him to discuss their concerns. For these residents, and for those, of course, who live between junctions 7 and 10, there are many anxieties—air pollution, light pollution, the safety implications of narrower lanes, surface water contamination, and the effect on side roads of newly generated traffic. But by far the greatest concern is the prospect of even higher levels of noise intrusion.

When the M25 was first proposed, the Department of Transport said that, if the bunds and noise barriers were not good enough, they would be expanded and extended. Although traffic flows and noise are much higher than originally envisaged, with a daily traffic flow of 110,000 vehicles against a design capacity of 79,000, nothing has been done.

To make matters worse, although local people are already suffering from a level of noise which many find unacceptable, they can expect a further 50 per cent. increase in traffic, with seriously inadequate noise protection.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Reigate: the widening of the motorway presents an excellent opportunity for noise levels to be restored to those which were expected when the road was built. Higher bunds and noise barriers, together with porous asphalt, would achieve that, and, in the process, they would restore the faith of my constituents in the Department.

I pay a sincere tribute to my hon. Friend the Minister, and to his officials, who worked so closely with local people when dealing with the widening of the M23. As my hon. Friend the Member for Reigate has said, it has been found possible to introduce porous asphalt throughout the length of the stretch of that motorway which is being widened.

The M25, of course, is a far busier, much noisier motorway. It affects a far larger number of homes, yet there are no plans at all to lay porous asphalt at present, as I understand it, on any of the stretch of the motorway which runs through my constituency. I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to reflect on that and to consider the great concern and hostility among my constituents.

9.54 pm

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Robert Key): I start by congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Reigate (Sir G. Gardiner) on initiating the debate tonight. I am grateful that he has given me the opportunity to explain some of the finer points of porous asphalt and just how much my officials in the Department of Transport and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport and I mind about the quality of life of people who have to live near roads. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, East (Mr. Ainsworth) for his kind remarks about the care with which my officials have worked with local people on the widening of the M23. I hope that, after my words tonight, he will feel a little more reassured about the M25. We shall see.

I fully understand the concern of my hon. Friend the Member for Reigate, who has spoken so powerfully on behalf of his constituents who are affected by noise from the M25. I recognise fully how distressing traffic noise can be, especially when a new road is built through an otherwise quiet area—the area which my hon. Friend represented when he was first elected to the House. Noise can be an abomination. I live in the depths of the Wiltshire countryside and, ironically, the noise from the trunk road that passes my bedroom window is considerably greater than the noise in central London. That is not a common perception.

We must, however, face up to the facts. The M25 is the busiest road in the country. It is essential for both the national and the local economy. It connects all the major radial routes to London, the southern ports, the airports and the channel tunnel. Congestion on parts of the motorway is encouraging traffic back into towns and villages around the motorway, bringing pollution and noise and making the roads more dangerous.

If nothing is done to improve the capacity of the motorway to take the increased traffic, those towns and villages will suffer even more from traffic trying to avoid motorway congestion. That would cause a return to the conditions which the motorway was built to relieve. Of course I understand that my hon. Friend's constituents do not see it that way, but when I travel the country I realise that, from a national perspective, the M25 is seen as the London bypass. It is therefore important for the economic well-being of the country that we ensure that the bypass is up to standard and able to support the wealth-creating sectors of our economy. Roads and villages that are quiet now will increasingly become rat runs—which can only be bad for residents, pedestrians, local motorists, businesses, and of course the environment and everyone's health and safety. It is to help to stop that happening that we propose improvements.

The section of the motorway between junctions 7 and 8 which runs through my hon. Friend's constituency is currently dual three lanes. It was designed to carry up to 79,000 vehicles per day. Peak-time flows are currently about 110,000 vehicles per day. The case for widening this very busy stretch speaks for itself.

The widening which started in March this year is to dual four lanes and is within the existing highway boundaries. Hard shoulders will be provided over most of the length. The cost of the works is about £45 million. The opportunity is also being taken to replace the existing yellow lighting through junction 7 with the glare-reducing lanterns which keep light spillage within the highway boundary. That type of lighting will also be used for the remainder of the stretch, for lighting is also a serious pollutant, particularly to those who live in the countryside. Fortunately, technology is helping us, and we shall take full advantage of it, by using a more friendly kind of light and a better-designed light fixture, which will allow those

[Mr. Robert Key]

who prefer the darkness of the countryside to have a better chance of enjoying the peace and quiet of the countryside in the darkness if they so wish.

Where possible, the existing landscape is to be retained and improved. Large areas of additional planting are proposed. Planting will be with indigenous species and designed to blend the scheme visually, and ecologically, into its surroundings. As both my hon. Friends have vividly described, the main concerns of the residents following the public consultation centred on the existing noise from the motorway and the likelihood of it increasing with the addition of more traffic lanes. Extensive additional acoustic fences were included in the widening proposals, and the residents and the local councils considered that further measures were required, especially in the Merstham area. The proposed level of mitigation was reviewed and enhanced noise mitigation measures were announced in the decision letter issued in July last year. The enhancements include more than 2 kilometres of additional acoustic fences and raising the height of some of the existing ones.

Once upon a time, I was but an innocent motorist. I thought that a road was a road, and that the road surface was the road surface; now I know differently—it is the pavement. I now know that road surfaces matter a great deal. I shall address some of the technical arguments put by my hon. Friend the Member for Reigate.

I must point out that the costs quoted in the parliamentary answer which he mentioned—

It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

Mr. Key: The costs quoted in the parliamentary answer to which my hon. Friend referred were right, but the costs for the concrete section related to total reconstruction of the road. The costs for porous asphalt were for resurfacing only. I have had to learn the hard way—by pounding the motorways of this country—about these things. I now understand that the cost per mile of laying different substances for the pavement varies enormously and, therefore, I am not at all surprised at the variations which my hon. Friend quoted.

There are many engineering and accountancy elephant traps in these matters because the cost of laying certain materials is not the same as the cost of the entire reconstruction work. Furthermore, the life of different surfaces varies. The life of porous asphalt is comparatively short—it may be as short as five to seven years—whereas a concrete surface can last more than 20 years. Those are some of the sums which I invite my hon. Friend to consider, perhaps in his bath tomorrow when he will undoubtedly have the benefit of *Hansard* to refresh his memory.

It is also important to recognise that my Department cannot simply lay new asphalt if there is still life in the existing concrete pavement. Often, it is true that the existing concrete pavement has been agreed as a noisy road surface, for which substantial payments have been made to those nearby in compensation already, and a double payment would not please the Public Accounts Committee.

My hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, East said that some of his constituents wish to come and discuss these matters with me. I will be delighted to see him, with representatives of his constituents, at the earliest convenient moment, and perhaps we can discuss that tomorrow.

The scheme includes the reconstruction of the carriageway around junction 7, which is nearing the end of its life, and provides for the reconstruction of the existing asphalt surface in conventional hot-rolled asphalt. Following requests from residents and local authorities for the use of a quieter road surface, porous asphalt surfacing is being used on a trial basis in the densely populated Merstham area.

Commercial vehicle flows on that section are high. Porous asphalt surfacing has not been used extensively on heavily used roads in this country and evidence of its durability is limited. In addition, it is more expensive than other surfacing materials and has a shorter life, so all the noise and dust of resurfacing would come round sooner.

My officials leave no stone unturned in the search for improved technology of pavements. Recently, I visited Italy to discuss these matters with my opposite number in the new Italian Government, and to visit Autostrada headquarters in Florence—a great hardship it was, too, as the House will imagine. We also pounded the Italian motorways looking at road surfaces and how they do it. Undoubtedly, we will have learnt from them, and they from us.

The section that is to be surfaced with porous asphalt will extend from Gatton Bottom in the west, through the Merstham built-up area to Pendell wood, east of junction 7. Pendell wood was chosen as the eastern termination point because the recent carriageway reconstruction ended there.

We considered carefully the requests from the While Hill residents association to extend the use of porous asphalt by a further 300 m eastward from Pendell wood to the White Hill bridge. We could not justify that as an additional expense when weighed against the likely costs of compensation and noise insulation measures which we may incur.

Following the publication of the environmental statement for the widening scheme between junctions 8 and 10 earlier this year, Reigate and Banstead borough council drew attention to discrepancies in the predicted noise levels at the point where the two schemes abut at Mogador, just west of junction 8. The consultants involved have investigated the apparent discrepancies and it has been established that the predicted noise levels at Mogador, which were quoted in the junctions 7 to 8 statement, were too low.

In recognition of the predicted higher noise levels in the Mogador area, higher noise fences will now be incorporated into the current junctions 7 to 8 widening works to reduce noise further in the area. Residents affected in the Mogador area were informed of those changes last week.

As a precaution, noise levels were reassessed for the whole scheme, which has resulted in a slight upward movement in some of the figures. Because of the extensive mitigation measures already included in the scheme, including bunds and noise fences, with one exception—Dell house at Merstham—that does not trigger the offer of further insulation, over and above that already proposed.

In calculating the noise levels at Merstham, no account has been taken of the porous asphalt surfacing because it is being used on a trial basis only. That surface treatment will, however, reduce the existing and future noise levels

by about 4 decibels, which is a substantial improvement; that is in addition to the benefits obtained from the bunds and fences.

Unfortunately, and perhaps inevitably, there have been some complaints about construction noise from the widening works near the main residential areas of Merstham. The contractor has now been told not to operate large plant at night. Strict noise limits are set on the works contractor's operations and agreed with the environmental health officer. Wherever possible, work is carried out behind existing noise fences and earth bunds. Lower speed limits through contraflow systems on the motorway during construction should also lead to a small reduction in traffic noise.

Proposals for widening the section between junctions 8 to 10, to dual four lanes within the existing highway boundary, were published in February. I am pleased to take the opportunity of this debate to announce the results of that public consultation. More than 200 people submitted written comments to the Department and all the opinions expressed were considered carefully. Many issues were raised but, as my hon. Friend pointed out, noise was the issue that caused most concern. We have decided to proceed with the widening of the M25 between junctions 8 and 10 generally, as described in the environmental statement. I am pleased to say that we have been able to increase the height of some of the barriers and provide extra barriers in certain areas.

I fully understand the concerns about traffic noise expressed by many of those who live close to that section of the M25. The published proposals accordingly included extensive noise fencing to reduce the noise impact of the scheme and the provision of porous asphalt through the Leatherhead area, where there would be benefits for a considerable number of people.

In addition to noise barriers, the effects of the widening works will be moderated by retaining as much as possible of the existing motorway landscape planting and earthbunding, and by new planting. To complement that planting, the scope for tree and shrub planting on land in private ownership outside the motorway boundary will also be considered. Many of the existing noise barriers will be replaced.

During the construction period, every effort will be made to minimise disruption and disturbance to local people and the local environment. The construction contract will include limits on noise levels and access routes. The length of time between the removal of existing noise fencing and the erection of replacement fencing will be kept to a minimum. Temporary fencing will be erected at the start of works, to protect the existing planting.

As has already been made clear to the House, the greatest concern expressed during public consultation was about the levels of traffic noise currently experienced by people living close to the motorway and the potential increase in noise from a widened motorway. Many people considered that the proposed provision of a porous asphalt carriageway in the Leatherhead and Ashtead gap should be extended elsewhere along that section of the motorway. I considered carefully all the representations made, but the existing surface is in good condition and, other than in the Leatherhead section, that part of the motorway passes through scattered and sparsely populated areas, with the notable exceptions of some small communities, including Downside and Walton-on-the-Hill. The proposed noise fences will help in those areas, but I am afraid that extending the provision of porous asphalt cannot be justified at this time.

However, when the carriageway is in need of major maintenance, the use of porous asphalt or other noise reducing surfaces will be considered. Porous asphalt is a well-known low-noise surfacing, but there are others. My hon. Friend the Member for Reigate referred to the noise of ridged concrete on our motorways. We are all familiar with that when driving a car and changing from surface to surface. It can be very noisy for the driver of the car, and it can be even worse for a person who has to sit near it all day and who sometimes has to endure it in the wet, which can be even noisier.

I had to learn about the different tones which emanate from the different kinds of surfaces. I am delighted to report that technology is again on our side, and it marches on. There is a new substance called "whisper concrete" which we are trialling on the M18 in Humberside. I visited the trial site, pounded up and down the M18, stood beside it, listened and looked at it from all angles. I listened to the advice of experts, and it is true—it is a very quiet surface. It has been used extensively elsewhere in Europe.

We hope very much that we will be able to use it more widely here. We have a second trial on the A564 in the east midlands under construction at present. Initial sings from the first trial are encouraging and we are carefully monitoring how it performs on noise, skidding and durability. The skidding point is very important. We can build an almost silent surface for a road, but if one then puts a car on it, it will skid all over the place, which is very dangerous. We have to get the balance right. We hope to take decisions on the wider use of "whisper concrete" very shortly.

It will be of enormous benefit if technology has triumphed, because that surface will have a much longer life than porous asphalt. If we get it right, the surface noise generated will be about as quiet as porous asphalt 2. Details of the additional mitigation measures are given in the decision letter, which will be published tomorrow. We will now invite tenders for the design and construction of the widening works which are expected to start next spring.

On the proposals for widening westwards between junctions 12 and 15, I would like to assure the House that I am fully aware of the strength of feeling about our proposals for adding three-lane link roads to each side of the motorway between those junctions. That is the busiest stretch of road in the country and additional capacity for this section is needed if the motorway is to continue to function effectively.

Many have said that they would experience considerable difficulty in preparing for the public inquiry before the end of the year, as is currently anticipated. I fully appreciate their concerns. It is a very complex scheme and these are important issues. Therefore, in the light of those representations, I have decided that the public inquiry will not now start this year. An announcement on an actual start date will be made as soon as practicably possible.

I have also received representations from my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, North-West (Sir M. Grylls) on behalf of his constituents who are seeking an extension to the objection period for the draft compulsory purchase order which ends tomorrow. Since the public inquiry will not now start this year, I will of course be prepared to

[Mr. Key]

receive objections after tomorrow. I look forward to discussing those matters—no doubt at great length—with my hon. Friend.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at thirteen minutes past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 15 July 1994

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITIONS

Sorting Office (Abbey Wood)

9.34 am

Mr. John Austin-Walker (Woolwich): I have a petition which was signed over the past weekend by more than 1,800 residents of Abbey Wood who are concerned that cost cutting has been put before public service. The petition

Sheweth that the Royal Mail proposes to close the Abbey Wood Sorting Office and relocate in Thamesmead; that the present office is easily accessible to Abbey Wood residents and is served by both buses and British Rail; that the Thamesmead office is not served by public transport, is located on a dual carriageway without pavements and that its relocation would cause great hardship, particularly to elderly and disabled people and parents with young children.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House will urge the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to review the proposed closure in the hope that he will take into account the overwhelming local opinion against this proposal.

To lie upon the Table.

Toxocariasis

9.35 am

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): I have the privilege to present a petition on behalf of my constituent Mrs. Debbie March, whose son Eric was blinded as a result of toxocariasis. He is one of about 100 children who suffer from blindness or serious disease of the eye every year as a result of dog mess. She believes, as do I, that we could prevent the problem by introducing a system of dog registration. The petition says:

To the House of Commons

The petition of citizens of the United Kingdom who declare that there is a danger of dirty parks and greens, stray dogs being put to sleep and a disease called toxocariasis for which there is no cure.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons think again about dog registration and the petitioners remain, and so on.

To lie upon the Table.

Orders of the Day

Merchant Shipping (Salvage and Pollution) Bill

Lords amendments considered.

Clause 1

SALVAGE CONVENTION, 1989 TO HAVE FORCE OF LAW

Lords amendment: No. 1, in page 2, line 5, at end insert—

("(7) A draft of an Order in Council proposed to be made by virtue of subsection (3) above shall not be submitted to Her Majesty in Council unless the draft has been approved by a resolution of each House of Parliament.")

9.36 am

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Before I deal with amendment No. 1, I should like to begin by paying a tribute, and giving my thanks, to Lord Donaldson—I see many of my colleagues clutching copies of his report "Safer Ships and Cleaner Seas" in their hands; undoubtedly, they will be referring to it—and Lord Mustill, who assumed stewardship of the Bill in another place. Both of them put the wealth of their knowledge of maritime law to the service of the Bill, and I am grateful for that. Two Ministers in another place, Lord Mackay, the Minister for Aviation and Shipping, and Baroness Trumpington for the Department of National Heritage—there is an amendment touching on national heritage matters which we shall come to later—also tabled useful amendments which I hope will commend themselves to the House.

None of the amendments affects the policy aims of the Bill earlier agreed by the House. Indeed, the amendments would ensure that those aims are met. Amendment No. 1 makes subordinate legislation made under clause 1 subject to parliamentary control. Clause 1 would permit the implementation and ratification of the 1989 international convention on salvage. As my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Mr. Ottaway) explained to the House on Third Reading, the aim of the salvage convention is to encourage salvors to get, and to stay, involved in salvage operations when there is a threat of marine pollution. The convention does that by assuring salvors that when there is a threat of pollution, they will at least recover their expenses. Of course, that will give them a great incentive to see a job through, or at least to attempt to salvage a vessel in difficult circumstances.

Clause 1 (3) allows any subsequent revision of the salvage convention to be given effect in the United Kingdom by means of an Order in Council amending schedule 1. Schedule 1 sets out the articles in the salvage convention and related provisions. Similar provision was made in earlier Acts of Parliament for the domestic implementation of internationally agreed amendments to international agreements. For example, section 14(5) of the Merchant Shipping Act 1979 allows revision of the 1974 convention relating to the carriage of passengers and their luggage by sea to be implemented by Order in Council. Section 15(2) of that Act, however, provides for

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parliamentary control, in that a draft of the Order in Council must first be approved by a resolution of each House of Parliament.

In its report dated 24 May 1994, the House of Lords Delegated Powers Scrutiny Committee noted the absence in clause 1 of provision for parliamentary control of the exercise of powers conferred by subsection (3). I accept that the implementation of amendments to the salvage convention should be subject to parliamentary control. Amendment No. 1 adds a new subsection (7) to clause 1, requiring that a draft of any order made under subsection (3) to give effect to the revision of the salvage convention be approved by a resolution of both Houses of Parliament.

Mr. Gary Streeter (Plymouth, Sutton): I have reservations about Lords amendment No. 1. First, I must declare an interest as I am a partner in a firm of solicitors —which has a marine department, although I am not involved in it—in Plymouth. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) for introducing the Bill. He is known in the west country as a veritable champion of all matters maritime.

I have grave concerns about Lords amendment No. 1 because I believe that it will be increasingly necessary to amend our salvage legislation. I am concerned that, if we make those matters that are to be dealt with by Order in Council subject to scrutiny, we might introduce an element of delay, which would be unfortunate and undesirable.

The Law Commission recently expressed concern about the backlog of its reports published since 1969 but not brought into law. Those reports might involve legislation and that is an expression of how difficult it is to find sufficient parliamentary time to introduce desirable and necessary measures. By this year, 35 Law Commission reports were awaiting implementation by the House. The primary reason for the delay was not that anyone disagreed with their contents but the difficulty in finding sufficient parliamentary time. We must consider that problem.

While amending the international convention on salvage and United Kingdom law covering such matters is of primary concern to those who are actively involved in salvage operations and maritime issues, one can easily imagine how such matters might constantly fall to the back of the queue in our proceedings.

As is often the case, the amendment would have an unforeseen consequence. It was tabled by well-meaning people, but could be counter-productive. I cite as support for my arguments the fact that there have been many revisions during the past 30 years or so to the approach that the Lloyd's insurance market takes to salvage. Insurance is central to the whole issue.

There have been changes to the Lloyd's standard form of salvage since the turn of the century, but there have been three revisions in the past 20 years. We all know that the old maxim, "No cure, no pay" used to govern the approach to salvage. That position has gradually changed during the past 20 or 30 years.

Mr. Nigel Waterson (Eastbourne): My hon. Friend may have answered his own question. The salvage industry and the insurance market are often able to react much more quickly to circumstances than the House. That is why Lloyd's open form, which is used to dispose of about 74 per cent. of salvage cases, is changed from time to time. Does that not solve the very problem that my hon. Friend is bringing to the attention of the House?

Mr. Streeter: My hon. Friend makes my point for me. How absurd it would be if the Lloyd's provisions were out of step with United Kingdom law and the parliamentary procedures and convention that we are following. It is important for such matters to go forward step by step. If we make them the subject of parliamentary scrutiny, with all the in-built delays that that involves, it could make us out of step with the commercial realities of the marketplace.

9.45 am

Mr. James Clappison (Hertsmere): My hon Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Waterson) makes an important point, although one does not necessarily draw the same conclusion as he does. Is it not right that matters as important as salvage and the protection of the environment should be protected by the force of law, rather than left to the vicissitudes of the market and of freedom of contract? There will always be unscrupulous owners and ships' masters who feel that they are under pressure. Is it not right that such matters should have the force of law and that we should give the environment the best possible protection?

Mr. Streeter: I thank my hon. Friend for his invaluable contribution. He is entirely right. It is important for such matters to be protected by the full force of the law, but that must be done in a way that reflects the commercial realities and the pace of change in the marketplace.

The recent Donaldson report gives us further evidence that salvage law is changing rapidly. Recommendations 85 and 86 of that report suggest that ocean-going salvage tugs should be made readily available. If we incorporate the provisions of the international salvage convention into our law in the near future, the market will shortly afterwards ask us to change those principles because of commercial pressures. I urge the House to put in place a system that will enable us to respond rapidly to such commercial pressures.

Mr. Michael Bates (Langbaurgh): Was not one of the matters raised in the Donaldson report the establishment of high-risk areas, a point which relates to my hon. Friend's argument? Does he agree that, in the context of the insurance market, such high-risk areas may lead to an unnecessary burden being placed on the most sensitive parts of the market—the parts that are most in need of protection? That might dissuade people in the market, but surely the protection of the environment is far more important. Is that not another endorsement for what he is suggesting?

Mr. Streeter: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who has also made a valuable contribution to the debate.

There is another reason why it would be a little foolhardy to accept the amendment. Our salvage law may need to be amended rapidly. A recent case that arose in the west country concerned the sinking of the trawler Pescado off the shores of Devon and Cornwall in late 1991. The vessel was brought to the surface after two years by new salvors, after many false attempts by the original salvage operators, who were brought in by the police. For the families of those who lost their lives on the Pescado, that was a time of great distress and humiliation. Local

television stations covered each attempt to raise the vessel and the families hopes were raised, only to be dashed, through the incompetence of the original salvors.

We are not far from the introduction of a range of measures to deal with the quality and competence of salvors operating off the shores of the United Kingdom, to protect people such as the families of those who so tragically lost their lives in the Pescado. That is another reason why it would not be right for us to commit ourselves to a procedure that cannot guarantee urgent ministerial attention and implementation. I believe that that further supports my argument. The Bill introduces into English law the issues arising out of the international convention on salvage. We now need to see an upgrading of firms that are involved in salvage operations.

A measure that may need to be brought forward is one to increase the rewards available to the people who are involved in the operation. We must see an increase in the number and quality of salvors operating from the United Kingdom. For those reasons, I express reservations about Lords amendment No. 1. It is right that the power to respond to an ever-changing marketplace should lie in the hands of the Executive, and it is right that we should be able to introduce changes to the law in relation to salvage quickly, and not await parliamentary time.

Mr. Piers Merchant (Beckenham): This is a small but important amendment, which raises some issues of constitutional significance. I do not wish to delay the House, but I want to raise two important points.

The first has to do with the principle of subordinate legislation, with which the amendment deals. I observed when I spoke at the early stages of the Bill that it did not deal with the issue of passing back delegated powers to the House for scrutiny. It is not that I lack confidence in my hon. Friend the Minister or in other colleagues in the Government, and I realise that it is necessary for orders to be made in many cases under many Acts of Parliament. It is simply a matter of a thousand eyes being better than two.

Where changes in the law are proposed, the House should at least have the opportunity to scrutinise them. That is why I disagree with my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Streeter), who I know is an advocate of legislation on that. I understand the reason why he stresses the importance of speed—I do not quibble with that—but I do not agree that changes in legislation would necessarily be held up by requiring this House and the other place to scrutinise them.

There are ways to ensure that that is done speedily through the usual channels if a particular emergency has to be dealt with. Accuracy is more important than speed, so it is important that any changes made to the law should be properly scrutinised. That was picked up by the Delegated Powers Committee in its report on 24 May, and that is rightly what informs us of the need for the Lords amendment.

There are wider constitutional reasons why it is important for secondary legislation to be properly scrutinised, and those relate to the authority of this place. This place exists to sanction and approve the law and if we increasingly encourage other ways by which the law can be amended or changed by diktat, that inevitably diminishes the powers, authority and responsibility of this place. Those powers have been built up over many centuries, often following great difficulty and struggle, and it is important that they are preserved.

There is also the simple and practical reason that our constituents expect and require us to be aware of changes in the law, and to look closely at, and to scrutinise, those changes. If there is a system where major changes in the law can be easily made, without reference to the House, we are put in the extraordinary position of having to say to our constituents that not only are we unable to make representations on the matter but we have no powers, responsibility or involvement. They would find that difficult to take, and we would find it difficult to justify.

Secondly, the international aspect is significant. This is a matter of considerable controversy at present, principally because of the European Union legislation. Many of my hon. Friends regard it as a dangerous trend that it is increasingly possible for those in Brussels, who have no elected status, to tinker with, and to change, the law of this country, often in a simple and easy fashion.

It worries me that we had, or still have until the amendment is finally accepted, a situation where the law can be changed effectively at international level. I appreciate that the regulations would actually pass through our constitutional process, but the reality is that negotiations could take place in an international forum where we are represented by a Minister or, effectively at some levels, by officials. A deal could be done and something that is not palatable could be accepted, perhaps without the full implications being realised. We could end up with a de facto situation where an international committee, comprising of a large majority of people who are not British, makes a decision which, through this process, slips into British law. That is a dangerous precedent. The matter that is agreed may not be one of any controversy, but it could be. It is necessary that the House ensures that there is a safeguard against that happening.

That is why I think that the Lords amendment is extremely important, why I fully support it, why I hope that it is incorporated into the Bill and why I beg to disagree with my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton, although I respect his views.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): I agree with all that my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Mr. Merchant) has said. I have looked at the speech of the noble Lord Donaldson, as well as at the offerings from my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris), and I congratulate them both on the way in which they have brought forward the Bill. When someone as learned as the noble Lord says that he is proposing a small technical amendment, it is normally time to dive for cover. In this case, I entirely agree that the amendment, which deals with an Order in Council under clause 1(3)—I presume that that is the clause to which the noble Lord was referring—is absolutely necessary.

I listened with care to the excellent speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Streeter). It is always encouraging to hear a member of the legal profession arguing for directness and speed. Sadly, however, at that stage I must part company with him. Such is the apparent need for speed—I am sure that this will not be taken as a savage attack on the usual channels—that we have, according to my hon. Friend, 35 law reports which are waiting to pass through the House. That is indeed a matter for the usual channels.

My hon. Friend said that this is such an important matter that we should bypass this place. I would merely say that, by the time that we have government by the Privy Council,

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government from Brussels and government by international convention, the press may indeed start to wonder why we are being paid any salaries at all.

I strongly support the amendment, and I look forward to what my hon. Friend the Minister has to say. I hope that he will be able to confirm that nothing can happen unless the matters come before the House of Commons.

Mr. Waterson: I am delighted to be here today to have an opportunity to speak on this important Bill and finally to wish it godspeed through the last of the legislative process. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Streeter) I should declare an interest as an Admiralty solicitor. I should also perhaps declare a more obvious interest, which is that I represent a coastal constituency—the most attractive coastal constituency represented in the House.

I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) who is a doughty campaigner for the sea and for those who earn their living on the sea. He has fought hard not only for the Bill but for other legislation for the sea. His constituents and all those with an interest in seafaring and the sea's environment already owe him a great debt. They will owe him an even greater one after the Bill is passed.

10 am

I join my hon. Friend in paying tribute to Lord Mustill. I also join in paying tribute to the learned Lord Donaldson for his magisterial publication on the Braer disaster, which contained 103 recommendations. I am sure that the House will refer back to that publication many times in the next few years.

We are considering the implementation of the salvage convention of 1989. I support amendment No 1, the drafting of which is analogous with that of the Merchant Shipping Act 1979. It is important that Parliament has a say in any future changes to the convention. As my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Mr. Merchant) said so eloquently, that convention will become part of our domestic law, so it would be quite wrong if the House had no say in any future changes to it.

We would all hope, of course, that any amendments to the convention would be sufficiently sensible and practicable to command widespread support in all parts of the House, but there is no guarantee of that. We are talking about important matters. The Lloyd's open form system operates in 74 per cent. of salvage incidents, but a substantial number are left as a matter for general law. The salvage convention reflects much of what is contained in the latest version of Lloyd's open form, but should the convention be altered in the future, such change must be approved by the House. If any change were needed urgently, following a particular disaster such as the Braer, I am sure that those amendments would be passed by the House and the other place with great rapidity.

As someone who represents a coastal constituency, I believe that it is essential that we maintain our crucial right to consider, and to approve or otherwise, any changes that are made to the salvage convention. The British Government will continue to have the opportunity to make representations, through the International Maritime Organisation, on any amendments to the convention, but it is necessary that the House and the other place should maintain the right to have a genuine debate on any suggested changes.

Sadly, this country, perhaps more than any other, has had more experience that any other of major shipping accidents such as the Braer and the Torrey Canyon disasters. We have a major interest in putting our point of view not only to ensure that whatever changes are suggested are sensible and have the desired effect but to protect our essential national interest—the coastlines of our constituencies, such as Eastbourne—from the pollution caused by such disasters.

I warmly welcome the amendment, which I support.

Mr. Bates: I, too, must part company with my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Streeter), who is a doughty fighter on coastal matters and takes a great interest in maritime issues. I fear that he is wrong on this particular occasion, because parliamentary scrutiny allows a number of different factors to come into play that may not be considered by, for example, the marine accident investigation branch.

My argument is based on what happened in my constituency a couple of years ago. A 5,000 tonne Swedish registered vessel, the SK Link, with a cargo of forest materials, tragically caught ablaze 10 miles off the coast of my constituency. It drifted with the tidal flows towards the coast and caused great anxiety to many of my constituents. The marine accident investigation branch paid particular attention to how the fire had started, the structure of the vessel and its safety provisions. It was unable, however, to consider the issue that was of prime concern to my constituents—the risk faced by the team of fire fighters from the Cleveland county fire brigade, who were airlifted onto the vessel to try to tackle the blaze. They discovered that the cargo included 38 tonnes of sodium chlorate, which could have exploded at any time.

Those fire fighters are paid for and accountable to my constituents and their safety is of prime concern to them. As my constituents' parliamentary representative, I should have the opportunity to scrutinise any incident in which those fire fighters are involved. If I cannot discuss in the House a potential risk to the lives of my constituents, and if that is not counted as legitimate use of parliamentary time, I wonder what can be.

It is vital that Parliament should be able to scrutinise the international conventions, such as the convention for safety of lives at sea, chapter 7 of which relates to the carriage of dangerous goods. If we had had a debate on what happened to the fire fighters in my constituency, that chapter could have been amended to avoid similar risks in the future.

Teesport is the second busiest container port in the country and it handles 43 million tonnes of cargo. It faces increasing risks because oil and gas come on shore through the central area transmission system pipeline at Teesside.

I have had a number of discussions with the Cleveland county fire brigade about the risks posed, as well as discussions with the environmental protection officers at the various district councils. There are question marks about safety and great concern has also been expressed about the effect on the environment of any accident. The local authority has taken great interest and made great strides in developing environmentally protected areas. It has established wildlife parks and the area is noted for the particular beauty of Seal sands and the coastline around my constituency at Saltburn. Northumbrian Water is spending

about £13 million to try to clean those beaches, one disaster such as the SK Link, when oil poured on to the beaches of my constituency, would cost the local authority thousands of pounds. Because of our constituents' concerns, we have a right to scrutinise any convention. We would be able to offer an added, helpful dimension to any discussions.

Great concern has been expressed about certain high risk areas. In the current stringent trading conditions, many companies find it difficult to operate. Companies feel that, however worthy it is, the proposals in the Donaldson report on high risk areas may attract a higher premium which could place added burdens on business. Business, local authorities, fire brigades, my constituents and representatives of environmental protection areas have a right to have their voices heard and their scrutiny applied to legislation. That is why I endorse Lords amendment No. 1.

Mr. Roger Evans (Monmouth): Clause 1(3) is a classic King James II clause. It really is historically unacceptable for the Crown, by treaty, to alter the rights of property and the obligations of subjects. That is why the amendment is so fundamental and important.

It has not been stressed that the key to the legislation is contained in schedule 1, and in particular in articles 13 and 14 of schedule 1, which are parts of the treaty. They are of fundamental importance. They redefine the liabilities to pay for salvage and how much salvors can be rewarded. They are classic examples of property rights and obligations, and they should be determined by Parliament and not by the Crown by the exercise of the prerogative.

Mr. Clappison: Legally, my hon. Friend has hit the nail on the head. Does he agree that articles 13 and 14 can properly be described as the regulation of economic relationships? However, is not it the case that, as with all economic relationships, they might need to be revised from time to time?

Mr. Evans: I agree entirely, but the difference, for the first time, is that when Lloyd's of London is so attacked from all quarters these days, we should recall that Lloyd's of London has a tremendous historic past and, one trusts, a future in marine insurance, that the triumph of Lloyd's of London was that the greater part of shipping collisions were arbitrated in London by arbitrators appointed by the Committee of Lloyd's, and that a small band of very distinguished experts—London Admiralty solicitors, such as my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Waterson) and members of the Admiralty Bar—over a long period established a substantial world dominance in this aspect. How that dominance appears in the invisible balance of payments statistics, I have never begun to understand. It is a classic example of the leadership of this country and the leadership of London being ignored by those who look at manufactured metal boxes which are much easier to count.

The point about that system was that Lloyd's of London had an agreement and could do things on a contractual basis. As was urged, one can see how contractual relations need to be brought up to date.

What provoked the recent convention—it is the key to this matter—is that the matter cannot be left any longer simply to those who are sinking and those who are going to save them because of the environmental issue, which means that, as a matter of public law and international law, it is necessary to protect our coastlines by superimposing and defining upon those contractual arrangements some public obligations and duties.

The important point is contained in article 13(1)(b), which states:

"the skills and efforts of the salvors in preventing or minimising damage to the environment".

That is an absolutely fundamental aspect.

Similarly, article 14(1) states:

"If the salvor has carried out salvage operations in respect of a vessel which by itself or its cargo threatened damage to the environment and has failed to earn a reward under article 13 at least equivalent to the special compensation assessable in accordance with this article, he shall be entitled to special compensation".

The rub of the argument in the international convention was exactly how we deal with the aspect of the environment and the payments to one side or the obligation of the other to pay. There was also a big dispute between this side of the Atlantic and the other side of the Atlantic —it used to be done on a pro rata basis—as to whether the cargo or the ship should pay and in what proportions. That was resolved in the convention by article 16.

I believe that, by a brief description of the guts of the matter, one can see that the most important types of social and public obligations and very serious questions of liability and rights to compensation are defined by this legislation—we hope. That is highly desirable. It is an excellent Bill, but it would be wrong to allow the Crown, by Order in Council—the Privy Council—as a matter purely of Executive power, to alter all that. That is why the Lords Committee was absolutely right to pick up that constitutional error in the Bill, and that is why I commend Lords amendment No. 1 to the House.

Mr. Clappison: I welcome the opportunity to make a short contribution on the importance of amendment No. 1, which goes to the heart of some important environmental issues. Before doing so, it would be a wise precaution for me to declare an interest as an underwriting member of Lloyd's, which these days seems to provoke certain interest in certain quarters. It might be wise to declare that interest now, in case *Hansard* is read in certain quarters on Monday and I find myself alleged to be part of a giant conspiracy involving amendment No. 1.

10.15 am

I wish to speak strongly in support of my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Streeter) and redress the balance, which has been in favour of strict constitutionality. Perhaps, at the end of the day, together with my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton, I will have to defer to the voice of strict constitutionality, as expressed by my hon. Friends the Members for Stroud (Mr. Knapman) and for Beckenham (Mr. Merchant).

My hon. Friend the Member for Monmouth (Mr. Evans) hit the nail on the head, as I suggested in my intervention, in his analysis of the legal implications of the amendment. However, I might place more emphasis than my hon. Friend did on the environmental implications which follow from leaving such matters to the law of contract and to the economic relationships between contracting parties.

Protection of the environment must be the top priority. It is right that public law should override freedom of contract and reinforce the protection that has been given under the Lloyd's open forms. There have been too many cases, I suspect—this matter was dealt with very well in Committee—when important environmental matters have

been at risk when ships are sinking and salvors are considering whether to go to the rescue, and there is hesitation and delay while parties argue about terms in a contract. The environment is just too important for that; it should not be left to such hazards. We should have a clear public law regime that sets out the rights and liabilities of the parties.

Such rights and liabilities may require revision. I am constantly surprised at how late the forces of law have been brought to bear upon the subject. The environment is so vital that the matter should have been dealt with years ago. Now, relatively late in the day, the needs of the environment have been brought into the equation. Perhaps further revisions will be needed to reassess, for example, the balance between risk and reward or to set a higher reward for salvors if salvors do not come forward because of the rewards that are provided for them in environmental cases. They might feel that the incentives are just not great enough for them to take the risk involved in going to the rescue of a ship. Perhaps the incentives will not be entirely effective. If that is so, I for one would be happy to take part in a revision.

I warn my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud and other hon. Friends who talked about strict constitutionality and the use of parliamentary time that it may be necessary for the matter, if it is to be subject to the House and to Parliament, to come back before the House on several future occasions so that we can act in the best interests of the environment and fine-tune the legislation to the needs of the environment.

It is an important issue. There are many other ways in which the law could be developed, not least to take account of marine environment high-risk areas, which is one of the most important recommendations in the Donaldson report. I can see no reason why a way cannot be found to take account of that in regulating such relationships, to provide higher incentives in such cases and to reward responsible masters and shipowners who use routes which put the environment at the least risk.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sutton put the matter most succinctly. I have expressed concern during the passage of the legislation and said that we should put the highest possible priority on the protection of the environment. I am happy to support the sentiments expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton, even if, at the end of the day, we have to defer to the voice of strict constitutionality.

Ms Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): Many Tory Members have expressed their thanks and gratitude to the noble Lords in the other place. May I place on record my gratitude to Lord Clinton-Davis, who gave full co-operation to the Bill but has not been mentioned in previous speeches. *[Interruption.]* Hon. Members tell me that the hon. Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) referred to him.

Mr. Harris *indicated dissent.*

Ms Walley: Oh, the hon. Member for St. Ives apparently did not mention the noble Lord. Clearly, I should not accept contributions made from a sedentary position.

Mr. Harris: I did not mention Lord Clinton-Davis, but I am happy to join the hon. Lady in thanking him for the valuable contributions that he made in the other place.

Ms Walley: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman.

Amendment No. 1 deals with parliamentary scrutiny. I am heartened by the huge number of well-informed, brief contributions that we have had from Tory Members who are suddenly interested in merchant shipping and want to participate in a debate on parliamentary scrutiny—issues which the Labour party has been trying to raise for a long time. It is ironic that so many people are suddenly so concerned about parliamentary scrutiny. In reality, it is a well-orchestrated filibuster of today's business, because parliamentary scrutiny should also be given to the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill and the Energy Conservation Bill.

Mr. Bates: The hon. Lady should also place on record the fact that only one Labour Member is in the Chamber this morning. It is all very well for her to talk about the importance of the environment, but by turning out and discussing the environment, Conservative Members are declaring the fact that they are serious about it and interested in it, whereas the vacant Benches behind the hon. Lady demonstrate eloquently the Labour party's position.

Ms Walley: The Bill has come forward only because the Government were not prepared to deal with the international convention on salvage. We have raised the matter time and again in Committee, but the Government refused to bring forward their own legislation to deal with merchant shipping and pollution. It is only because they have relied on the admirable efforts of the hon. Member for St. Ives to rescue them for their failure to deal with merchant shipping that the Bill has now been through its Committee and Lords stages and returned here. It has therefore had all the debate that it needs and it should now be a matter of rubber stamping the amendments before us.

Mr. Roger Evans: It is absolutely astonishing and an indictment of the whole parliamentary process that the Bill got as far as it did before clause 1(3) was picked up by the Lords Committee. It is up to us to put it right this morning.

Ms Walley: That proves that, had the Government been prepared to prioritise merchant shipping and introduce proper legislation rather than legislate in a backhand way through a private Member's Bill, the Bill would have been carefully prepared and we would not have to pick up mistakes at this late stage.

The hon. Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Clappison) tabled a great number of amendments to block the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. Will the hon. Lady return to amendment No. 1, please?

Ms Walley: Amendment No. 1 deals with parliamentary scrutiny.

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): A moment ago, the hon. Lady said that she thought that the House should rubber stamp the Lords amendments. Will she think again about the phrase, "rubber stamp"? Is it not the obverse of proper parliamentary scrutiny?

Ms Walley: We want parliamentary mechanisms that enable us to deal with the issues of the day and to introduce parliamentary legislation that has been thoroughly researched and well prepared within the overall agenda of the Government's legislation. If that had been done in

respect of the 1989 international salvage convention, we would not be dealing with this Bill. The later issue of parliamentary scrutiny had not been included and we are not dealing with it as I should have liked, partly because priority has not been given to merchant shipping. Indeed, the House of Commons does not even have a Minister responsible for shipping—he sits in the other place. Those issues must be borne in mind.

In view of all that has been said this morning on parliamentary scrutiny, will the Minister say whether that will conflict with the provisions of the Bill on deregulation and contracting out? I agree with the hon. Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies) that parliamentary scrutiny is absolutely important. Members of Parliament need to know exactly what legislation we are passing and be involved in the procedure of drawing up legislation. I welcome an amendment that will give proper parliamentary scrutiny to subsequent orders of this kind. Bearing in mind not just what is contained in the draconian first part of the Bill on deregulation and contracting out but that many issues relating to deregulation and contracting out could be taken away from this place, could the matter that we are now discussing be taken away at a later stage because of that?

Clause 1 was drawn up because we need to ratify the 1989 international salvage convention. I would welcome any subsequent conventions that arise out of that convention, or out of the International Maritime Organisation or European organisations, which would enable us better to respond to ships in distress and prevent environmental catastrophes.

Other issues arose from the Donaldson report, which many hon. Members have before them. Although those may not relate directly to the international salvage convention, they should be brought forward urgently. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds has raised some specific issues with me. As so many other issues need to be addressed, the Minister's response may be an opportunity for him to say whether he now proposes to introduce new regulations to implement the recommendations of the Donaldson inquiry, which could be part and parcel of clause 1. Will he introduce the mandatory routing of oil tankers to avoid hazardous areas of sea? Which of Donaldson's recommendations does he expect the shipping and ports industry to deal with voluntarily?

Mr. Waterson: Does the hon. Lady agree that one of the main benefits of the Bill is that, by extending the strict liability to vessels other than laden oil tankers, part II, schedule 3 may help to deal with many clandestine and apparently minor discharges of bunker oil along our coastline which, on a daily basis, is very damaging to our natural wildlife, particularly to birds?

Ms Walley: The hon. Gentleman makes an important case and I entirely agree with him. I am pleased that we are dealing not only with catastrophes but with the regular, consistent discharge of bunker oil into the sea, which is not properly dealt with at present. It may be better to debate that matter under clause 6, but it may also relate to the parliamentary scrutiny that we are discussing now. In which case, this might be an opportunity for the Minister to elaborate further on the Government's policy on ports.

It is clear from recent parliamentary questions that I have asked about whether the Minister will introduce regulations to deal with facilities for the ports and ways in which legal discharges can be made—*[Interruption.]* I have just accepted an intervention on the subject, which is part and parcel of the parliamentary scrutiny that we are discussing. I agree that the issue of facilities in ports cannot be left to the marketplace.

Having made those few comments, I look forward to the Minister's reply.

10.30 am

The Minister for Transport in London (Mr. Steve Norris): I commend my hon. Friend the Member for St Ives (Mr. Harris) for his customary assiduity in introducing the amendment, and I join him in thanking noble Lords in another place who have helped to sponsor the amendments to the Bill that we wish to make this morning.

The lonely vigil of the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms Walley) on the Opposition Benches is notable for the very reason that she should recall more than she has —she alone appears to have the slightest interest in these important topics. By contrast, my hon. Friends have contributed to an extraordinarily high-quality debate on an extremely important issue. It is a bit rich for the hon. Lady to talk in terms of a sudden interest because it would be useful if the Labour party took a sudden interest in who governs the country, which is what the amendment is about. It has been notable over the years that the Labour party has been solely concerned to ensure that it introduced the sort of socialistic nonsense that the electors of this country will never take through the front door as they have shown by their affection for the Government—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is getting a head of steam and must return to amendment No. 1.

Mr. Norris: As ever, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you go straight to the heart of it. I was incensed. I crave your indulgence as I did stray, for which I should be reproached, and I am grateful to you. I shall leave my remarks on the record and those who witness our proceedings on television will draw their own conclusions about which side of the House is concerned about marine pollution.

Ms Walley: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Norris: No, I do not have the time to give way to the hon. Lady, as it is important to get on.

I was discussing the useful debate that we have had with my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick). He and I are mere journeymen in the world—we are small business men. When I listened to my hon. Friends the Members for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Streeter), for Eastbourne (Mr. Waterston), for Hertsmere (Mr. Clappison), for Langbaurgh (Mr. Bates), for Stroud (Mr. Knapman) and for Monmouth (Mr. Evans) I became terrified at the prospect of ever having to pay my hon. Friends for the sort of contributions that we have just heard free of charge. I am diffident about intervening or responding to the extraordinary outpouring of knowledge that my hon. Friends displayed. I note that my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Mr. Merchant) has a degree in law and politics so perhaps, by implication, he is also to be commended for his assiduity.

My hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham was right when he said that it was important to ensure that any amendment to the essential provisions of the Bill should be subject to the scrutiny of the House. He made an important

[Mr. Norris]

point that was underlined by my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud. Without wishing to select one contribution over all the excellent contributions that we have had this morning, I must say that in the House we can effectively scrutinise the changes proposed by others whose interests are not those of the United Kingdom. I believe that that was the expression for which my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham was seeking—the people that we are talking about were not necessarily born in the United Kingdom. We are talking about those who quite properly prosecute interests that are not United Kingdom interests. We want to ensure that when such changes are made, they are made with the full scrutiny of the House. It is important on all such occasions when we, quite properly, enter into international obligations—whether as part of the European Union or any other international forum—that this House remains in control of those negotiations and is able to endorse them after appropriate debate or to reject them if that is appropriate.

Mr. Ian Bruce (South Dorset): I thank my hon. Friend for giving way—I decided not to make a speech so that we could get on. Will my hon. Friend take up the point that concerns my constituents? Recommendation 9.3 of the Donaldson report mentions the harmful effects of pollution from bunker oil and waste, which are often carried around the world without the facilities to get rid of it. A company called ROIL proposes to place a facility into my constituency, in Portland—all the details have been given to the Minister for Aviation and Shipping. In asking us to ensure that we ratify the conventions, the Government must also help to put in place the necessary facilities.

Mr. Norris: I know that my hon. Friend has submitted full details of the ROIL scheme to my noble Friend the Minister for Aviation and Shipping. No doubt ROIL will continue to press for a waste oil facility and I know that my hon. Friend the Member for South Dorset (Mr. Bruce) will continue to press for new jobs in Portland. I hope that he will not mind if I do not dwell at length on the point that he has made. If I can help to bring the matter to the attention of my noble Friend, I will be happy to do so.

Like all law, conventions adopted within the International Maritime Organisation require amendment from time to time to take account of the changing circumstances in which they operate. I think that my hon. Friends appreciated the fact that many of the amendments are technical and do not necessarily require detailed consideration by a Chamber such as this. The Bill, therefore, provides for those amendments to be implemented by Order in Council—that is perfectly sensible and straightforward. It is clearly right that Parliament should have oversight of the implementation of such amendments. I, therefore, agree with those of my hon. Friends who supported amendment No. 1, which ensures that any future revision of the salvage convention can be simply and rapidly implemented in the United Kingdom, subject to the agreement of this House and the House of Lords.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sutton, who I know is, and has for a long time been, interested in the subject as he has a maritime interest in his constituency, need not worry about the ability of the House to make swift changes and take rapid action should that prove necessary—a point endorsed by my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh. My hon. Friend also mentioned the tragic accident involving the Pescado, which was the subject of a thorough investigation by the marine accident investigation branch.

As my hon. Friend knows, a number of recommendations were made as a result of that report. Some of the recommendations have been made public, some have been communicated to members of the family and others remain to be determined. Following that incident, there is and will remain a procedure that must be followed—whether in relation to tragic accidents such as the Pescado or incidents involving oil pollution—and under which rapid action can be taken and, if necessary, rapid changes can be made to the regulatory framework. None of that will be impeded because the House has the opportunity to endorse such changes where it is felt that they are appropriate.

In this country, we can be proud of the fact that we have the ability swiftly to address the causes of accidents, whether marine, aviation, rail or any other mode of transport to ensure that swift action is taken—I am thinking particularly of the MAIB and the air accident investigation branch. One of the things about which we are concerned is that we should not rush to make regulatory change before we have fully taken account of, for example, the cost that might flow from our over-enthusiasm in dealing with the cause of accidents immediately. I know that my hon. Friend is concerned about the Pescado and I understand his point, but it does not conflict with the intention of this amendment.

If the amendment were not made, there would be no parliamentary oversight of the implementation of any revision of the salvage convention. Those who ask whether this power sanctions the implementation of radical changes to the salvage convention by subordinate legislation need not concern themselves—the answer is clearly no. The power sanctions only the implementation of relatively minor changes to the convention. If the convention needed to be revised extensively, that would be done not by agreeing amendments to the 1989 convention, but by agreeing an entirely new convention. The power of clause 1 (3) would not allow the implementation of a new salvage convention. For that, one would properly require primary legislation.

In answer to a couple of my hon. Friends, we do not anticipate the early need for significant amendments to the 1989 salvage convention, which supersedes a convention that was agreed in 1910. As I think my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne knows, the principles are, in general, well established and such amendment as is necessary is technical—it reflects technical change rather than any amendment of the principle.

The United Kingdom will, of course, ratify the salvage convention shortly after the Bill receives Royal Assent. The convention will enter into force one year after the date on which 15 states have agreed to be bound by its provisions. To date, nine states have made that commitment. The Irish Republic already has legislation in place to permit ratification. Australia and Canada, like the UK, should adopt the necessary legislation shortly. Entry into force in 1995 is, therefore, possible and one can assume that entry into force no later than 1996 is relatively certain. If, this autumn, the number of contracting parties to the salvage convention is still insufficient to bring the convention into force internationally in 1995, the terms of the convention will be applied in UK law from 1 January 1995.

I should like to refer to one or two other points that were made by my hon. Friends during the debate. My hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh mentioned Teesport. I agree that that is an important matter. I think that he will agree that the issues have been answered, in a sense, by my hon. Friends' observations. We have had a valuable debate to flesh out precisely why, as a number of my hon. Friends have said, this is an important amendment.

Perhaps it was not fair of my hon. Friend the Member for Monmouth to chide the House for having allowed to Bill to go this far without spotting the need for the amendment. I underline that my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives introduced the Bill as a private Member's Bill. He has prosecuted it vigorously with the support of Labour Members, who have been here, if not in number, then at least in spirit and who have not opposed the passage of the Bill. I am grateful to them for that. The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North mentioned the Donaldson report. I do not want to go down that track, because there are other amendments with which we should deal. As she knows, the Government remain committed to ensuring that the recommendations in Lord Donaldson's excellent report are fully aired and debated and, where necessary, brought into effect as urgently as possible.

On salvage tugs, Lord Donaldson's inquiry envisaged in the longer term a mixture of a few large salvage tugs and smaller tugs to administer first aid while a larger tug is on the way. The inquiry rightly acknowledged the need for negotiations with tug owners and other countries to establish what could be done before we decide on tug sectors. We intend to take those discussions forward and the inquiry also recognised that detailed negotiations on arrangements and funding would take time, but it identified Dover strait, the western approaches and north-west Scotland as the three areas most urgently in need.

10.45 am

We have asked the chief executive of the Coastguard Agency to carry out a study of the cost and benefits of providing the three tugs. That study should take about six months. The appropriateness and role of public funding, both in the short and long term, of the tugs needs careful consideration and we shall consider the matter in the context of the report's general recommendations on financing.

Ms Walley: In view of what the Minister has said, can we expect early Government legislation to implement the Donaldson report?

Mr. Norris The hon. Lady knows our attitude to the Donaldson report. We have commended those people who prepared the report and, in particular, Lord Donaldson for an excellent piece of work which gives us a number of valuable insights. We have accepted some of the recommendations and agreed, as Lord Donaldson suggested would be appropriate, to investigate others as a matter of urgency. She will not cause me to move from that position this morning, as she is well aware.

The hon Lady asked whether the provision of the salvage tugs should be more widespread. She knows that the inquiry recognised that it was impractical to provide coverage of all areas by full-size salvage tugs. Not only would cost outweigh benefits, but skilled crews might become stale and unable to function in an emergency. The inquiry suggests the Dover strait and south-western approaches because the density of traffic means that a tug is most likely to be needed there. Most other areas have some sort of tug available. The only exception is north-west Scotland, where a third salvage tug is suggested.

The hon. Lady asked for an undertaking in relation to the contents of the excellent Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill, which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry currently has before the House. It is classic of the Labour party to assume that any attempt to reduce the burden of regulation on industry or business will lay to waste killing fields of danger and expose employees unnecessarily, solely in the pursuit of profit and putting safety last. That is, of course, a nonsensical approach to the sensible business of ensuring that regulations are always appropriate to the protections that any individual or organisation can reasonably expect.

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): Are the Government in favour of regulation?

Mr. Norris: I shall not be drawn on that, save to say that we believe that regulations should exist only where they are necessary for the protection of the public, as individuals or collectively, and where they are concerned with safety, honesty and probity. Any regulation that goes beyond that to any degree and imposes a burden on individuals or businesses which cannot be justified should not remain on the statute book for one moment longer.

I am sad to say that the Labour party is obsessed with the idea that the slightest reduction in the burden on industry or business will somehow simply allow the massive accretion of private profit at the expense of personal safety. That sort of attitude will ensure that it remains exactly where it is long after the next election, with or without the ministrations and leadership of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott).

The hon. Lady need not concern herself that the deregulation Bill will have the slightest impact on the terms of the convention. My goodness, I saw you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, about to direct my mind to the amendment, but I hope that you appreciate that I was answering a request from the hon. Lady. Methinks I was provoked yet again, not just by the hon. Lady but by the normally silent member of the usual channels mafia, the hon. Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) who is occupying his usual place on the Opposition Front Bench.

I do not wish to detain the House unnecessarily. We have had an excellent debate and I am grateful to my hon. Friends who participated. My hon. Friend the Member for Hallam reminds me that I may have overlooked mentioning my hon. Friend the Member for Hertsmere. All the contributions were excellent. My hon. Friend the Member for Sutton is an experienced enough lawyer to know that, although he made his debating point with force, my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham and others are clearly right that it is necessary for Parliament to have the right and ability to scrutinise proposed changes to obligations entered into by this country in conjunction with others. The amendment provides for that and I commend it to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 3

AMENDMENTS AS TO POWERS OF IMPLEMENTATION

Lords amendment: No. 2, in page 2, line 43, leave out from ("section") to ("shall") and insert—

("(a) may make provision corresponding to the provision authorised for an Order by paragraphs (a) to (d) of subsection (4) of this section; and (b)")

Mr. Harris: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

I hope that this matter can be dealt with quickly. The amendment corrects a minor error in the wording of clause 3, and I am grateful to their lordships for correcting it.

Clause 3 is important. It aims to simplify the procedure for the domestic implementation of technical amendments to the International Maritime Organisation conventions governing the safety of life at sea and the prevention of pollution from ships. Those two issues—making our seas cleaner and safer—are what the Bill is all about.

Hon. Members have spoken about the work of the IMO. I visited the IMO across the river yesterday to meet its secretary-general, Mr. William O'Neill, about Lord Donaldson's report. It is clear that the IMO has carried out its own appraisal of that report, but, of course, the initiatives on the report have to be taken by the Government. I have no doubt that the Government will make recommendations to the IMO on safety at sea and the prevention of pollution by ships.

Despite the remarks by my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Mr. Merchant), it is necessary for many of these matters to be dealt with internationally. I look forward to the Government, taking a lead where international initiatives are required in putting such matters to the IMO. I have always been greatly impressed by the IMO, which is rather different from most United Nations agencies. I was about to say that it does a down-to-earth job, but that is quite the wrong metaphor for a maritime organisation. It functions in a workmanlike and impressive way.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 4

PREVENTION OF POLLUTION FROM SHIPS: FURTHER POWER TO IMPLEMENT INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS

Lords amendment: No. 3, in page 3, line 22, at end insert—

("and provision authorising the making of regulations authorises the amendment or revocation of regulations made by virtue of paragraph (e) of the said subsection (4).")

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.-[*Mr. Harris.*]

Ms Walley: Will the amendment make it easier for the Government to lead discussions at next year's North sea conference in Denmark on the need to curb deliberate and continual dumping of oil at sea? That matter was mentioned briefly in the debate on amendment No. 1.

Mr. Norris: I can assure the hon. Lady on that point. Plainly, the extension of the United Kingdom's jurisdiction for counter-pollution measures will apply to the law not only as it stands but to any future law. The amendment makes that clear.

Mr. Quentin Davies: The clause is extremely important, because it gives effect to the provision in the law of the sea conference that coastal states can extend their jurisidiction over waters beyond the territorial sea for the purposes of controlling marine pollution. This island is beside the world's busiest sea lane, between the English channel and the North sea. A small proportion of ships passing our coasts fly the British flag or the flags of the other coastal states. Therefore, it is important to exploit the possibilities provided by the new law of the sea that emerged from the 1982 convention to apply our own standards as a coastal state.

The amendment is sensible; it makes it clear that when the legislation is used to extend coastal state jurisdiction by regulation, we can subsequently change the regulations. That is important, because, from time to time, marine pollution regulations need to be revised without having to go back on that essential extension of the jurisdiction of this country over the seas beyond our territorial waters. I hope that the amendment will be accepted.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 5

LIABILITY AND COMPENSATION FOR OIL POLLUTION DAMAGE: 1992 PROTOCOLS

Lords amendment: No. 4, in page 3, line 37, leave out from beginning to ("and") in line 42 and insert—

(a) the word "1984" shall be omitted from the section 4A(1) of the 1974 Act and the paragraph 4(a) and (d) constituting Schedule 1 to the 1974 Act as respectively inserted and substituted by Part II of Schedule 4 to the 1988 Act;")

Mr. Harris: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to take Lords amendments Nos. 5 to 7.

Mr. Harris: The amendments improve the clauses as they left the House. Clause 5 is extremely important.

Mr. Norris: The amendments are important because clause 5 will allow the UK to accede to the 1992 protocols. The Government are keen to do that as soon as possible, so that higher levels of compensation quickly become available to victims of oil pollution. The 1992 protocols will enter into force one year after the date on which a total of 10 states representing both leading carriers and importers of oil have agreed to be bound by their provisions. To date, only Mexico has agreed to be bound by the 1992 protocols. The Government plan to accede to the protocols shortly after the Bill has received Royal Assent.

Hon. Members will be interested to know that copies of the 1992 protocols are available in the Vote Office for them to consult. We have arranged for the text of the protocols to be published as a Command Paper and laid before Parliament at the beginning of the next Session.

In the past, the implementation of IMO instruments has taken a considerable length of time. We are anxious to avoid a repetition of that with the 1992 protocols; we are working with our partners towards early implementation of the protocols in domestic law, and will seek to encourage other countries to follow suit.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

It being Eleven o'clock, MADAM SPEAKER *interrupted the proceedings, pursuant to Standing Order No. 11 (Friday sittings).*

Disabled People (Consultation)

11 am

The Minister for Social Security and Disabled People (Mr. Nicholas Scott): With permission, Madam Speaker, I should like to make a statement regarding the publication today of a consultation document on measures to tackle discrimination against disabled people. The document addresses five key areas affecting their lives. The Government would welcome comments on the proposals in the course of the next three months.

The Government give a high priority to helping disabled people to live with dignity and independence. Over the last 15 years, much has been done to further that aim. This document seeks to build on that record, offering wider opportunities for disabled people to partake in and contribute to the life of our community.

As the House will be aware, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister welcomed the fact that the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill was to be examined and discussed in more detail in Committee. This and subsequent debates also provided the opportunity for other voices to be heard in addition to those of the supporters of the Bill—employers, small businesses and other service providers, the very people on whom the burden of any additional cost would be likely to fall. The Government's consultation document will ensure that all those affected will have the opportunity to comment on the next steps.

The first issue addressed in the document is that of employment. The quota system, which requires that registered disabled people should make up at least 3 per cent. of larger work forces, is increasingly recognised as unworkable. Only one third of those in the work force eligible to register do so—about 1 per cent. Therefore, the quota scheme as it stands cannot be sustained and the approach is, in my view, inappropriate to today's needs.

Many employers, of course, adopt good and sensitive practices when employing disabled people, but the Government recognise that some employers may discriminate unjustifiably against them. We are therefore inviting views on how that unjustifiable discrimination against disabled people can be tackled in this important area.

One option might be to strengthen the quota scheme itself, but it is hard to see how its underlying problem of low registration could be overcome. Another approach might be simply to repeal the quota scheme and replace it with an entirely voluntary system.

The Government are aware, however, that there is now widespread support for the present system to be replaced by a statutory right for disabled people not to be unjustifiably discriminated against in employment. Such a right would replace the quota scheme. We are consulting on ways in which such a right might be framed, but the Government would be prepared to consider the position again if there were substantial support for a workable and effective alternative.

The introduction of such a right would have to take into account the fact that some people would be unable to do some jobs because of their disability. Employers would also have to consider whether it was reasonably practicable—taking account of cost and other factors—to make an adjustment to the working environment or practices or to provide specialist equipment to enable a disabled person to do his job. A code of practice would be issued to provide

[Mr. Nicholas Scott]

guidance on those matters. We would draw on the experience of employers and disabled people when developing the code.

We believe that the right should apply only to people who have a substantial disability that is long term or recurring. We are seeking views on how best to define that group in a clear and practical manner. The new right, like the quota scheme, should not apply to employers with fewer than 20 employees.

Where individuals believe they have been unjustifiably discriminated against, they would have a right to complain to an industrial tribunal. However, it might be possible to provide, as an alternative to full tribunal proceedings, a less formal but more practical and more speedy process to resolve such issues.

Disabled people not only want jobs—important though that ambition is—they also want to be able to participate, to the greatest extent possible, in the full range of activities open to the able-bodied population. It is important, therefore, to make the environment increasingly more accessible to them. The building regulations have done much to make new non-domestic dwellings accessible as well as most extensions to such buildings.

We are considering whether the regulations should also apply to the design of new domestic dwellings so that they would take greater account of the needs of disabled people. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment is considering advice in that area from the building regulations advisory committee. He aims to consult on detailed proposals before the end of the year. That will promote an informed debate on the extent to which new dwellings should be made more accessible to disabled people. There will be a similar consultation exercise in Scotland.

Making buildings physically accessible is of little use to disabled people if they are excluded by prejudice or groundless fears for their safety. We are seeking views on making it unlawful for any person providing goods or services to the public to treat people unfavourably because of disability. Discrimination would be ruled out in a variety of areas, including access to public places, accommodation, entertainment facilities such as cinemas, theatres and restaurants, as well as facilities for transport and travel. The new right of access would not apply where existing physical barriers prevented access or where compliance may create insurmountable safety problems. Where access was wrongly denied, a disabled person would be able to take civil proceedings. He or she would be able to recover damages for any financial loss suffered as well as damages for injuries to feelings. In the latter instance, it might be a fixed sum or an amount subject to an upper limit. The Government could vary the sum or limit in future years. Depending on the level of damages for injury to feelings, claims could be subject to the small claims procedure where proceedings are informal and simple and the cost relatively low.

However, the disabled person might often prefer that the situation which had originally caused offence should be rectified without recourse even to the small claims court. To facilitate the resolution of cases without recourse to legal action, the Government are considering whether to institute a mechanism to help the parties concerned reach a mutually acceptable solution. For example, that might be done by funding a voluntary body to provide an advice and conciliation service for disabled people.

I come now to financial services. We have received little evidence of discrimination in the provision of financial services. None the less, we are inviting the Association of British Insurers, the British Bankers Association and the Building Societies Association to develop and issue statements of good practice on the treatment of disabled customers, including clear advice on how to pursue complaints and, in the case of banks and building societies, to explain the role of their ombudsmen. The Association of British Insurers, for example, will be asked to include in their statement of good practice, first, the need to be aware of the main forms of disability and their relevance in assessing the size or probability of an insurance claim; secondly, that insurers should ask only for medical information that is demonstrably related to the additional risk associated with insuring the disabled person; and thirdly, the need for insurance companies to have a clear mechanism for the investigation of complaints from disabled people and for those complaints to be handled sensitively and speedily.

The ABI will also be invited to set up an independent advisory committee, comprising representatives of insurers and the disability organisations, to monitor the effectiveness of the statement of good practice.

The banks and building societies already follow the code of practice,"Good Banking". That code has, as one of its guiding principles, that banks and building societies should act

"fairly and reasonably in all their dealings with their customers".

The Government are committed to tackling discrimination against disabled people. There is a strong case for setting up an independent body that could closely monitor that area and advise the Government on the effect of existing efforts to combat discrimination. The body would work closely with existing bodies representing the interests of disabled people.

The new body might be called the National Disability Council. In particular, its duties would include monitoring discrimination against disabled people and advising the Government on general issues and measures relating to the elimination of discrimination and progress towards those aims; drawing up codes of practice when requested by the Government; reviewing the effect of the new right of access on business; and reporting annually to the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People, who would be required to lay its report before Parliament.

The Government, in their triple role of policymaker, employer, and service provider, can and should provide a strong lead. I am now co-ordinating a programme of action developed to build upon the many positive initiatives that are already taking place. Later this year, the Government will be launching a major publicity campaign designed to change attitudes and actions that adversely affect disabled people. We will also seek to involve organisations of and for disabled people in wider public consultations and to increase the representation of disabled people on public bodies.

A new programme for action on employment of disabled people in the civil service, launched in conjunction with this document, will provide a strategic framework and detailed action checklists to help Departments and agencies recruit and retain disabled people. Many Government Departments and agencies have

already improved the accessibility of their buildings and the quality of service they offer to disabled people. To encourage this approach throughout the public service, a checklist on how the citizens charter principles apply to service provision for disabled people will also be published shortly.

The Government have an impressive record in helping disabled people, but more needs to be done. This document outlines the Government's proposals for further action designed to release the untapped potential of disabled people in our society.

I commend the document to the House and ask that hon. Members and all those who share our concern to improve the quality of life of disabled people by removing barriers and expanding opportunities, to respond in a constructive and forward-looking way to its proposals.

Mr. Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield): It was with some sadness that I listened to the Minister's statement on what could possibly be his last appearance at the Dispatch Box. His words add very little to what was said in the previous debate in the House, and in his subsequent letter to me on 26 May.

The Minister knows that there are two ways of evaluating the Government's performance before the statement—it is either malevolence towards disabled people and their rights or it is incompetence. Those of us who have been here Friday after Friday know which it is.

It is clear to us that the Government did not have the honesty or integrity to oppose publicly and openly a Bill offering civil rights to disabled people, and that they did not have the courage to allow the House to make its own decision on such a Bill. That is the background to today's statement. But for the Government's total embarrassment on recent Fridays, there would have been no statement, however inadequate.

We received a copy of the statement very late—only a few minutes before the Minister spoke. I thank him for giving us a copy, but I see that it refers to codes of practice; we hear "voluntary" "advisory" and, unfortunately, "citizens charter", but we do not hear about "power" to disabled people. Nor did we hear about a commission, which is the only effective way to deliver rights to disabled people.

Will the Minister confirm that the statement says nothing about important matters such as education and transport, which seriously affect the lives of disabled people? The statement runs to five pages of guff, but contains nothing about education or transport. *[Interruption.]* If I am allowed to be heard, I shall continue. I know that there are certain sensitivities on the Conservative Back Benches—we have certainly witnessed a discreditable performance Friday after Friday. Once again, Conservatives would like the Opposition's voice not to be heard on this important issue.

Why does the statement fail to address various aspects? It is clear that the Government believe that education and persuasion are all that is necessary, workable, affordable and practical. Suitable legislation that meets all the criteria and which would deliver power to disabled people has already been before the House.

Why has not the Minister produced a document that delivers civil rights? That is what the debate is all about, but the Government are terrified of delivering them to disabled people. Why has not the Minister made a statement of intention that delivers on holistic and integrated approach? The House and disabled people outside know that the statement is piecemeal, partial, pathetic, grudging, belated and inadequate. Disabled people and their supporters will not accept it.

Mr. Scott: I recall a story about a parson who from time to time used to write in the margins of his sermons the initials "AWSL". They stood for "argument weak: shout loudly". Nothing better typifies the hon. Gentleman's approach than those initials.

The previous Labour Government's record bears no comparison with that of this Government in meeting the needs of disabled people over the past 15 years. We have trebled the amount of money provided to disabled people through the benefits system; we have introduced the disability living allowance, the disability working allowance and the independent living fund; carers' income has increased one hundredfold; and I believe that our record bears comparison with anything that has gone before.

I am sure that the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) listened with great care to the statement, and that he will respond in his usual constructive manner when he has had time to reflect. I believe that it contains another major step in the right direction. We do not believe in the concept of rights in the sense that it was embraced in the Bill. We prefer to tackle the key issues affecting the lives of disabled people in a practical, workmanlike and affordable manner. We will continue that approach.

Mr. Alan Howarth (Stratford-on-Avon): Does my right hon. Friend accept that his own abhorrence of discrimination is widely recognised and appreciated and that it is welcome that the Government are undertaking consultation? But will he further accept that the extent of the consultation needs to be increased and that it must be conducted, so to speak, without prejudice?

Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Government owe it to all of us who are concerned about this immensely important issue to make a balanced and realistic analysis of the benefits as well as the costs to the economy, and that it will not do to assert again in the consultation document that the cost of anti-discrimination legislation is £17 billion? We appear to have a dialogue of the deaf in this regard—not with my right hon. Friend, but with the economic Departments.

Will my right hon. Friend accept that the consultation needs to cover all the relevant fields and that it is for the Government to lead in the introduction of legislation to establish civil rights for disabled people on a comprehensive basis as a decent society requires, while safeguarding the reasonable interests of employers and service providers?

Mr. Scott: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his opening remarks and I appreciate his concern. I sought to set out in the statement what we have identified as the key issues. However, it will be open to those who read the consultative document to respond on a range of matters affecting the lives of disabled people. The document contains some assessment of the costs that flow from action in these spheres and, if we move in due course to relevant legislation, compliance cost assessments will be introduced.

I understand the point that my hon. Friend has raised more than once about the need to balance costs with the benefits that might flow to society.

[Mr. Scott]

Manifestly, it is more difficult to quantify those benefits in financial terms than to quantify the costs, but undoubtedly there are benefits from greater employment of disabled people and from putting greater purchasing power into the hands of disabled people. That purchasing power can then flow out. We ought to recognise those: to quantify them is a much more difficult task.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): Is not the Minister still up the river without a paddle? Does he recall my hour-long meeting with the Prime Minister, when it was made clear that the Government could not accept any Bill on this subject with cost implications? Is that still his policy?

Is he aware that the promoters of the civil rights Bill have consulted very widely already? Indeed, is he aware that, ever since I first published the Bill in 1991, the response has been strongly positive? Is he also aware that it would be a further and gross betrayal of Britain's 6.5 million disabled people to abandon a Bill which they say is so crucially important to them, and which has a parliamentary majority? Will there be a debate in this House on the document on an amendable motion?

Mr. Scott: It is certainly not open to me to deal with the last point raised by the right hon. Gentleman, but I have no doubt that he can make his views known in other quarters.

The manifest flaw in the approach taken by the Bill which we recently discussed is that the costs that were inherent in it were unquantifiable and unpredictable. It is important when the Government come to legislate that they have a clear view not only about the costs that they intend to accept themselves but about those that they intend to impose on business and other providers in our society. That was not taken into account by the Opposition in their approach to the issue. I believe that to create a concept of some over-arching right for disabled people leads one all to easily into the dangers that we have observed in other such legislation.

Mr. Sheerman: Name one.

Mr. Scott: I look particularly—I make no criticism of anyone involved in the process—

Mr. Sheerman: Pregnant ex-service women.

Mr. Scott: If the hon. Gentleman will let me complete the sentence—yes, precisely that. I find few people in my constituency who do not react with astonishment and dismay to the prospect of pregnant ex-service women receiving grants and compensation vastly in excess of those serving members of the armed forces who have been injured in the course of their duties.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on an excellent statement, which is welcomed on the Conservative Benches as a positive way forward for providing additional opportunities for Britain's disabled people. I particularly welcome his proposals for the Government's own lead. The Government are a big player as an employer. I urge my right hon. Friend to produce the action checklist and act on it as soon as possible.

Mr. Scott: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, whose record in disability matters is well known and highly respected. As I said in my statement, if we are to encourage others to take action in this important area, the Government must set a lead and an example.

Ms Liz Lynne (Rochdale): Is the Minister aware that, although his statement is all very well and good, it does not go far enough? Disabled people want to have their civil rights entrenched in law. They want to be treated like ordinary human beings, because that is what they are.

Why are there no details about transport in the statement? The Minister says that he wants to get more disabled people into employment. Does he not realise that without accessible transport, they cannot get to that employment? He mentioned action in the document. Is he now saying that education and persuasion have not worked?

Mr. Scott: No—I do not agree with the hon. Lady's last point. Increasingly, in terms not only of physical provision but of attitudes towards disabled people, we have made a great deal of progress. However, I recognise that I would not be making this statement today if I did not recognise that we needed to do better and go further in the future.

In a way, I believe that transport has been a good example of how significant progress has been made in recent years without the need for some over-arching legislation. On the railways, all new rolling stock is now accessible for disabled people. We already have in London and in other parts of the country pilot projects for properly accessible buses.

All new taxis in London have to be accessible to wheelchairs, and 80 other local authorities around the country are following the same rules that were started in London. Anyone who looks at what has happened in terms of accessible transport in Britain over the 10 years should recognise the substantial progress that has been made.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend (Bexleyheath): Is it not a parliamentary fact that private Members' Bills are frail craft, ill suited for highly controversial and expensive legislation? I warmly congratulate my right hon. Friend on presenting a document that talks in terms of what is practical and affordable. I congratulate him on getting money out of the Treasury for that purpose at a difficult time.

Mr. Scott: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who has also contributed a great deal on disability matters. *[Interruption.]* We shall have to see. This is a consultation document. I know that it may be an unfamiliar concept to the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) to publish suggestions and then listen to what people outside have to say about them. We will listen to the representations that are made to us and then make firm decisions on the way forward.

Mr. Roger Berry (Kingswood): I thank the Minister for giving me, as the most recent promoter of the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill, early sight of his statement and the consultation document. There have been many such Bills, and I hope that it will not be necessary for there to be many more.

Will the Minister acknowledge that the very reason why he has made the statement here this morning is that there is overwhelming support throughout the country for the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill? If the Minister is saying that the Government cannot accept the principle of rights-based legislation, will he tell please tell the House

why neither he nor any of his colleagues voted against the Second Reading of the Bill and why he did not oppose a single clause of the Bill in Committee?

Will the right hon. Gentleman recognise that the one option for progress that has the overwhelming majority support of Members of this House is, indeed, the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill? In the spirit of consultation —I share his view that it is necessary to consult—will the Minister circulate with his documents for consultation the one proposal that a majority of Members of Parliament are on record as supporting?

Mr. Scott: I recognise the proprietorial interest that the hon. Gentleman has in his piece of legislation.

Mr. Sheerman: Don't be so patronising.

Mr. Scott: I am not being patronising. I genuinely understand the hon. Gentleman's commitment to the concept behind his Bill. I do not happen to agree, and the Government do not agree, that it is the way forward. I believe that much of the swell of support for his Bill came about because of a general wish in our society to meet the needs of disabled people. I believe that, when people understand what we propose in a practical and affordable manner, they will support us in the work that we are doing, and look forward to the action that will flow from the process.

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): I commend my right hon. Friend for both the tone and the content of his statement, and for the positive steps that he has taken in issuing the consultation document. It is far more in character than his attitude to the private Member's Bill, which some of us found rather disappointing, and which seemed to alternate between ambivalence and a negative approach. Will he assure me that, during the consultation process, full account will be taken of the needs and problems of those who suffer what has been described as the invisible disability—the deaf and hard of hearing?

Mr. Scott: It will certainly be our intention to take account of those needs as we go forward. I hope that the House as a whole, rather than harking back to the approach of the Bill so recently discussed, will look forward in a constructive way to the future. Anyone who has held my job knows that the largest group of disabled people in our society is the deaf and hard of hearing. We will certainly not neglect their needs.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): In his reference to the financial aspects and how disabled people could have access to finance, the Minister referred to the "main forms" of disability. Does that mean that he is talking about the categorisation of disability? Disability comes in many forms, and each is distressing, and we certainly would not like to see any categorisation. As to monitoring discrimination, the Minister indicated that a much closer watch will be kept on that. Who will be appointed to do the monitoring and to whom will they be accountable? Finally, what budget limit has been placed on the exercise by the Treasury?

Mr. Scott: It would clearly be wrong to go into the consultation process with some predetermined financial limit on what action might follow, and no such thing has been done. We will be going out genuinely to consult on the proposals in the document, and then looking to see what action can be taken. We do not enter this with predetermined attitudes, and we look forward to receiving and involving all the organisations of and for disabled people, as well as hon. Members. Of course, we are not forgetting that there are many other people whose businesses and other activities will be affected by any legislation that we pass in this sensitive area.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): Does my right hon. Friend agree that his statement successfully balances the special needs of disabled people with the reasonable ability of a Government to pay, unlike the past rhetoric of Opposition Members?

Mr. Scott: I am sure that that is right; it is the correct approach for us to take in this area. Having said that, I am convinced—I am sure that all those who have held my post are convinced—that there is still discrimination against disabled people. Of course, this involves some expenditure, but it also involves changing many people's attitudes towards disabled people and recognising the immense untapped potential there still is for disabled people to contribute in a whole variety of ways to our society.

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): The credibility among disabled people of the consultation that the Minister wants will depend on what happens after that consultation. The Minister referred to the three-month period. Can he tell the House a little more about what will happen?

Will there be a Bill, or will there be a debate initiated by the Government, which would give hon. Members a proper opportunity to discuss all the points raised in the consultation? If that is the case, can he assure the House that we will not be treated as we were, and as my hon. Friend the Member for Kingswood (Mr. Berry) was, over the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill, when we did not have a proper allocation of time? May we have an assurance that, after the consultation, something constructive will happen and there will be adequate time for the House to discuss that?

Mr. Scott: I would not have produced a document, as I have today, unless I was looking forward to positive action following the consultation process. I very much hope that, during the three-month period, we will get a good and positive response to the ideas in the document. Legislation is referred to in the document. We will have to see how to carry that work forward when we return.

Dr. Charles Goodson-Wickes (Wimbledon): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the difficulty in this saga is not a question of principle but the practical application to help the disabled, in which he has such a singularly distinguished record? Is there not a stark contrast between the practical help offered by the Government in the instant help given to those on the disability living allowance introduced by this Government, compared to the Labour Government's mobility allowance introduced in 1976, which was phased in over a long period? Does that not demonstrate the differences between posturing and practical application?

Mr. Scott: Of course, Labour Governments suffer when they seek to introduce measures in this area—and, indeed, in a whole range of other areas—from their total and proven inability to run a successful economy. The controls of the International Monetary Fund always play a significant part in their activities.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Is not the reality that the Government have been dragged kicking, screaming and protesting into introducing the consultation document? May I take the Minister back to the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox), about what might happen in terms of legislation? May we have an assurance that, in so far as the consultation period ends in three months' time, at the end of October, we will have legislation before July next year? I give the Minister notice that Labour will seek substantially to amend that legislation if it does not meet our objectives.

Mr. Scott: The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that I am not in a position to give that assurance, but I can tell him that we are approaching the consultative exercise, on which we are now embarking, in a positive way, and looking forward to a positive outcome as a result.

Sir Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Is not the only pathetic thing about the statement this morning the ridiculous rant of the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman), and the fact that so many Labour Members have singularly failed to welcome what is an important step forward for the disabled?

Is it not a fact that this Government have achieved more for the disabled than the Labour party could ever have dreamt of 15 years ago? Is it not both presumptuous and impertinent for Labour Members to arrogate to themselves the monopoly of caring for the disabled, and the belief that they have the only practical and sensible system for achieving the sort of end for the disabled that all of us in the House want?

Mr. Scott: With his long experience of advocacy and presenting effective cases, I do not think that I can do better than simply say that I agree with my hon. and learned Friend.

Ms Glenda Jackson (Hampstead and Highgate): If, as the Minister said, the costs of the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill are unquantifiable, how have the figures which I have heard, which range from £15 billion to £18 billion, been arrived at, and why was there no detailed definition of such costs in the Bill? Further, with whom will the Minister consult? All we have heard from Tory Members is an attitude to the disabled which suggests that they are constantly looking for patronising help. It is not help the disabled want; it is civil rights.

Mr. Scott: The document is being distributed across the whole range of those who are interested in this matter. Of course, it involves the organisations of and for disabled people, as well as hon. Members. It will also be of particular interest to those on whom any costs may fall, either in the public or the private sector. I look forward to receiving a whole range of views about the way forward, but the Government certainly intend to approach the matter in a constructive and forward-looking manner.

Dr. Ian Twinn (Edmonton): I thank my right hon. Friend for his statement today and for the opportunity it gives the country as a whole for constructive consultation on this matter. Is he aware that the 60 per cent. increase in funding for the London dial-a-ride has been warmly welcomed in London since the demise of the Greater London council? Is that not a good example of how the Government have taken positive and constructive action throughout their time in office to help disabled people and not relied on adding burdens on industry which may in fact harm the interests of disabled people?

Mr. Scott: The whole point of the consultation document is to be able to balance a whole range of factors —some leaning one way, some another way. I certainly reinforce my admiration for the progress that we have made in terms of dial-a-ride. But in a whole range of other areas, surely those who have open rather than closed minds recognise the tremendous progress that has been made over the past 15 years.

Mr. David Hinchliffe (Wakefield): Does the Minister recall that, when the National Health Service and Community Care Bill was discussed in the House, assurances were given by the right hon. Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley), who is now the Secretary of State for Health, that the advocacy provisions in the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 were overtaken by the provisions in the 1990 Act? Obviously, that is now nonsense to all disabled people in the country.

The Minister made no mention whatever of advocacy provisions this morning. What steps will the Government take within the review to ensure that proper advocacy provisions for disabled persons are introduced in Britain?

Mr. Scott: Manifestly, those matters are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health and, undoubtedly, the hon. Gentleman will take an opportunity to raise that matter with her. We certainly do not want closely to define the consultative process on the document. If the hon. Gentleman thinks that he has points that are relevant to it, he is welcome to put them forward.

Mr. Eric Pickles (Brentwood and Ongar): My right hon. Friend talked about financial services and suggested that a code of voluntary practice is appropriate. Given the change in those financial services, that is probably better than primary legislation. In his discussions with the industry, and bearing in mind the fact that one of our larger institutions recently had to withdraw some of its employees from work because it got the guidelines wrong, will my right hon. Friend ensure that the guidelines, when they are issued, receive wide publicity and are aimed at customers of those financial institutions?

In addition, will my right hon. Friend stress to the industry the fact that, should it decide to place additional sums on a client's costs because he or she is disabled, it will have to be demonstrably proven that that extra cost relates to the disability and that there is a strong reason why such a cost should not be absorbed generally within the services?

Mr. Scott: I am sure that my hon. Friend's latter point will be taken seriously by those who take part in the consultation—the organisations that represent banking, insurance and building societies.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): The document contains few international comparisons, which does not surprise me. In 1981, I was the rapporteur in the European Parliament for the International Year of the Disabled, which involved making comparisons between European countries on the situation of disabled people. At that time, the United Kingdom was very near the bottom of the pile

on rights for disabled people, and it is still at the bottom of the pile. This document is the mark of a weak Minister, who has failed to make his case with the Treasury.

On the quota system, it has been suggested that the system ought to be voluntary. In other European countries, a financial levy is imposed on employers who do not meet the quota system. The Minister should consider that carefully, as its strength has already been established. The Department of Employment is one of the few Government Departments to have reached its 3 per cent. quota. Is he suggesting that, if there is a voluntary scheme, Departments will be able to throw the quota system out of the window?

Mr. Scott: I described earlier the new actions being taken throughout the civil service to encourage the employment and retention of disabled people. We will be approaching that matter very positively throughout Government.

The hon. Lady's recollection of the pattern of provision in other European countries may or may not be correct. I have visited a number of them since I was given my present responsibilities. In this country, we have nothing to be ashamed of in our provision for disabled people. She mentioned the concept of imposing a levy on employers if they fail to reach their quota, as happens in one or two European countries. Many employers in those countries prefer to pay the levy rather than employ a disabled person.

Mrs. Angela Knight (Erewash): As part of his consultation, will my right hon. Friend explore better ways to promote best practice and effective practical help, such as the excellent decision by Trent Buses, which operates in my constituency, to replace its existing bus fleet with so-called "kneeling buses", to the great benefit of disabled people and the elderly?

Mr. Scott: I very much agree. Opposition Members often deride good practice as an ineffective approach. Of course I recognise that law has to play a part in our approach to meeting disabled people's needs, but I am sure that good practice, and a deeper understanding of the contribution that disabled people can make and the extent to which we can voluntarily overcome obstacles to their doing so—in a way that encourages good practice—also have an important part to play.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Madam Speaker: Order. I am now going to bring questions on the statement to a close. Hon. Members will understand that we shall be returning to the subject of disability. Today is the last day for private Members' Bills and I cannot deny those Members with Bills on the Order Paper the opportunity to reach their Bills.

Inshore Fishing (Scotland) Bill [*Lords*]

Not amended (in the Standing Committee), considered; reported, without amendment.

Order for Third Reading read.—[Queen's consent, on behalf of the Crown, signified.]

11.43 am

Mr. George Kynoch (Kincardine and Deeside): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

This is an important measure, which has received all-party support in this House and in the other place. In the Standing Committee, I welcomed the support given by the hon. Members for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) and for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace), and I am pleased to see the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) here on behalf of the Scottish National party.

The Bill would introduce changes to fisheries legislation to allow my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland to control all fishing activities in inshore waters, where it seems to him that such control is necessary to preserve stocks, or prevent disputes between fishermen using different and incompatible types of fishing gear.

Those powers are already available to my right hon. Friend where fishing is conducted from fishing vessels. The recent growth in land-based dredging operations, however, has allowed a coach and horses to be driven through the control measures that Parliament put in place in the Inshore Fishing Act 1984. That has meant that the full weight of stock conservation has fallen on one group of fishermen who are prosecuting the stock in question. There is broad agreement in Scotland that that is inequitable, and I believe that the House will share that view.

It is clear that the law should be changed to ensure that all who profit from an activity also contribute to the long-term survival of the resources that they are using. Only by that means can real sustainability be assured. Developments in other parts of the fishing industry have shown that sustainability can be difficult enough to achieve when all concerned are contributing to sensible conservation measures. It is clear that, without that solution, no conservation measures will work. If there is no conservation, there will be no long-term industry.

The problems of land dredging arise in many parts of Scotland, but the activity has proved most worrying on the Solway firth. That is partly because of the vast sandbanks that are exposed at low tide. They often stretch as far as the eye can see—about three or four miles. The sandbanks are ideal for populations of cockles and, in recent years, a fishery has developed to extract them.

In the beginning, a small number of local vessels adapted their fishing equipment to take cockles, but, as increasing numbers of tractors also joined in the fishery, it became evident that the cockle stocks were diminishing. That reduction was brought about and aggravated by the situation across the sea in Holland, where the Dutch Waddensee cockle fishery closed in 1992. Some of the Dutch fishermen decided to come to Scotland to prosecute the stocks there.

The hydraulic suction dredgers used are tractor-drawn. That is a highly efficient method of harvesting cockles, but unfortunately the dredgers sort, and almost entirely remove, cockles of a certain age and size, which significantly reduces the biomass of stocks within a site.

[Mr. George Kynoch]

The survival of the remaining cockles is good only if they are left undisturbed. Unfortunately, with that method of extraction, they are not.

Dredging has an impact not only on cockles, but on the other flora and fauna found in the sea bed. The magnitude of that impact will depend on the frequency of dredging, on the depth at which it occurs and on whether the fauna is able to move away from the site of disturbance. The damage is significant environmentally and has an impact on the life of the sea bed.

The stock reduction may in part have resulted from entirely natural fluctuations in stock levels. I understand that cockle stocks are especially vulnerable to large fluctuations in their numbers. I do not intend to go into details of the reproductive cycle of a cockle—

Mr. Nigel Waterson (Eastbourne): I do not want to encourage my hon. Friend to go into the sex life of a mollusc—exciting or dull though that may be. The obverse, however, is that, when sensible conservation measures are taken, the refreshment of stocks can be very rapid for precisely the same reason.

Mr. Kynoch: My hon. Friend raises a valid point, but he will recognise that the reductions that can occur naturally and through the aggravated process of dredging mean that it is necessary to have conservation measures, and that is what the Bill is about.

I was talking about natural fluctuations, which are a part of the natural biology of the cockle. It is clearly a factor within which fishermen have to work and, as my hon. Friend said, they must take cognisance of it. It is not impossible that some of the falling stock levels were due to natural and environmental reasons, entirely unrelated to either the land-based or vessel-based dredging activities. However, surveys of the cockle beds showed beyond doubt that the population had shrunk considerably.

Because of that, my hon. Friend the Minister had to judge whether the existing levels of fishing could safely continue, given the changing size of the cockle stock. A letter put out by the Scottish Office on 10 June 1993 referred to the stocks situation in Solway:

"Updated scientific assessment of cockle stocks in the Solway have just become available. These indicate that the biomass has improved slightly from its low in 1991 . . . though stocks remain well below the 197m per square km detected in 1990. However much of the latest increase stems from good spat settlement in 1992 and these very young cockles form a very high proportion of the total stock biomass. Stock assessments of older cockles indicate a steady and continuing decline . . . After two poor years, the good spat settlement in 1992 is encouraging. However, the exploitable stock biomass remains at very low levels and is, in fact, below the level at which the fishery was closed last year."

As result of the statistics, the Minister extended the fishery's closure beyond July 1993 and has said that it will remain closed until August 1994. I understand that he has renewed that closure, because the situation is still poor. Of course, that applies only to vessels which fish from the sea.

It was at the point when my hon. Friend acted that local vessel owners pressed him and the Scottish Office to control the activities of all cockle fishermen, to make sure that sufficient population levels remain for stocks to regenerate themselves. They fully realised that they would have to be affected by any controls as well and their motivation was not to put an end to land-based dredging while they continued regardless. They accepted that, in the absence of powers to control tractor dredgers, it would be themselves alone who would have to stop fishing, at least in the short term.

I applaud the fishermen for the responsible attitude that they have shown to stock conservation and I also sympathise with them because they have had to suffer one-sided controls for so long. I know that they are eagerly awaiting the completion of the Bill and that they are equally eager for the powers to be used as soon as possible, to bring all fishing activities under the existing controls. I hope that my hon. Friend will say something about how he envisages the powers being used and how quickly and effectively they can be brought in.

Concerns have also been raised by other interest groups. Cockles are an important foodstuff for many coastal bird populations. The south-west of Scotland is particularly rich in bird wintering and nesting areas. It is not the only part of Scotland which is affected by the measure and which has cockle areas.

I received information from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds—it has been extremely helpful in the preparation of the details of the Bill and in providing background information to myself and colleagues who have approached it—that cockling areas that are of international importance for wild birds include not only the Solway but Dornoch firth, Cromarty firth and Otterswick in Orkney.

The areas are spread throughout Scotland and while the problem at present exists only in the Solway firth, it is likely that it could be aggravated, and could spread to other parts of Scotland. The *Press and Journal* of 28 April 1992 states:

"Pirates plunder Tain shellfish".

Tractor dredgers must have already got up to that part of Scotland.

The activities of tractor dredgers and, to some extent, other fishing activities, obviously upset the fragile balance which exists within the eco-system. In particular, dredging activities conducted at low tide can disturb roosting birds during the winter months, as well as the foreshore when it is exposed or covered with shallower water than would be the case with vessel dredgers. That means that overturned sand that has been left to dry out could have a serious impact on many other marine organisms that live in the same stratum of the foreshore as cockles.

If there are not enough cockles for birds to eat, they can starve to death. In the Dutch situation to which I have referred, there was a significant death rate among the eider ducks that fed in that area. Undersized cockles that are returned to the sea as part of the process of suction dredging are less likely to survive if they are returned to parts of the beach that have dried out.

On the other hand, vessel dredgers return small shellfish to the sea bed while they are still covered in water and that allows them to burrow easily back into the sand. Another clear impact on local bird populations—this applies equally to vessel dredgers and tractors—is caused by the fact that the number of cockles remaining for local bird populations is reduced. It must be obvious that that may have an impact on breeding success and can in extreme cases lead to the short-term survival of adult birds.

The House knows that much of rural Scotland has outstanding beauty. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I am pleased to hear my hon. Friends from south of the border

agreeing with that; may many more of them come to see the beauties of Scotland. In particular, they may like to see the beauties of the Solway firth.

The countryside is a valuable natural resource in its own right, but it is also of inestimable value in attracting tourists to areas that otherwise would have limited means of income generation. Tourists come for a wide variety of reasons, but one is to see the wild animals and birds that thrive in those areas. Any potential impact on birds would therefore be worrying in its own right, but could also have an impact on the long-term income generated from the tourism industry.

The *Annandale Herald* of Thursday 3 December says:

"Scottish Office environment minister, Sir Hector Monro, announced international conservation designations for the Upper Solway Flats and Marshes this week. The site, which straddles the Scottish/English border, has been made a Special Protection Area for Birds and a Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar convention."

People will come to visit the Solway firth not just to see the bird life but to experience the peace and quiet which is so natural there. I know that the RSPB has circulated hon. Members with photographs of what the beach at the Solway firth looks like with the monstrosities of tractors and dredgers. There is a man in the photograph and it clearly shows that the suction dredger is more than double the size of that man. These objects go charging up and down the beach, ripping it to pieces, and they have an effect on the peace and quiet of the area.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): The measures that the hon. Gentleman is proposing are generally thought to be constructive. Is it not all the more a pity that, the last time they came before the House, they were caught up in the disreputable attempts by his hon. Friends to delay and stop discussion of the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill? Is not the point that we should take from this that constructive measures such as these should not become a part of the tactics used in this place to stop other hon. Members' constructive measures?

Mr. Kynoch: If the hon. Gentleman had been present on that occasion, he might understand that my hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Luff) raised valuable points about the problems related to ownership of the tractors and leasing commitments. He raised valid points about which there was concern and he contributed significantly to highlighting the importance of the details of the Bill.

Mr. Peter Luff (Worcester): My hon. Friend will no doubt recall that the only reason that the Bill failed to complete its Committee stage on that day was that the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) called an unnecessary Division, which meant that the Bill was lost.

Mr. Kynoch: I agree; that is why I want to ensure that we get the Bill through today.

I do not believe that all land-based dredging need necessarily be prohibited, but it must be controlled. That will ensure a proper balance between it and other types of fishing. The powers in the Bill will be used to ensure an overall balance between fishing activities generally and the flora and fauna that would be affected by any activity.

Land-based dredging techniques are in their infancy and I do not believe that anyone can say at this stage that that activity must be curtailed for ever more throughout Scotland and at all times of the year. It is important, however, to ensure that the Minister has flexible powers available to use in whatever way is necessary in the circumstances that face him. In this case, he should have the power to address the anomaly whereby conservation measures affect those who fish from vessels, while, unfortunately, they must watch as tractors on the beach continue to deplete the stocks of cockles.

The Bill has, therefore, been carefully drafted to allow seasonal controls and for those controls to apply to certain parts of the coastline only—for example, in areas of particular sensitivity to bird life. That flexibility is similar to the powers already available in the Inshore Fishing (Scotland) Act 1984 in relation to vessels. Those powers have worked well in the past 10 years and it can only be right that, when the Act is extended, similar flexibility should exist in its revised coverage.

The Bill has support from both sides of the House and from all fishing organisations. I was speaking to Bob Allan, chief executive of the Scottish Fishermen's Federation, just last night and he reconfirmed his support for the Bill. I therefore believe that it should reach the statute book and pass into law as quickly as possible.

12.2 pm

Mr. Peter Luff (Worcester): The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) once again raised the canard about why a number of Conservative Members are keen to speak about the Bill. I will not weary him once again with an account of those reasons; I simply refer him to column 1039 of the *Official Report* of 20 May, which gives a full and adequate account of our concerns about the Bill.

Mr. Salmond: I am sure that the hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Kynoch) did not realise what he was saying when he referred to my non-attendance on 20 May. I am sure that, on reflection, he will recall that that was the day of John Smith's funeral and will want to withdraw his imputation.

Mr. Luff: I will happily give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Kynoch) if he wishes to help to clear up this matter.

Mr. Kynoch: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way. If the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) had been here on that day, he would have realised that we were sympathetic about the fact that Opposition Members were not present. I was not implying anything about his absence, but he was suggesting that that sensible debate had been totally unnecessary. If he had read *Hansard* fully, he would have appreciated that the points raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Luff) were valid. I do not want to imply that the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan was absent through lack of interest and if that is what I did imply, I do not want it to be on the record.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. I think that those mutual explanations will suffice for the moment. Can we now get back to the Third Reading?

Mr. Luff: I agree entirely with your judgment, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The two basic themes behind the Bill are environmental and economic. One deals with protecting birds and the other with protecting the activities of responsible fishermen. Both those needs are extremely urgent. It is my

[Mr. Luff]

great regret that we were unable to give the Bill its Third Reading on 20 May, so that it could reach the statute book. Conservative Members, at least, know the reason for that.

There is an urgent need to act. I should like to quote from a leaflet entitled "The Solway Firth" produced by English Nature and Scottish Natural Heritage. It states:

"Today the Solway's highly productive and largely unchanged environment continues to play a key role in many people's lives. With careful management, some of the more traditional means of earning a living such as those in the fishing industry may contribute to the local economy for a long time to come. At the same time the relatively unspoilt coastline with its combination of mudflat, rocky shore, sea cliff and sandy beach is attracting new commercial activities that include tourism, bird-watching and industrial development.

To manage all the Solway's rich resources wisely so that they are still there for future generations to enjoy and use, will require a careful balancing of all present and future needs."

That sums up the purpose that lies behind the Bill.

About 19 months ago, the Scottish Office announced enhanced protection for the upper Solway firth. On 10 December 1992, the *Galloway News* quoted the Dalry-based RSPB conservation officer for Dumfries and Galloway, Chris Rollie, as saying:

"The RSPB are delighted that the Government has at last recognised the international importance of the Solway and we hope that this will increase the impetus for proper regulation of the cockle industry, for example, to take account of the internationally important birds and other wildlife."

On 5 May, *The Herald* contained a long report on concerns about marine pollution and human activities, particularly as they affect bird life. It reported David Dick, the RSPB's species protection officer as saying,

"points to 75,000 seabird deaths along Scotland's East coast in February. Scientists are fairly sure the birds died from starvation. They suspect bad weather played a part. But the scale of the deaths has confounded them.

Mr. Dick is also concerned at the increases of some bird populations and the decreases of others. It all points to further signs of an eco-system tilting out of balance.

'It shows just how little we know about how the sea works' he says."

I underline those points. I am sure that hon. Members will have noted Mr. Dick's observation that starvation on the other side of Scotland may have played a part in the deaths of those sea birds. The Bill is aimed at preventing that fate.

In the same article, Bob Allan, chief executive of the Scottish Fishermen's Federation, is reported as saying:

"fishermen are all in favour of participating in campaigns to sustain a healthy marine population, but he warns that they are being locked into 'a straitjacket of bureaucracy'—of regulations and directives from Brussels.

'The last thing we want is a whole new set of rules,' he says. 'If they are coming to talk to us as fishermen about ways we can help them to sustain bird population and other forms of marine life, fine. But they have to appreciate that the industry is in many ways fighting for survival.'"

Against that background, the federation's support for the Bill is all the more admirable.

Controls are urgently required to protect not just birds but, as the quote from *The Herald* suggests, fishermen. *Fish Trader* of 5 to 18 March states:

"Cockle beds in the Solway have also been closed and new by-laws are proposed for the Dee. Fortunately cockle stocks in the Burry Inlet, South Wales have been protected by a strict quota system and the fishery, centred on Penclawdd, remains productive.

Ups and downs in stock levels are typical in this fishery and cockle beds can regenerate quickly after a good 'spatfall'."

That was the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside. The article continues:

"But many fishermen fear the cockle bonanza will be over unless stricter controls are introduced soon to protect the declining stocks."

In other words, this is a problem not just for the Solway firth and for Scotland but for the entire United Kingdom. That is why I am here, representing an English constituency.

My first question to the Minister is the same as that posed by my hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside. How soon after the Bill receives Royal Assent will its provisions be enacted? The need for action is urgent. In a recent letter to me, the Minister with responsibility for fisheries in Scotland said that, because we had lost the Bill more than a month ago, part of this season's stock has already been lost to effective protection. How quickly does he intend to introduce the measures in the Bill?

I have also received a series of specific questions from the RSPB, some of which I have written to the Minister about. He has been kind enough to reply in writing. As part of the RSPB's new and welcome marine life campaign, it published a document earlier this year, entitled, "Recommendations for the Protection of Seabirds' Marine Habitats", in which it spoke about the need to establish protected sea areas under United Kingdom law. It states:

"Biological targets should be established to judge the success or failure of management. Depending upon the objectives in protecting a site, targets could be in terms of richness of the seabed invertebrate community, fish stock characteristics or wildlife populations.

There must be a basis in law for managing all activities, even existing rights which are not compatible with site management objectives. Fisheries authorities must have proactive powers to manage fishing activities, both in the interest of the fishery and for ensuring fishing in an area is compatible with other uses of the site.

The Government is being called upon to protect marine wildlife and fisheries from various threats, such as tankers, offshore development etc. A coherent programme for identifying sites needing protection and controlling threats must be established by the Government, rather than the current ad hoc site protection measures."

The Bill is welcome—I hope that it will receive the approval of the House—but it is an ad hoc measure in respect of the RSPB's overall marine life campaign. Under the new European habitats and species directive, the Government are obliged to designate and protect coastal and marine areas, including the Solway, Cromarty firth and the Severn estuary, rather nearer to my constituency of Worcester.

I should be grateful if my hon. Friend the Minister would say whether a decision has been made on which coastal and marine areas should be designated under the habitats and species directive and what new measures will be introduced to control fishing in such areas. The Association of District Councils in England and Wales and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities have asked repeatedly for certain activities below low-water mark, including fish farming, to be brought within the jurisdiction of local authorities. I wonder whether my hon. Friend the Minister would repeat what he said to me in his letter about the intention of legislation to extend the jurisdiction of local authorities below the low-water mark.

The regulatory mechanism for fisheries in Scotland is determined by my hon. Friend the Minister with responsibility for fisheries, and in England and Wales fisheries regulations are determined at local level by sea

fisheries committees. Will my hon. Friend comment on an intention to introduce sea fisheries committees in Scotland?

I also press my hon. Friend the Minister about the levels of fine in the original 1984 legislation which are not addressed in the Bill. The levels are referred to in section 4(2), which states:

"Any person guilty of an offence under this section shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding £5,000 or, on conviction on indictment, to a fine."

Does my hon. Friend regard those fines as truly adequate 10 years after the original Bill? Was consideration given, in advising my hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside, to the need to uprate those fines to provide an effective deterrent?

Several amendments that I have tabled have not been selected for debate. I do not challenge your decision on that point, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I hope that the Minister will be able to give some assurances about the issues that those amendments address, particularly the advice that is given to fisheries officers. The unselected amendments deal with reasonableness in enforcement. I seek a simple assurance from my hon. Friend the Minister that fisheries officers are advised to act reasonably at all times.

We know that the federation supports the Bill—hon. Members heard me quote the article in *The Herald*—and we heard of the federation's concern about the straitjacket of regulation and bureaucracy that it considers that it suffers from and the fight for survival that it is engaged in. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister would agree that we must not harass fishermen unnecessarily. Fisheries protection vessels—one of my family has served as a fisheries protection officer, so I know something of the subject—can engage in fairly intimidating tactics to stop illegal fishing. They can fire blanks, they can call up a frigate, they can buzz a vessel with a helicopter, and so on. Long chases can be quite exciting experiences. I hope that, at the end of a chase, there is no temptation to vindictiveness on the part of fisheries officers.

What would constitute unreasonableness? An intimidatory approach to searching individuals or cabins, excessive intrusions into privacy and so on all need to be considered. The Bill confers remarkable powers on fisheries officers—powers which I am sure that officers use with discretion. The House will be a little surprised to know that—I say this with no sense of flippancy—this is the only legislation that confers on fisheries protection officers, and sometimes naval officers, an absolute right to ask a pretty girl to submit to a strip search without giving any reason whatsoever. That might be a fanciful example of the powers in the Bill, but my hon. Friend the Minister will have to concede that it is factually correct. I hope that he will be able to assure me that the guidance given to fisheries protection officers deals fully with that point.

This is an important Bill for Scotland; the issues that it raises are important for the whole of the United Kingdom. I commend it to the House.

12.14 pm

Mrs. Angela Knight (Erewash): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Kynoch) on introducing this subject. It is obviously greatly important to him and to other Scottish Members. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds has raised the matter throughout the country. My eight-year-old son, who is a member of the RSPB, has brought the matter to my attention in the way in which only small children can, and he will no doubt do so in respect of other environmental subjects.

I also congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Luff), who obviously has an in-depth knowledge of the subject. I should be interested to learn the answer to his question about strip searching and whether it is true or nothing more than a fishy tale.

I represent a land-locked constituency, but my constituents are not land locked; they travel widely—for example, to Scotland and to other parts of the country. I am conscious from their comments on this and many other environmental subjects just how such issues are becoming increasingly important to everybody, wherever they may live. There is a need for conservation. There is also a need for people to be able to go about their normal course of business and earn their livelihoods. Often, there is considerable tension between those two requirements, but I suspect that that is not the case in respect of the Bill, as the intention is to do in Scotland what has already been done in England and Wales. Often, Scottish Members complain that legislation is introduced first in Scotland and then later in England and Wales. This legislation mirrors what already exists in England and Wales or can be implemented in England and Wales.

There has been an advance in cockle fishing techniques since the introduction of the Inshore Fishing (Scotland) Act 1984. I suspect that it was not visualised then that cockle fishing could take place in other ways—for example, tractor dredging, which can be very destructive not only for cockle fisheries but for estuaries generally. I have always understood cockling to be a traditional activity in many estuaries in Scotland, England and Ireland. We all recall the song that we learned at school —[HON. MEMBERS: "Sing it."] I will not sing it, but it goes something like, "In Dublin's fair city, where the maids are so pretty". I am sure that hon. Members can finish the first verse for me.

The tensions and difficulties arise not in the traditional activity of cockling but in the suction dredging technique, which the Bill would control. An extremely disturbing survey undertaken by the university of Aberdeen showed that heavy exploitation by whatever technique of such fishing would result in, perhaps, a short-lived, high-yielding fishery but then periods when stocks were too low to support a viable fishery. Those who indulge in such techniques ruin the livelihoods of others.

The problem occurs elsewhere. Disturbing reports have been brought to my attention, in particular one in *The Independent* in June 1993. It was reported that more than 20 men were travelling the country in search of cockles and were using two articulated trucks, tractors and an all-terrain vehicle, and that they were attempting to take cockles from an estuary in Wales. The problem is more widespread than has been mentioned so far. The report goes on:

"a local cockle picker said of incoming gatherers: 'They have no right to come here. We want to gather cockles here for the next 40 years and not just for a couple of weeks'."

That demonstrates succinctly exactly what the Bill seeks to achieve. An article that appeared in a newspaper a few months earlier said that fast-moving pirates from the south of England are going to a bay in Scotland, which is rich in shellfish, to take the shellfish in a short period, thereby destroying the fishing there for the future.

[Mrs. Angela Knight]

Clearly, tractor dredging is causing great disturbance. It is not only destroying normal fishing but causing many difficulties for other wildlife, particularly birds. Hon. Members will agree that it is much easier to destroy than to conserve, but it is essential for the future that measures be available so that conservation can be dealt with in a sympathetic, clear and coherent manner. I support the Bill.

12.20 pm

Mr. Peter Atkinson (Hexham): It is surprising that the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond), who criticised hon. Members who wanted to speak in this debate for filibustering to keep out another Bill, has vanished now that the discussion is under way.

It is a pleasure to discuss a Bill on conservation, as we rarely have an opportunity to discuss conservation relating to a matter that commands widespread support from both sides of the House. As my hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Kynoch) said, this is an important Bill. As an English Member, I step into this debate somewhat reluctantly as I want to discuss the Solway firth, which the Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), knows like the back of his hand. If I make an incorrect statement about it, I am sure that he will correct me immediately. I know the Solway because it is near my constituency. It is a wonderful part of the country and its estuary is of unique value to the landscape and wildlife of the British Isles, so it needs careful protection.

The area is also popular among tourists who go there to see the wildlife and landscape. I know of only one tourist who did not like the area. He was a local man called Paul Jones, who went on to become the commander-in-chief of the Confederate Navy during the American civil war and was responsible for the last invasion of these islands. Funnily enough, the area that he chose to invade was Kircudbright which is on the Solway, and he bombarded the town. So that tourist went back to the area with an evil intention.

The protection of wildlife in the area through the control of the cockle fisheries is essential. Hon. Members may not know that the other side of the Solway is England, where cockle fishing has been controlled for many years. The English have a much better record on conservation than the Scots. For instance, we took off the salmon nets in about 1865, whereas the Scots still have the right to take salmon with nets on their side of the Solway. I believe that the Scots refused to take off their nets in the 19th century because they were frightened that Englishmen would come and steal their fish. So rather than have Englishmen steal their fish, they would fish it themselves, regardless of the conservation consequences. That is a typical Scottish attitude.

The Scots had a fascinating way of catching salmon. I realise, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that a salmon is a little larger than a cockle, but it is linked by fishing. The Scots used to ride on horseback and spear the salmon in the shallow waters of the Solway, so there is a long history of fishing in that area.

One of the problems faced by the Solway cockle is the change in status of the humble cockle. We have had a good discussion on the cockle this morning, although I was hoping to hear a little about its sex life. I read up on that interesting subject, but my hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside rightly spared the House the intimate details. Whereas the cockle used to be eaten by Cockneys when they went to Southend-on-Sea, it has now moved up a scale and become a shellfish delicacy, particularly on the continent. Because the Dutch closed their cockle beds, the price of cockles has been forced up to such an extent that it has caused a bonanza for tractor dredgers on the Solway and other areas.

I have visited the Solway at night [HON. MEMBERS: "What for?"] I confess that I went there for wildfowl.

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): Will my hon. Friend pursue a little further the interesting question of why the Dutch had to close their cockle beds? Was it because of the overfishing, which the Bill is designed to prevent in this country? Or was it for some other reason, such as disease, environmental damage or pollution, from which we could learn a useful lesson to safeguard the future of our cockle industry?

Mr. Atkinson: I understand that it was because of pressure from environmentalists. Overfishing and the knock-on effect on bird life caused the Dutch Government to introduce regulations to ban cockle fishing in a substantial number of traditional cockle beds. The Dutch have a passion for fish and shellfish and are determined to buy it everywhere. Interestingly, Dutchmen are behind the tractor dredging industry on the Solway. Locals will confirm that, although the tractor dredgers are locals or southerners who come up to fish, they sell their cockles to Dutch merchants who wait in the area and pay large sums of cash for bags of cockles, which are rapidly moved overseas to Holland. There are also reports of Dutchmen using British-licensed boats to fish cockles in the sea. So the high prices and the increasing demand for cockles are problems faced by the poor mollusc.

The effect on bird life has differed according to the species of bird. I am grateful to the RSPB, which has been helpful on this matter. Curiously, although the overfishing of cockles is causing a decline in most species, particularly wading birds, the population of the pintail seems to be going up, perhaps because it feeds on smaller cockles which sea fishermen are putting back into the water. I hope that, during the period of consultation that will follow the Bill's enactment, we can examine that phenomenon so that that problem can be dealt with.

I welcome the Bill and congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside on piloting it through the House. I wish it a speedy passage today and hope that it will be enacted as soon as possible so that the wildlife and traditions of the Solway firth may be preserved.

12.27 pm

Mr. Richard Spring (Bury St. Edmunds): I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to make a few comments. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Kynoch) on promoting the Bill so effectively. It seeks to amend the Inshore Fishing (Scotland) Act 1984 to make provision for the control of fishing in Scottish inshore waters by vehicles or equipment. As my hon. Friend said, it brings the law in Scotland in line with that in England and Wales.

Many threads in the Bill are being examined today. One thread involves the livelihoods of those affected by cockling and the decline in cockling stocks in the Solway

firth area, the good husbandry of stocks for the future and the closing of loopholes that destroy those stocks. There is a broader environmental picture. We are talking about wildlife conservation, fisheries development, business and leisure, all of which have conflicting demands.

The problem is not unique to Scotland. My hon. Friend referred to the experience of the Netherlands. Such was the decline of cockle stocks in the Waddensea, in the North sea in the Netherlands that a closure was made. That action was taken because birds in the area were consuming 13,500 tonnes of cockles per annum—more than the stock. That shows the importance of the cockle stocks, not only to individuals who wish to consume them, but to bird life.

The Solway firth is an extremely important natural habitat, particularly for oyster catchers, knots and sea ducks, which eat cockles. The Solway firth is a natural habitat for many species of bird life. We must balance the needs of the bird life with the needs of fishermen who make their livelihoods in the area.

I believe that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, were in the Chair when I initiated an Adjournment debate on a landlocked subject—metal detecting, which causes big problems in my constituency. Due to that experience I empathise with those in the Solway firth area. Illegal metal detecting destroyed crops in my region—a phenomenon that is not dissimilar to the destruction of fishermen's livelihoods and the depletion of cockle stocks in areas such as the Solway firth. The environmental damage caused is similar and parallels can be made between the two—the spirit of the Bill is the same as the spirit behind that Adjournment debate.

In 1985 and 1989, orders were introduced to make necessary adjustments to the 1984 Act. They stressed that fishermen should voluntarily restrict their actions. The Scottish Office displayed a willingness to be flexible. We now know that the cockle fisheries were closed and the ban has been further extended.

Research was done in the "Netherlands Journal of Sea Research" in 1990 and it was found that considerable damage could be done and recovery could be quick. But it was found that if the action was repeated regularly, it caused irreparable ecological damage. Suction tractors are a new innovation and cause extensive damage when used on an unsustainable basis. The aim at the heart of the Bill is to prevent the terribly damaging effect of tractor dredging that undermines fishermen's livelihoods.

Cockles landed in 1991 in the United Kingdom totalled 40,000 tonnes; by 1993, it was down to 20,000 tonnes. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham (Mr. Atkinson) said, cockles have ceased to be the staple food of cockneys and have become designer food in fashionable restaurants. It is not only the birds that have suffered from the lack of cockles, but people's wallets.

The RSPB and Scottish Natural Heritage have pressed for the measure. The Solway firth is the largest continuous area of inter-tidal habitat in the United Kingdom and is a vital resting place for migratory birds. It is the winter home to many waders and wild fowl. Oyster catchers are particularly keen on eating cockles and 34,000 of them live in the Solway firth. In addition, there are many barnacle geese from Spitsbergen, as well as pink-footed geese. Some 120,000 different birds live in the Solway firth at different times and the ecological balance of that vital area of the United Kingdom is under threat from tractor dredging. The RSPB has pressed for the Bill, which has been introduced so successfully by my hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside.

There is considerable resentment among local people at the activity of individuals who appear to own or operate the tractor dredgers. They are called dolers by some local people because they appear to operate in some sort of grey economy with their bull-nosed motor cycle tractors and they are regarded by traditional fishermen as fly-by-night operators with no sense of feeling or love for the sea and its bounty.

The statistics are frightening. The tractors can collect 1.5 tonnes of cockles per hour. We know from research into rates of depletion how damaging that can be. The Bill exposes that unwelcome activity. It highlights the importance of a balance in marine life. Cockle stocks on the Solway firth dropped by about 80 per cent. between 1990 and 1992. That drop must be halted. The Bill will control tractor dredging and, in helping to ensure that cockle stocks are replenished, will play a vital part in the ecological balance in one of the most beautiful parts of these islands.

12.35 pm

Mr. Eric Pickles (Brentwood and Ongar): The Solway firth is well known to me—I often take family holidays there—and I have had the opportunity to see tractor dredgers in operation. Such a sight would destroy any romantic idea that one had as a child of shrimping or cockling. It looks more like opencast mining.

The tractor dredgers are very efficient and quite ruthless in the way in which they take cockles from the surface and nothing much is left behind. My hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Kynoch) mentioned that cockles that do not meet the necessary size requirement are cast aside. That is different from what happens on boats. Cockles are cast aside onto the beach. Whether the molluscs survive depends to a great extent on the state of the tide. In observing the tractors in operation, I did not take the view that I was watching an operation involving biodiversity or recycling in the sea.

Given a good season, cockle beds quickly regenerate, but there must be an optimum level at which they cannot form. My hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmonds (Mr. Spring) talked about the Dutch experience. My hon. Friend the Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies) asked whether it was a question of disease or fishing. Therein lies one of the principal dangers of not passing the Bill. The nature of over fishing means that if a disease is introduced into cockle beds—which one hopes will not happen—the constitution of those cockle beds will make them less able to survive.

We live in a constantly changing world. Cockle beds in the Wash in East Anglia, an area which I represent, have been out of action for a whole season, but fishing is about to restart. Cockling has been taking place in the Solway firth for generations and fishermen have adapted. They, too, operate a dredging system. We should not lose sight of the fact that sustainable communities in the Solway firth rely on fishing. Our fishing industry has diminished, but communities can survive, and we can look forward to their being there for the next 40 or 50 years. Communities rely on fishing and enjoy untold benefits from it which extend across the region.

[Mr. Eric Pickles]

I do not take the xenophobic attitude that was perhaps displayed by some of my hon. Friends. I do not mind who eats the cockles, whether it is Scots, the Welsh, the English or even the Belgians—if I could differentiate between Belgians and an oyster-catcher. The importance point is that if the Belgians are paying for cockles, that money is coming back into the local economy. That is part of the process of ensuring that such economies can be sustained. It is right to try to influence control at the source rather than seeking to control the vessels or tractors that extract the cockles.

Mr. Quentin Davies: My hon. Friend has not mentioned what appear from the debate to be important consumers—the birds. What are we to do about them? We have heard that birds ate more of the Dutch stocks than the annual replenishment rate. Over-consumption by birds and not over-fishing by humans destroyed the Dutch stocks. Surely no conservation measure applied to this cockle fishery will be effective unless we can cope with the problem of birds. What does my hon. Friend suggest?

Mr. Pickles: On that matter, I must defer to my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds who has great knowledge of the subject. It is a matter of common sense that if vehicles are removing molluscs at the rate at which my hon. Friend the Bury St. Edmunds referred, stocks for birds will be diminished. For birds to take cockles is natural. Long before dredgers entered the Solway firth and before my hon. Friend became a Member of the House birds were taking cockles there, but nature has a way of sorting out populations. Dredgers are artificial and destroy the balance of nature. That is the reason for fishery conservation.

Some 100 or 200 years ago, there was cockelling along the Solway firth, but the way in which the cockles were taken from the sea was quite different and not as efficient as current methods. If old methods were still used, the balance of nature would be preserved. The central theme is that this practice is an important part of the economy of the Solway firth. Communities rely on it and we must do our best to ensure that the balance of nature is maintained. That is why the measure is important.

I am delighted to see that my hon. Friend the Member for Erewash (Mrs. Knight) has returned to the Chamber. She spoke about problems on some of our beaches caused by gangs taking cockles and other molluscs from local communities. That has led to a degree of tension and there has been some violence on our beaches, which I deprecate. By controlling the extraction of molluscs, the measure makes it less likely that cowboys will engage in raids and take from communities a commodity on which they rely as a major source of income. I commend the Bill to the House and congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside on introducing it.

12.42 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Sir Hector Monro): I have many points to answer from my hon. Friends in this important debate. As many hon. Members have said, I have a personal interest in the Bill, because I live within sight of the Solway firth and I know its shoreline particularly well.

The Bill has had all-party support and it made speedy progress when it had a chance to do so. I will not repeat what happened on 20 May: perhaps hon. Members know the sad reason why I was not able personally to promote the Bill that day.

The general agreement in this useful debate is that it is a worthy Bill. I pay a warm tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Kynoch) for guiding it through the House. I think that it is the first Bill that he has taken through the House under the private Members' Bill procedure, and I am glad to say that it looks as if it will be successful.

I thank Lord Campbell of Croy, who has great Scottish knowledge and interest, for guiding the Bill through the other place. We have had satisfactory progress on a Bill which will be of tremendous benefit to the Solway.

My hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Luff) referred to the ecological and economic importance of cockling on the Solway. Many of my hon. Friends highlighted the importance to the whole shoreline of bird life on the Solway. The major areas are the Caerlaverock nature reserve and the East Park centre, which many thousands of people visit each year to see barnacle geese in particular, but also the large numbers of grey and pink-footed geese on the Solway in winter and the many other species of wild fowl.

The numbers of barnacle geese had dropped to a dangerous level 20 or 30 years ago, but now 15,000 to 20,000 of them come to the Solway each winter. There appears no reason to be too concerned about their long-term future, which is good news for all those interested in bird life. However, that raises questions among the large farming population in my constituency about how many geese are sustainable in the winter months. The farmers look longingly at the large financial assistance for the farmers on Isla, who have a similar, although bigger, problem with barnacle geese.

Many hon. Members have referred to the tremendous support for the Bill from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. I commend it for its support and for the information it has supplied to Members of Parliament. I am pleased to have a close relationship with RSPB officials in Scotland and throughout the United Kingdom on any matter that relates to Scotland.

My hon. Friend the Member for Worcester referred to the position of fishery protection officers. I am sure that they would always behave reasonably in carrying out their duties under the Bill. They have immense experience around our coast, both in fishery protection vessels and in aircraft, which are also important. The Scottish Fishery Protection Agency has a code of practice on enforcement procedures. My officials go into great detail on the law as it applies to fishing activities on the shoreline and out to sea.

I was glad to hear from my hon. Friend the Member for Erewash (Mrs. Knight) that her children are interested in wildlife. She was right to suggest that we should encourage children to take an interest as early in life as possible. England is, perhaps, fortunate in having slightly stronger legislation on tractors than Scotland. However, Scotland should soon catch up on that. My only disappointment was that my hon. Friend did not burst into song.

My hon. Friend the Member for Worcester raised two points about the habitat directive. Scotland is closely following through issues related to the marine environment. Under the Natura 2000 sites, we will fulfil all

responsibilities. He referred to the sea fisheries committees. Scotland has always taken a different line on that. We feel that it would add a layer of bureaucracy to an already complicated system and might, through byelaws, cause problems for the fishing industry. It is something of which we are constantly reminded by some fishermen, although others remind us that they do not want committees in Scotland.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hexham (Mr. Atkinson), who is an acknowledged expert on the countryside, shared his expertise with us. If I could just establish contact with him, I must say that I thought that I noted a hint of suspicion in his comments. I believe that he thought that English conservation legislation was perhaps more effective than the equivalent Scottish legislation.

I remind my hon. Friend that King Robert the Bruce introduced the first conservation Bill, which dealt with salmon, significantly before any such legislation in England. Of course, at about the same time we put certain men to flight at Bannockburn. *[Interruption.]* I want to keep hon. Members on side.

My hon. Friend was absolutely right to highlight the importance of cockling on the Solway. I shall not digress and become involved in the story that he was relating about John Paul Jones. The cottage in which he was born has recently been renovated and opened to the public, and is located near to the main cockling areas on the Solway which we are debating. My hon. Friend also mentioned the support given by the RSPB, and I reiterate our gratitude to that organisation.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Mr. Spring) gave us some interesting information about the amount of feed required to sustain the bird population. He is right to say that we have to find a balance between the long-term livelihoods of fishermen and the sustainability of the bird population. He also mentioned the barnacle. I am sure that there is a substantial number of Brent geese in his part of the world, just as there are substantial numbers of pinks and greys on the Solway and all around the coast of Scotland.

My hon. Friend also mentioned the fact that cockling on the beaches has become a particularly unattractive sight because of the sometimes venerable tractors and, more important, the diggers and other implements which do not mix well with those who enjoy walking on the beach or bathing in the summer when cockling takes place.

We have always accepted and welcomed cockling from boats, but the problems that have been highlighted are the reason for the introduction of the Bill. We have to prevent a modern form of cockling, which has been imported perhaps from Holland and which has overtaken cockling from boats which has existed in this country for many years.

My hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. Pickles) also stressed the importance of sustainability and of striking the essential balance between fishing from boats and fishing on shore. My hon. Friend the Member for Worcester asked a key question—how soon would we be able to take action? I highlight the imperative of the issue by pointing out that only this week I signed yet another order to ban cockling from fishing vessels from 1 August —in other words, the ban on vessels fishing for cockles will be continuous, because stocks are so low.

When the Bill has received Royal Assent, I shall, rightly, have to allow several weeks for consultation, but, subject to that consultation, which I must not prejudge, we shall have an order in place in the not-too-distant future. I believe that we are talking about a month or two. Initially, we certainly envisage that for the Solway firth, but, if the situation were to deteriorate on the Dornoch firth or the Moray firth or elsewhere in Scotland, legislation is available to be introduced quickly to deal with it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside spelled out the importance issue of the activity that we wish to restrict. When we introduced the Inshore Fishing (Scotland) Act 1984 to provide powers to regulate inshore fishing, no one anticipated that tractor-based dredging would be introduced a few years later. This is our first opportunity since the position became serious to prevent that from happening in the future. There will be proper consultation and we will take action on the basis of scientific evidence of the availability of stocks.

My hon. Friend's Bill will give us the opportunity to make an order, again subject to consultation, to prevent dredging of cockles by tractors. My hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds highlighted the huge tonnage that could be extracted in a week's fishing with dredgers. That is why we want to have the legislation in place as soon as possible.

I am disappointed, of course, that we have to prevent local fishing vessels from fishing for cockles, but that is because the stocks are so critical and so very low. After a year or so, we shall reassess the position and consider what can be done this time next year, when the order that I have just signed runs out.

We have to take all factors into account, as well as the additional duties that were placed on me and other Fisheries Ministers under the Sea Fisheries (Wildlife Conservation) Act 1992. That Act was introduced as a private Member's Bill and, like the Bill that we are discussing today, attracted strong Government support.

The long title of the 1992 Act adequately explains its function. It requires Fisheries Ministers and relevant bodies to have regard to the conservation of flora and fauna in the discharge of their functions under the Act. Section 1(1)(b) also requires Ministers to achieve a reasonable balance between conservation of flora and fauna and any other considerations to which they are required to have regard.

In effect, the Act merely confirms the existing position, because I and my colleagues in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and in the Welsh and Northern Ireland Offices already took such factors into account. However, it was helpful to confirm that in legislation and to bind our successors to the practice that we believed to be sensible.

Existing vessel-based fisheries came within the purview of the fisheries Acts. My powers would therefore be used after taking into account the conservation interests mentioned in the long title of the 1992 Act. The subsequent developments brought increasing numbers of tractors, which ploughed the exposed foreshore at low tide. Unlike the vessel-based fishery, those activities were not open to control under existing fisheries legislation. We therefore faced the unwelcome fact that a natural and finite resource was subject to exploitation by increasing numbers of operators, but that only one group was subject to control.

I should perhaps stress that I do not believe that all tractor dredging is necessarily harmful or that the activity should be prohibited under any and all circumstances. If that had been my view, I would have suggested to the House that section 3 of the Act should be amended to enshrine an outright ban in the primary legislation.

[Sir Hector Monro]

Dredging activities have shown themselves to be economically efficient. We must now examine what safeguards should be set in place to ensure that other factors are taken into account. In some highly sensitive areas, that may mean many year-round bans—I cannot rule that out—but in other areas it may be possible to develop controls that will allow judicious amounts of dredging to take place while still taking into account the impact on the stocks and the effects on other forms of natural life. Therefore, the issue is one of ensuring that the new activity is open to control in the circumstances required.

I and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, whose constituency borders the Solway as much as mine—indeed, more so—became increasingly concerned about the effect that combined fishing pressure might be having on stock levels on the Solway. The scientists at the Scottish Office marine laboratory conducted surveys of the stock level in the area affected. Some of the results of the surveys have been mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds.

The surveys showed conclusively that the cockle stock had reduced significantly. It was not easy to determine whether that was due to the natural fluctuations which natural populations are subject to or whether dredging activities were having a more direct impact, but it was clear that the stock level had reduced to a point at which fishing pressure could make the difference between stock collapse and stock recovery.

We looked at other ways of trying to meet the problem; in particular, we recommended to local authorities that they might frame byelaws under the Civil Government (Scotland) Act 1982. But at the end of the day, because of the necessity to get almost universal approval from landowners to the shore, it was considered best to proceed as we are—by this legislation. That is why we were so glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside was successful in the ballot. We are about to see the Bill's enactment into law.

As I said, the Bill has considerable support from hon. Members on both sides of the House. I know that the hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) gave it warm support in Committee. We will now proceed, once the Bill is enacted, to consult and then decide to bring in an order to deal with something that is presently, at face value, very harmful to the cockle stock on the Solway.

We are looking not only at the issue of saving the cockle stock but at the long-term future of the fishermen—the traditional fishermen who have earned a valuable livelihood over many years and who are now finding it swept away by modern methods which were, as I said earlier and as hon. Members mentioned, originally imported from Holland.

We are concerned about other fish. All in all, the Bill will be a valuable restriction and a tremendous help to the fishermen and fish processors. A number of fish processors in Scotland deal with cockles and other similar products.

Hon. Members have mentioned how popular cockles have become in restaurants abroad. Of course, that is very welcome. The amount of fish exported from Scotland is high, and that is important to the Scottish economy. It is interesting that in 1992, the total income from shellfish landings into Scotland was more than £46 million; yet, in 1938, the comparative figure was £70,000. Even allowing for inflation, that shows that it is an important issue in Scotland.

I am grateful to hon. Members for the all-round support that we have had for the Bill. It is right that we have highlighted our concern about not only the fishermen and the cockles but the tourists. What has stood out firmly today is the way in which hon. Members felt this was important to bird life, and the interest that has been shown by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.

After all the explanations that we had in Committee, in another place and in this House, this is the moment when we should say, "Well done," to my hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside. He has achieved a significant piece of legislation—something with which we in the Scottish Office are proud to be associated. I am grateful to the large number of my hon. Friends who have shown support here on a Friday. I support the Third Reading of the Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed; without amendment.

Marriage Bill

Not amended (in the Standing Committee), considered; reported, without amendment.

Order for Third Reading read.

1.4 pm

Mr. Gyles Brandreth (City of Chester): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

I am pleased to say that the Bill enjoys support on both sides of the House and beyond. You may have noticed, Madam Deputy Speaker, that today every national newspaper is carrying a delightful picture of yesterday's royal wedding. I hope that you have also seen a wonderful British film called "Four Weddings and a Funeral", which is a considerable box office hit—one of the most successful British films ever made. It is playing to marvellous business throughout this country and on five continents.

It seems that the whole world loves an English wedding and my Bill is designed to give couples who choose a civil wedding in England and Wales even greater choice as to where their marriages take place. The Bill would implement two of the most popular recommendations contained in the Government's 1990 White Paper, "Registration: proposals for change"—those aimed at introducing greater choice and flexibility for couples over a venue for civil marriage, by empowering local authorities to license suitable buildings, in addition to registry offices, as venues for such marriages, and by allowing couples to marry by civil ceremony in any registry office or approved building in England and Wales.

As the law stands, couples wishing to marry by civil ceremony have to do so at the registry office in the district where at least one of them resides. There are many reasons why people wish to marry by civil ceremony in other places, the most common being that they have moved away from their family home to study or work, but wish to return there for their marriage. Perhaps the registry office does not meet their expectations of a suitable place for marriage —it may not be sufficiently stylish or large. Those of us who believe in marriage want it to be celebrated in the style and manner that the couple choose.

Mr. Peter Luff (Worcester): I would appreciate it if my hon. Friend could reassure those of us who watched, "Love Story" and saw the rather sickening chic of the marriage sequence in that film, or who occasionally browse through the pages of *Hello!* magazine and have seen some of the grosser excesses of Las Vegas-style weddings, that his Bill will not open the floodgates for such scenes.

Mr. Brandreth: I am shocked by the revelation that my hon. Friend reads *Hello!* magazine. "Love Story" is not a British movie and therefore not one that I have seen. My hon. Friend can be reassured that there is no way that we want to move towards the Las Vegas style of wedding. Marriage is, we hope, a uniquely important event in any couple's life and the ceremony must be conducted with dignity in suitable premises. I shall elaborate in a moment.

By allowing local authorities to approve buildings such as stately homes and hotels as venues for civil marriages, and by removing the requirement to marry in the district of residence, the Bill will give allow members of the public a greater choice over the venue of their marriages.

Mr. Roger Evans (Monmouth): My hon. Friend mentioned stately homes and hotels. I do not understand whether it is a requirement of the Bill that a marriage should take place in a public place, in the sense that an approved location is one to which the public can have access.

Mr. Brandreth: Yes. Being a distinguished lawyer, my hon. Friend has gone to the heart of the matter. One of the basics of the English marriage is that it should take place in a public place, so the place must be accessible to the public. Obviously a constituency such as mine, which is rich in heritage and packed with historic buildings and the finest hotels, is ideal. Candidly, I foresee a day when the City of Chester becomes the most popular location for weddings in the United Kingdom.

The Bill ensures that local authorities adopt a responsible attitude in approving buildings for civil marriages, by providing for the making of regulations setting out the procedures to be followed by councils. That follows consultation with the local authority associations and the drawing up of formal guidelines. The Bill has the support of the Association of County Councils, the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, and the Society of Registration Officers—the registrars' professional organisation.

Mr. David Lidington (Aylesbury): I am concerned because the Bill does not mention the Association of District Councils. For those of us who live outside the main metropolitan areas, the district council is the chief planning authority and it might be worried if unsuitable premises, from a planning point of view, were selected by the county council. Has my hon. Friend taken that into account in the Bill?

Mr. Brandreth: Yes. My hon. Friend will find that district and county councils will be able to work together on this in a satisfactory way. I shall show him the range of consultation that has taken place and he will be reassured on the involvement of the district councils.

As I have mentioned the registration service, this could be an appropriate point at which to pay a tribute to that service and the contribution that it has made to the civilised ordering of important moments in all our lives. The registration service in England and Wales came into being in 1837 and, in many respects, its organisation and procedures have not changed greatly up to the present day. It is in some ways comparable with the city of Chester and —some would say—with the hon. Member for the City of Chester in that it is a service that is as modern as tomorrow and yet has a lot of time for yesterday.

Mrs. Angela Knight (Erewash): I am sure that my hon. Friend is whetting the appetites of those who wish learn about the provisions of the Bill and about the delights of the city of Chester. When will the proposals be put into effect if the House agrees to them?

Mr. Brandreth: If the Bill goes through the House and has a satisfactory passage through the other place, we hope that weddings will be taking place in this way this time next year, so it will be reasonably imminent.

Exactly a decade ago, the Government's programme of efficiency scrutinies included an inquiry into the registration service. The findings were published in the efficiency scrutiny report on the registration of births, marriages and deaths, and the report made nearly 50 recommendations for change.

[Mr. Brandreth]

In 1987, the Government announced that if time could be found, new legislation would be introduced. As a first step, a working group was set up and was asked to consider the scrutiny recommendations and to make proposals for the form that the legislation should take. The working group covered a wide range of interests, with representations from the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, the Department of Health and Social Security —as it then was—the Home Office, the Association of County Councils and the Association of Metropolitan Authorities. In sub-groups of the working party, the Society of Registration Officers, the National and Local Government Officers Association—as it then was—the Local Authorities Conditions of Service Advisory Board, the Society of Genealogists, the Institute of Population Registration and the Institute of Heraldic and Genealogical Studies were also represented. The consultation process was wide and deep.

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): My hon. Friend has given a long and impressive list of professional societies, corporate bodies and voluntary organisations which were consulted in connection with the Bill. Were people at any stage also consulted?

Mr. Brandreth: Very much so. The working group reported in 1988 and its recommendations were published in a Green Paper called "Registration: a modern service". That Green Paper received 600 responses from throughout the United Kingdom, including many from public bodies and other organisations, but also many from individuals. The great majority of those who responded registered broad agreement with the proposals.

In January 1990, the White Paper to which I referred was published and the proposals that it contained put forward a sound basis for reforming and modernising the registration service in England and Wales. Because of the many other reforms that this great reforming Government have introduced, it has not yet been possible to find time in the parliamentary programme to introduce the legislation necessary to implement many of the proposals. I am aiming to remedy the matter from the Back Benches.

Last year, I introduced a Bill relating to the registration of deaths. The Bill whose Third Reading we are now considering proposes to introduce two of the most popular recommendations contained in the White Paper to give members of the public greater choice over where their civil marriages may take place. It will also give local authorities greater scope and flexibility to deliver a service geared to the needs of the local population.

I pay tribute to hon. Members on both sides of the House for the work that they have undertaken to get the Bill to this stage. I pay particular tribute to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen), who has taken a keen interest in this matter. He has been actively supported from his Front Bench by the hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) and by the spokesperson on the Liberal Democrats Front Bench—I suppose that it is its lone Bench really—the hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms Lynne).

In Committee, the hon. Member for Leyton tabled half a dozen amendments, half of which would have brought a religious dimension to what is essentially a Bill about civil marriage. It is important to understand that the Bill relates to civil marriages. About half the marriages that take place nowadays in England and Wales are civil weddings.

The hon. Member for Leyton wanted the Bill amended to allow for religious marriages to be solemnised in any building approved by local authorities. He felt, in particular, that it should be made a requirement for every local authority to approve a Buddhist or a Hindu temple, a Muslim mosque or a Sikh gurdwara within its area and that persons other than registrars should be able to solemnise such marriages.

I hope that I was able to reassure the hon. Member that the law already provides for the registration for marriages of any building used as a place for religious worship and certified as such by the Registrar-General. I believe that the procedures involved are reasonably straightforward and the cost is certainly minimal. There are 281 eastern religious buildings currently registered for marriages in England and Wales. There is scope for further considerable extension. Marriage ceremonies in those buildings can already be performed by the religious celebrant, where that is required.

The hon. Member for Leyton also tabled an amendment to allow marriages to take place in gardens and other public open spaces, bringing English law into line with that of other parts of the world. My hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Luff) mentioned the possibility of beach-style weddings, the sort of thing that might feature in American or Australian films. That would change English marriage law fundamentally. My hon. Friend the Member for Monmouth (Mr. Evans) raised that point in a timely intervention. Apart from specific and historical exceptions, marriages in England and Wales must take place in a registry office, a church or chapel of the Church of England or the Church of Wales, or in buildings of other religious denominations, Christian or non-Christian, registered for marriages. It is a basic tenet of English law that marriages take place in buildings publicly recognised as being suitable and approved for the purpose.

It is also necessary for the venue of the marriage to be capable of clear description so that a specific and known venue can be included on the notice displayed at the registry office and to give ample opportunity for any legal objection to be made. The idea of a wedding in a garden may seem romantic, but it could be an elusive venue. We do not want to encourage people to get married behind the bushes. We want to know where the marriage is taking place.

The climate in our country might be said to be against open-air marriages. It might be possible for a marriage to take place in what could be described as a garden room within a permanent structure. It would not be possible, however, to hold a marriage in a large open space, somewhere like Hyde park, because one would arrive to witness the wedding, but would not know where it was —it could be anywhere. That is why we do not envisage open-air marriages.

A moored ship on a permanent site, such as the Thames, might be a possibility as a venue, but not a free-floating vessel. One must know where— [*Laughter.*] My hon. Friend the Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) is amused at that suggestion, but there is a serious point behind it. One wants to be able to attend a wedding, let us say—[*Laughter.*]

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I intervene to assist the hon. Gentleman while he convulses. It is an interesting point. Should not marriages be conducted on a moving vessel?

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): On a submarine?

Mr. Banks: Some marriages would have been better conducted in a submarine, kept quiet and never allowed to rise to the surface. What about a captain's power to twin people? I thought that captains still had such power. Would it go?

Mr. Brandreth: That power will not be affected. We are talking about civil weddings in England and Wales. My serious point—it is wonderful that such a happy measure is being received in such happy terms—is that it is vital that people are able to have access to the place where a wedding is taking place. Although we want to introduce greater choice in respect of a wedding venue, it is a serious and important public event. Therefore, access to it by the general public is essential. A wedding must be at a location that is well known, open to the public and, consequently, stationary.

The hon. Member for Leyton withdrew an amendment aimed at ensuring that the regulations that are provided for in the Bill would be formally approved by the House and the other place rather than being subject to affirmative resolution. Although I recognise the importance of the Bill—the number of right hon. and hon. Members who are present today underlines its importance—I do not believe that the regulations made under it are of such significance that they warrant the affirmative resolution procedure.

In Committee, I was able to offer some good news to the hon. Member for Leyton—this will please my hon. Friend the Member for Erewash (Mrs. Knight)—who asked when the legislation would be implemented. I have encouraging news on the timetable for the implementation of the Bill. The hon. Member for Leyton proposed that the Bill should automatically come into force three months after receiving Royal Assent. I do not believe that such an amendment would have been necessary.

I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Minister. Not only is he a fine Minister and an adornment to any Government, but he has taken a particular interest in the work of the registration service. Publicly and behind the scenes, he has worked hard to ensure that the important reforms are put forward as rapidly but as sagely as possible. I have been assured by my hon. Friend that, should the Bill pass into law this Session, from January next year, couples will be able to marry in the register office of their choice in England and Wales.

Clause 2, however, requires the making of regulations and the setting up of the necessary procedures for the approval of premises by local authorities. We do not want to harm a good job by doing it in a hurry, particularly when, as has been said, there might be a need for discussions between county councils and district councils. A three-month deadline would be restrictive. I hope that the provisions can be brought into effect within the first six months of next year.

A spring or early summer wedding in an approved building is therefore a distinct possibility. Think of it, Madam Deputy Speaker—this time next year, at wedding receptions across the land, once the bride and groom have been toasted and once the best man has celebrated the bridesmaids, glasses might be raised to the hon. Members who give a fair wind to the Bill today.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Would it not be very good if, as they raised their glasses, they could think of the prospect of living in a warm and comfortable home which had been enhanced by the House also making progress on the Energy Conservation Bill?

Mr. Brandreth: We have to proceed one measure at a time, but I understand the right hon. Gentleman's desire to move on to his business, which is why I conclude by saying that this is a good-news Bill which is designed only to add to the nation's sum of human happiness. I commend it to the House.

1.24 pm

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): I welcome the Bill and the change that will occur in our nation's marriage laws provided that the Bill passes all its stages before the end of this Session. I am one of the Bill's sponsors and I congratulate the hon. Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth) on getting it this far. When, in Committee, he compared the Chairman, the hon. Member for Southampton, Test (Mr. Hill), to Hugh Grant, the star of "Four Weddings and a Funeral", I thought that he was pushing his luck. I am pleased that he did not compare you, Madam Deputy Speaker, to Andie MacDowell, the female lead in that film, because that certainly would have been pushing his luck. When he said that, I thought that he might—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. I suggest that the hon. Gentleman does not push his luck. He must remember that Third Reading is about the content of the Bill.

Mr. Cohen: Yes, I had better move on to safer ground.

The current marriage laws were enacted in 1949 and are out of date and restrictive. They do not give couples who want to get married the same rights and choices as those in other countries. I want that choice to be expanded, which is why I introduced a Bill—number 13 on today's Order Paper—on St. Valentine's day last year and again this year. But my Bill will not make progress, whereas this one will. With due respect to this Bill's proposer, my Bill is better, but we must take what we can get and the form that he proposes is welcome.

This Bill deals with civil weddings and their location, whereas mine deals also with their religious aspect. In my Bill, couples can choose to get married in the manner that they wish, whereas under this Bill, the registrar decides where the venue should be, but at least it is a move in the right direction. I was particularly concerned that many couples are forced to have two weddings. In 1949, the law makers in this country knew only about the Church of England, the Quakers and the Jews. Many other ethnic minorities were not covered effectively by the wedding laws, so they have been forced to have two weddings: first, a religious ceremony—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but he is not answering an exam question comparing and contrasting the various methods. He must concentrate on the Third Reading of this Bill.

Mr. Cohen: This Bill relates only to civil weddings, so many people will still be forced to have two weddings. Those people will be not just ethnic minorities but couples in which only one partner is religious or when the partners have different religions. Such couples will have problems. The hon. Member for City of Chester assured us that a wedding could take place in gurdwaras, mosques or temples, and I welcome that. I hope that the "Minister for marriages", as he called himself in Committee, will add his assurance in that respect. Perhaps the guidelines that his Ministry will publish will included guidance for local authorities and registrars to allow marriages to take place in those venues in all circumstances if they are located in their vicinity. I hope that the guidelines will take that matter into account.

I should like marriages to take place in gardens, open spaces and parks. That happens in other countries. It is well known that in Australia couples like to get married under Sydney bridge. I do not see why couples in this country—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I fear that the hon. Gentleman was not listening when I said earlier that we can discuss only what is in the Bill. Open-air locations, and certainly Sydney bridge, are not in the Bill.

Mr. Cohen: I appreciate what you are saying, Madam Deputy Speaker, but the Bill is about locations for weddings and marriages. The registrar can choose nice buildings in the location, which is right. The locations should include the person's own garden. That would fall in line with giving the couple the choice. When people get married they spend money and are prepared to do so, but some may not wish to spend too much money.

The couple may also wish to get married in the place where they will live out their vows, so their garden may have a special significance to them. It is a shame that we are still restricting that choice. The measure could still include provision for open doors, mentioned by the hon. Member for City of Chester, even if the ceremony were in an open space. There could be an arrangement so that other people could object so that the marriage complied with requirements under the current law.

I welcome the Bill. A press release has been issued by an organisation called Garlands. There is a role for celebrants to conduct marriages, as happens in other countries around the world. Our law should recognise the fact that a celebrant could have a good role to play. I should have thought that the Government would have welcomed the idea of a celebrant, who conducts a sort of business —the Government say that we should encourage small businesses.

When I was presenting my amendments in Committee I spoke to one of the Clerks of the House who said that he hoped that the Bill and the changes would be passed because when he retired he would like to build a church in a beautiful location and let people come to be married there for a charge. That is a reasonable aspiration and a business which could be encouraged by both sides of the House.

The press release is headed, "Wedding Survey Reveals Discontent with Venues". It states:

"More than one in five couples with no religious beliefs marries in church simply because they want the tradition and pomp of a church ceremony.

'It was everything I wanted' said one bride. 'I just closed my mind when it came to the religious bit.'

A survey of recently married couples published today reveals that 60 per cent. weren't able to have their first choice of wedding venue because of Britain's current restrictive marriage laws.

Churches were the first choice of those who held firm religious beliefs, but over half of those questioned would choose to marry in a beautiful garden, if they could. And stately homes, castles and hotels also came out high on everyone's list. Nobody at all gave a register office as their ideal venue. In fact, increasing numbers are voting with their feet and are getting married abroad in their search for a romantic wedding.

The survey was commissioned by . . . Garlands"—

which—

"specialises in organising wedding ceremonies in unusual venues."

The survey continued:

"Current law allows a marriage to be legalised only in a register office or church . . . Many couples come"—

to Garlands—

"wanting to be married in a beautiful building or by a river and then are heartbroken to find that, although they can have their own ceremony where they like, they still have to go to a register office to register their marriage. And they feel that this effectively means having two ceremonies."

It states:

" The survey shows that religious couples often have to marry in a register office because the local priest is intransigent over divorce or mixed religions, or refuses to marry non-churchgoers. And non-religious couples often choose a church simply because they want the solemnity of atmosphere or else they end up in a register office if they aren't prepared to lie about their beliefs.

"Although many register offices are attempting to make their ceremonies more memorable affairs in order to accommodate the desire for a meaningful event, some are still very mundane places without character. 'Dark, dismal and naff' was how one bride described her London register office. 'Drab and office like' said another.

"The only alternative one-stop venue at present is a church but in fact only 1 per cent. of those questioned were churchgoers. Some 53 per cent. of the brides claimed some religious beliefs and 40 per cent. of grooms. But 35 per cent. of brides and 48 per cent. of grooms said they had no religious beliefs at all."

A Garlands representative said:

"That's very significant . . . Many people aren't religious but their wedding is still the most important day in their lives and they should have an equal right to a grand and dignified ceremony where they want it. If only a tiny minority of the population are churchgoers, it seems wrong that other than register offices churches are the only buildings which can be licensed to register marriages."

The press release then refers to the Bill introduced by the hon. Member for City of Chester. It welcomes the relaxation of marriage laws and states that his Bill

"proposes that certain other buildings such as stately homes and hotels should be able to be registered for marriages and that couples should be allowed to marry in any register officer and not just the one in the local authority area in which they live.

"Gyles Brandreth's Bill is a start but it doesn't go far enough . . . I'd like to see a situation where the marriage is legalised not because of the building it takes place in but by the officiant who performs the ceremony—whether he or she is a priest, registrar or trained marriage celebrant. Then people could have their wedding where they want just as they do in the Australia and the USA. They're much more enlightened than we are."

That is a press release from a company and a celebrant with knowledge in this area and it puts the issues clearly. The proposal would widen choice. It shows how out of date our marriage laws are. It shows how we could and should introduce further reform to take into account couples' wishes on marriage, which are not being met in many cases.

The Bill introduced by the hon. Member for City of Chester is an important start in the achievement of change and I welcome that. It is the only prospect of achieving change quickly. I hope that we will approve it today, that it will be passed in another place and that those many couples that the hon. Gentleman referred to can have the wedding of their choice next summer.

A change in the law will still be necessary in the not-too-distant future to increase choice so that couples' wishes can be met. I congratulate the hon. Member for City of Chester. He has set in motion important changes. The Minister for marriages is also the Under-Secretary of State for Health. The Department of Health has only few opportunities to present legislation to the House in every Session and marriages, I suspect, are a long way down the list of important matters on which health legislation is required. If it were left to the Government, it is likely that it would take several decades to change the marriage laws.

I congratulate the hon. Member for City of Chester on picking up the issue and proposing changes that can be passed by the House.

1.37 pm

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): Like the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen), I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth) on introducing the Bill and on the perspicacious, persuasive, perceptive and even passionate way in which he spoke. Like a wine waiter introducing us to the virtues of a good claret, he showed that this particular variety would be distinctive and greatly enjoyed by many celebrating people.

As the hon. Member for Leyton said, it is right that we should pass a deregulation measure which will allow the 60 per cent. of people who do get their first choice of marriage venue a greater opportunity to do so. As part of my lengthy preparation for the debate, I asked the registrar of deaths and births in Kidderminster in my constituency about the figures on marriages in registry offices and in Church of England and other authorised religious establishments. In 1989-90, there were slightly more marriages in religious establishments—346 compared with 288 registry office weddings. By 1993-94, the position had been reversed and more people—286 against 283—were getting married in registry offices. The measure will give those people greater choice. The figures are not surprising as one third of marriages nowadays are remarriages.

As the hon. Member for Leyton said, sadly, parts of the Church of England take a dirigiste attitude and people are forced into registry office weddings although they would prefer a religious ceremony. That probably has something to do with the appalling fact that a 1991 survey showed that some 57 per cent. of people of the marriageable age of 18 to 24—it is getting older nowadays—were ignorant of the nature, purpose and history of Good Friday. By encouraging people in the way that the measure seeks to do, that situation could be improved.

There is a broader reason why it is important to give couples more choice of places in which to be married. It is that successful marriages depend on the involvement not only of couples' families but of their communities. Given the production line nature of many registry office weddings, it is often difficult to provide a personalised atmosphere, but the investment and memorableness of the wedding occasion are preludes to a successful marriage.

Earlier this year, *The Daily Telegraph* published an article in which Lesley Garner said:

> "Marriage is more than a ritual that many consider outdated. It is the offering of protection and security under the law."

Any change in the way in which people get married—especially as it affects those 50 per cent. who get married in registry offices—that underlines that and involves the family in a place that is familiar or has an impressive setting, would make it more likely that people will take their marriage vows more seriously and think more carefully about the implications. It may be a forlorn hope, but in my view that could lead to more stable marriages.

Such changes may also encourage more people to get married. At present, 25 per cent. of children are born out of wedlock. While I make no comment on people's decisions about life style, many people do not get married because they feel that it is a hassle and would not mean much to them. If they were able to get married surrounded by their family in a happy and familiar setting, they might be prepared to consider it slightly more seriously. That leads me to what I think is the Bill's only fault, which, I hope, can be remedied by the regulations that will oversee the way in which local authorities decide on the places that are appropriate for marriages.

I have a great deal of sympathy for the view expressed by the hon. Member for Leyton that we should encourage maximum flexibility in the choice of places for registered weddings. Sadly, many stately homes and chateaux mariages—the sort of hotels that would be applying for licences—are anything but the kind of places where marriage vows should be properly exchanged.

Perhaps the house of an aunt or that of a mother or father would be more appropriate for marriage vows, whether outside or indoors. The legislation should allow local authorities on a temporary or permanent basis to permit such places to be used for registered weddings after deciding that health and safety and planning regulations have been met. It is important that the public should be able to gain access to such events. Obviously, that would be up to the local authority and, ultimately, the registrar. He will have discretion over whether to marry a couple after he has seen—together, I hope, with local authority officials—the surroundings in which weddings will take place.

Provided that the regulations can be drawn up in a flexible way, people will be allowed to marry in registered surroundings of their own choice rather than the long-standing and possibly inappropriate choice of the local authority. That would meet the objectives of the Bill.

With that important proviso, I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for City of Chester on bringing the Bill to the House and I wish it every success.

1.46 pm

Mr. David Lidington (Aylesbury): Like other hon. Members, I welcome the principles that animated my hon. Friend the Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth) to introduce the Bill. I want to take just a few minutes to deal with three or four points of concern about the detail of the Bill, with which I hope either he or my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary will deal when they reply to the debate.

My first point is that to which I alluded in an intervention; it concerns the respective duties of county and district councils. In the majority of cases, there would be little difficulty in the two local authorities reaching agreement on the designation of a particular building as a suitable site for civil marriages. There would be no problem with most hotels, to take the example most frequently cited. However, I can imagine circumstances in which there might be a clash of opinion. We all know of certain public buildings and of private buildings with a public function, such as sports stadiums, whose

[Mr. David Lidington]

construction and use has been permitted by the local district council subject to fairly stringent planning conditions.

Where there is a difference of opinion between the two authorities, whose power will prevail? Will it be the county council, with its proposed right under the Bill to designate particular premises as suitable for civil marriages, or the district council, which might say that the building cannot be used because its planning conditions state that it may be used for certain defined purposes only and not for anything else? Will the county council, as registration authority, have to seek planning permission from the district council?

I want to question the definition of "premises" in the Bill. I do not think that a full answer was given to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen). I understand that a particular building or a garden attached to a building is covered by the definition of "premises". If a couple wanted a Disraeli wedding, they could book Hughenden house or its garden. If they wanted to be a little more adventurous and have a John Wilkes wedding, they could book Prebendal house in Aylesbury for that purpose. However, if they wanted a Hellfire club wedding, would the West Wycombe caves count as premises under the Bill's definition?

Even though a couple could not use a field or a large park, would a small, easily identifiable, well-defined and fenced area of open space count as premises? Could they hold a John Hampden wedding by the Ship Money memorial in the field just outside Prestwood?

My third query relates to public access. Public access is crucial because a wedding is not only a private but a public ceremony. All of us who have been through the ceremony as a participant know that the most heart-stopping moment comes when the minister or registrar asks whether there are any objections to the marriage. I am worried especially about the designation of premises outside a couple's registration district. I hope that the regulations will contain provision for adequate notice to be given—and to be given publicly—of certificates and licences so that members of the public are able to exercise their lawful right to voice a legitimate objection in that one in a million case where such an objection exists.

My final concern relates to the record of marriages taking place under the proposed new system. In passing, I regret that my hon. Friend the Member for City of Chester did not feel able to include in the Bill a provision covering information additional to that contained in marriage certificates. In this respect, England and Wales have much to learn from the Scottish system.

I ask the Minister and my hon. Friend to take on board the use that genealogists make of certificates, licences and other material relating to weddings. Such material is especially important for the reconstruction of family history. Whereas my hon. Friend and I would probably not have too much difficulty tracing our ancestors, even though we might not know exactly where they were born and married or where they died, people with a more common surname might find it more difficult knowing only the name. In such cases, the place of residence and, associated with that, the place of marriage, become more important. I hope, therefore, that registers of licences and certificates provided for in the Bill, and especially of documents relating to marriages that have taken place out of a couple's home registration district, will be made available as a matter of course to genealogists and other legitimate researchers.

1.51 pm

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): In view of the time, I shall be as brief as possible. I thank my hon. Friend the Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth) for introducing the Bill because I was one of those caught up in the bureaucracy that he seeks to abolish.

Eighteen years ago, when my wife and I were planning to get married, I was living and working in London and she was living and working in High Wycombe, although we wished to marry in York where her parents lived and where she had been brought up. In order to be married in York, not only did she have to re-establish her residence there for a couple of months before the wedding but I had to make four separate visits to the registrar in London to persuade him to study up and get the forms right to enable us to be married in York. My impression was that if two professional, reasonably articulate people found it so difficult to overcome such bureaucracy, most people must be living in sin because they could not have got through all the hoops in the first place.

I hope that either the Minister or my hon. Friend can clarify, first, the religious use of premises. The notes that my hon. Friend has helpfully circulated state that for premises to be registered under the Bill there

"must be no recent or continuing connection with any religion."

Filton folk centre is a major public building in the town of Filton in my constituency, and it would be ideal for registration under the Bill as drafted. However, at weekends it is regularly used for services by at least one major evangelical Christian group.

The premises would be perfectly adequate for the celebration of marriages at other times or, indeed, at the same time because there are plenty of rooms in the building. I hope that the restriction under the regulations concerning connection with any religion will be applied, if necessary, not to the whole of a building but to a particular part of a building or a particular part of a building at a particular time. If not, what would otherwise be ideal premises will be completely excluded.

There are two matters on which the Bill does not go far enough. There has already been some discussion of whether people should be entitled to be married in a private home or their own home. In fact, quietly, the Bill permits that in two types of home. The Bill will permit the marriage at home of the owners or occupiers of a stately home or their families. It will permit the marriage at home of the owner-occupiers or employees living on the premises of a hotel. That is wholly admirable. I hope that in building on the legislation in future that principle could be extended. I hope that the matter can be considered in the regulations.

I understand the difficulties that are admirably expressed in the notes that my hon. Friend the Member for City of Chester circulated in relation to his argument that weddings must be held in a public place. However, I commend to him the principle that the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) and I became used to in our youth. At certain times of the year—I am thinking of the passover service held at home—private premises are thrown open to all comers. The door is left open and an extra place is laid at the table to anyone who wishes to walk in. I can see no reason why, as my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) said, a private house cannot be made

into a public place for a particular purpose and on a particular occasion. There are now many religions and branches of religions in this country for which either a combined religious and civil ceremony or one following the other would be ideally held at home. I cannot honestly see any reason why the law should be so restrictive as to bar people from ordering what is often the most important day in their life as they and their families desire.

The second matter is that, to my great regret, while the Bill and the proposed regulations under it recognise the increasing practice of registrars of allowing some music at a civil ceremony, there is still a crazy distinction—I can only describe it as such—between religious and secular music. Why is it that popular tunes such as "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring" or "Sheep May Safely Graze" are barred from use in a ceremony because they originally formed part of a cantata? Why is it that Rossini's "Stabat Mater", which has been described by critics as the most secular piece of religious music ever written, should be barred because of its title?

Why is it that if one is particularly fond of Ravel's "Danses Sacrées et Profanes"—roughly translated as sacred and secular dances—one has to pick the bits of the dances that are permitted to be played legally at a ceremony? It is a crazy distinction and any registrar who was serious about it would find that there was little secular music that had not been made into a hymn tune at some time or another.

I hope that when the regulations are made under the Bill they will be somewhat wider in their application to what is permissible. Subject to that, I commend my hon. Friend the Member for City of Chester for introducing the Bill. I wish he had been in a position to do so 19 years ago and I certainly do not wish to delay its passage.

1.58 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tom Sackville): Time is pressing on so I shall simply limit myself to dealing with some of the points raised during the debate. First, the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) raised yet again his obviously deeply felt desire to have been married in a garden. As we know, there are some problems with marriage law—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. My problem is that that is scarcely relevant.

Mr. Sackville: That is what I was about to say, Madam Deputy Speaker. I shall turn to my next point.

The Bill is about civil marriage. Matters to do with marriages in temples are taken care of. Those places can be registered and, as long as an authorised person or registrar is present, there need be only one ceremony. I think therefore that that is not relevant to today.

My hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington) made a good point about which local authority would be designating. The answer is that it is metropolitan boroughs, county councils and London borough councils at present. That will remain the case, although district councils—of course, there may be changes in all this; we do not know—can put forward their own civic buildings for consideration. But there will be no change to that.

My hon. Friend said that among other excellent places in his constituency are the Hellfire club caves at Wycombe. I have to tell him that I used to play in a rock band called "The Hellfire Club", and I have some knowledge of the activities that those gentlemen—Wilkes and others—got up to in the caves. Those activities would not lend any sort of dignity to the institution of marriage, so the answer to his question is probably no. Being caves, they can hardly be called a permanent structure, either—although that is a matter for geologists.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr.Stern) raised a number of interesting points. He pointed to the criteria for designation, and mentioned a place used by religious groups at some point. The criterion will be something along these lines: any building that would be seemly and dignified, and therefore appropriate to the institution of marriage, will be permitted. The fact that such buildings might be used at some other time for religious purposes would probably not be relevant, but that would have to be left to the discretion of the local authority concerned.

On the matter of the music, I was deeply impressed, as was the whole House, with my hon. Friend's erudition in these matters. If I may, I will write to him and deal with what he said.

I warmly welcome the Bill. We have a strange, quaint custom, particularly at the beginning of Adjournment debates, of welcoming debates that do nothing to help the Government, and congratulating hon. Members who are about to get up and do everything that they can to destroy one's credibility. In this case, however, I most sincerely and warmly congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth). For the past two years, I have been trying to find ways to help the White Paper commitment to the improvement of civil marriage. My hon. Friend has made that possible. I am quite sure that what he and other hon. Members have said—that this will add to the dignity and, we must now say, the popularity of marriage at a time when it certainly needs it—means that this is one of the most useful and beneficial pieces of legislation to have emerged in the past 11 years.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

Sale of Goods (Amendment) Bill [*Lords*]

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered; reported, without amendment.

Order for Third Reading read.

2.3 pm

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

I shall be brief. I commend the Bill to the House, and in doing so I thank those who are responsible for its being here—primarily, Lord Renton. He is better known to many of us in this place as the right hon. Sir David Renton; he was a Member here for many years and the predecessor of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in the constituency of Huntingdon. He piloted this Bill through another place with the general support of peers in all parties.

I had the good fortune to take on the Bill and, had I won a place in the ballot, I would have introduced it last year. I took the Bill through Committee with the support of hon. and right hon. Members on both sides of the House and I am grateful for that support. I am especially grateful to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Technology, who is on the Front Bench today, and to our right hon. Friends the Minister for Industry and the President of the Board of Trade, all of whom have been extremely helpful in supporting the Bill.

The Bill has one simple, but important, aim—to outlaw the practice of market overt. Members on both sides of the House will know that if goods in Bermondsey market, which is the one that is almost always quoted, are bought between sunrise and sunset, the title of the goods purchased passes to the purchaser, regardless of the origin of the goods. The market has been castigated as a thieves' den for that reason. The Bill contains no threat to the legitimate traders of Bermondsey market and it has the strong—indeed, passionate—support of the various antique dealers associations, the *Antiques Trade Gazette*, the Metropolitan police and many other police forces who have been in touch with me, all of whom see it as a small, but positive and helpful step. The Historic Houses Association is yet another organisation which lobbied for the Bill and welcomes its introduction.

I know that some of my hon. Friends have matters that they want to raised and we have little time. With the leave of the House, I shall respond to them if there is an opportunity. I commend the Bill to the House.

2.6 pm

Mr. Roger Evans (Monmouth): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for speaking so briefly. I propose to be equally brief. He is wrong to suggest that in Bermondsey market one can pass title regardless of origin. The rule applies only to goods acquired for value in good faith. That is not such a startling proposition and, indeed, it is one which is echoed in other areas of the law.

My concerns about the Bill are that, first, it does not apply, and has no relevance, to car boot sales, which are the modern curse, where fences dispose of property. Secondly, a proper understanding of the rule is so narrow that it will arouse greater expectations for change. The problems of prosecuting people who buy colour televisions—stolen from my constituents—in public houses in Cwmbran are exactly the same as those of prosecuting people who buy antique items in Bermondsey market at and under value. The law does not affect that problem.

I do not intend to talk out or to oppose the Bill, because I am satisfied, having talked to my hon. Friend the Minister, that the Government can deal with it in a way that will satisfy all of us. The problem that my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) identified is important, but—partly as a result of the heritage lobby, with and for which he is elegantly associated and an important spokesman—it is only one aspect. Ironically, he wants to tear up the pages of Coke's institutes and Coke's reports, which are still the law of the land on the topic, and to replace them with the Rocky Horror alternative prayer book version; but never mind. If there is a social need to do so, I can understand the force of the argument, but the problem with the Bill is that it does not deal with other situations that are equally open to challenge, and the matter ought to be given broad consideration.

For example, mercantile agents in possession can pass good title to goods, which means that if one takes one's car to a car salesroom to ask for a quote and it is sold on to someone else, that other person takes good title.

Secondly, if we buy trust property that is sold in breach of trust by a trustee, the rule is that the purchaser for value in good faith takes good title. It makes nonsense of law reform to take one aspect of chattels of a particular class and deal with it on its own. I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to consider whether the Government will review the general position.

The next problem is that the Bill moves English law further away from European law, rather than the reverse. The rule in the French civil code is "La possession vaut la titre", which is very similar to the doctrine of market overt. Will my hon. Friend the Minister consider, because this is a single-market issue, whether there ought to be a European approach as to the circumstances in which good title in goods is passed and the circumstances in which it is not. If one buys and imports throughout the European Community—whatever the appropriate balance of protection between the vendor and, on the one hand, the person from whom the goods are stolen and, on the other, the bona fide purchaser—it is a matter with a European dimension that is dealt with on that basis.

Has my hon. Friend had any consultations with the City of London corporation? One of the glorious anomalies is that every shop in the City of London is a market overt in the class of goods in which it trades. He is seeking here to abrogate the ancient privileges of London, and I should be very interested to know what consultations he has had on that aspect.

What has tended to happen in recent years is that our ancient franchise markets—the kind of market to which the market overt rule traditionally applies—have been greatly undervalued by those in power. I am bound to say that we have seen attempts to deregulate them which the Government have had to slightly reflect upon, and this is another fairly brutal attempt to whittle away at their considerable privileges.

I have several traditional franchise markets in my constituency, and I see colleagues in the House who represent agricultural constituencies where rural franchise markets are a part and parcel of life and perform a valuable social function. Farmer Giles can still turn up and sell his potatoes or his beasts. It used to be that one bought them with good title, and one could sue the auctioneer or those running the market. The Bill would stop that.

I urge my hon. Friend to consider the question of franchise markets. He should not abolish them as a feudal

anomaly where they are valued and appreciated institutions. Nevertheless, will he consider a general review of the way in which markets are regulated and run? I hear what those in the antiques trade who make complaints about Bermondsey market say. I have never been there and I have certainly never bought anything there, although I may have driven past it.

Those who complain that particular institutions have become thieves' kitchens might perhaps consider whether they have a remedy in the law as it stands, rather than promoting Bills of this sort.

2.12 pm

Mr. Peter Atkinson (Hexham): I shall also be extremely brief, and I could not better the erudition with which my hon. Friend the Member for Monmouth (Mr. Evans) expressed his concerns—which I share, particularly those about livestock markets. The reservations that I have about the Bill include the fact that we are intending to sweep away a piece of English history which goes back for many hundreds of years at just after 2 o'clock in a deserted House on a Friday in July, and that is a pity.

The Bill will not do what it is designed to do, and it will pursue people in one market at the expense of livestock markets in my constituency. I have one charter market in my constituency which has existed since mediaeval times. We do not know—and my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) also does not know—whether it is a market overt or not. I suspect that it is, but there is a dispute about that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Monmouth said that there could be real problems in dealing with the issue of title, which is currently covered by that aspect. While I share those concerns, I do not propose to obstruct the passage of the Bill; but it is worth a moment's pause before we abandon a piece of legal history to the dustbin.

2.13 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Technology (Mr. Patrick McLoughlin): I shall respond to some of the points that my hon. Friend the Member for Monmouth (Mr. Evans) put directly to me. He asked me to consider whether the matter could be looked at through the European Commission. That is an interesting point and I will consider it. I do not believe that the Bill contains some of the anomalies to which my hon. Friend has referred, but I shall want to look carefully at it in the light of what he said. I will respond in due course.

We are conducting a more general review and we have known about the Bill for some time. There have been no representations that the market overt rule ought to be kept. My hon. Friend the Member for Hexham (Mr. Atkinson) almost argued against his own point in one respect, when he referred to his local market and said that he was not sure whether it was a market overt or not. There are some problems with definition as to which markets are covered by the general rule of market overt. I do not think that there are particular reasons for keeping it going.

Indeed, it is something of a puzzle why it was not abolished when the common law regarding the sale of goods was first codified in the Sale of Goods Act 1893. The rule has been much criticised as a thieves charter, and although there is not a great deal of evidence that market overt is used as a means of disposing of stolen goods, it can no longer rationally be defended. For that reason, the Government support the Bill and commend it to the House.

2.14 pm

Mr. Cormack: With the leave of the House, Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank my hon. Friend the Minister for his remarks. I should like to reply briefly to my hon. Friends the Members for Monmouth (Mr. Evans) and for Hexham (Mr. Atkinson), to whom I am grateful for saying that they will not ultimately oppose the Bill. I cast no aspersions on the learning of my hon. Friend the Member for Monmouth, but many learned lawyers, including Lord Renton and Law Lords in the other place, believe that the Bill is desirable and sensible. On the law, I rest my case.

To say that, because market overt has been enshrined in English history since 1189, there is no reason to get rid of it, is hardly an argument. William Wilberforce could have bowed to the same argument when the slave trade was being abolished and one could still be branding people and doing all sorts of other unmentionable things. That argument does not hold, because something that has a long history behind it is not necessarily correct.

I am glad to note what my hon. Friend the Minister said about Europe and it is, of course, important that we discuss matters with our colleagues in the European Union.

As for the City of London, as a freeman of the City—if I have to declare that interest—I have received absolutely no representations from any of my colleagues or from common counsel on this. Many of them know about my interest in the Bill, just as they know that Lord Renton took it through the other place.

I will not weary the House by quoting an extremely learned letter from Brian Davenport QC—I believe that my hon. Friends the Members for Monmouth and for Hexham have seen the letter—but, as he points out,

> "As a matter of history, there is nothing new in the suggestion that the law of market overt should be abolished. This was unanimously recommended by the Law Reform Committee in its twelfth report in 1966."

He goes on to deal with the livestock market and notes:

> "The Law Reform Committee reported that over half the livestock markets in England were private markets and therefore could not be markets overt. In the case of each of the others it would have to be shown that the market was established by charter or had existed since before the year 1189."

I do not believe that the farmers of Hexham or of anywhere else are in danger. No one likes dealing in stolen goods in any event, if he is an honest man, and most farmers are honest.

I am conscious that another measure is to be discussed briefly, so, once again, I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time and passed, with amendments.

Sports (Discrimination) Bill

Order read for consideration, as amended (in the Standing Committee).

Mr. David Hinchliffe (Wakefield): To be considered on Friday 21 October.

Sir Peter Fry (Wellingborough): There are amendments to the Bill.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): It will not be in order for the hon. Member for Wellingborough (Sir P. Fry) to move his new clause, because consideration has been deferred by the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe), who is in charge of the Bill.

Bill to be considered upon Friday 21 October.

Energy Conservation Bill

Not amended(in the Standing Committee), further considered.

New clause 2

COMMENCEMENT

'This Act, except sections 4 and 5, shall come into force on such day as the Secretary of State may by order appoint; and different days may be appointed for different provisions, different purposes of the same provision and different areas.'.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the clause be read a Second time.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to discuss also the following: Government new clause 3—*Power of Secretary of State to give guidance on conduct of investigations—*

Amendment No. 92, in clause 2, page 2, line 4, leave out 'and'.

Amendment No. 93, in page 2, line 4, after 'practicable', insert 'and cost effective'.

Amendment No. 181, in page 2, line 20, leave out from 'cent.' to end of line 22 and insert

'or such other percentage as the Secretary of State may by order made by statutory instrument substitute; and any such instrument shall be subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament;'.

Amendment No. 94, in page 3, line 24, at end insert—

'(5A) In determining for the purposes of subsection (1)(a) above what measures are in its opinion cost effective, the authority shall have regard to any guidance on the question for the time being issued by the Secretary of State.'.

Government amendments Nos. 43 and 51.

Amendment No. 153, in page 3, line 27, after 'plan', insert 'and any modification'.

Amendment No. 182, in page 3, line 28, at end insert—

'(8) Orders under subsection (2)(a) above may make different provision with respect to different cases or classes of case.'.

Government amendment No. 52, in clause 3.

Amendment No. 203, in page 3, line 29, leave out 'shall' and insert 'may'.

Amendment No. 196, in page 3, line 29, leave out 'a date' and insert

'such date or dates as he considers appropriate'.

Amendment No. 199, in page 3, line 29, leave out 'all'.

Amendment No. 151, in page 3, line 29, after 'plans', insert 'and modifications'.

Amendment No. 197, in page 3, line 29, after 'plans', insert

', or parts of plans, as he may specify'.

Amendment No. 206, in page 3, leave out lines 31 to 41.

Amendment No. 147, in page 3, line 31, leave out 'all such plans' and insert 'any plan or modification'.

Amendment No. 201, in page 3, line 31, leave out 'all such plans' and insert

'a plan or part of a plan specified under subsection (1) above'.

Amendment No. 193, in page 3, leave out line 32.

Amendment No. 204, in page 3, line 32, leave out 'shall' and insert 'may'.

Amendment No. 146, in page 3, line 32, leave out 'such plans' and insert 'the plan or modification'.

Amendment No. 198, in page 3, line 32, leave out 'such plans' and insert

'the plan or the part'.

Amendment No. 171, in page 3, leave out lines 33 and 34.

Amendment No. 170, in page 3, line 33, after 'may', insert

', with the consent of the Treasury,'.

Amendment No. 169, in page 3, line 33, leave out 'a Scheme for making'.

Amendment No. 148, in page 3, line 34, leave out 'of such plans'.

Amendment No. 195, in page 3, line 35, leave out lines 35 to 41.

Amendment No. 205, in page 3, line 37, leave out 'shall' and insert 'may'.

Amendment No. 200, in page 3, line 38, leave out from 'above;' to end of line 41.

Government amendment No. 32.

Amendment No. 167, in page 3, line 42, after '(4)', insert

'Subject to subsection (5) below,'.

Amendment No. 149, in page 3, line 43, after 'plan', insert 'or modification'.

Amendment No. 166, in page 3, line 45, at end insert—

'(5) Regulations under subsection (4) above may make different provision for different cases, or classes of case, including different provision for different areas.'.

Government amendment No. 53.

Amendment No. 194, in the title, line 5, leave out from 'powers' to second 'and' in line 5 and insert

'to secure the implementation of such plans'.

2.17 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): I listened with great care to the Minister's advocacy of new clause 2, which he spent 30 minutes doing on 22 April and I am disposed to accept it.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House proceeded to a Division.

Mr. Beith (seated and covered): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is it not clear that this Division was not originally sought and that it is taking place against a Government new clause which I have accepted, with tellers for both sides being put in by Government supporters so as to ensure that the Energy Conservation Bill does not make any further progress today? Can you confirm that the promoter of the Bill did not put in tellers for the Division? It is clearly an attempt by the Government to prevent the House from considering the Energy Conservation Bill any further.

Madam Deputy Speaker: As Deputy Speaker, I have no knowledge of those matters. All that I am concerned with is whether the Division has been called correctly, and I am satisfied that it is in order.

The House having divided: Ayes 63, Noes 2.

Division No. 296] **[2.17 pm**

AYES

Arbuthnot, James
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Austin-Walker, John
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bendall, Vivian
Berry, Roger
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burt, Alistair
Carrington, Matthew
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Cohen, Harry
Conway, Derek
Cormack, Patrick
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Dover, Den
Dykes, Hugh
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fry, Sir Peter
Garrett, John
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gunnell, John
Hanley, Jeremy
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hodge, Margaret
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Keen, Alan
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacKay, Andrew
McLoughlin, Patrick
McWilliam, John
Malone, Gerald
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Merchant, Piers
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Patnick, Irvine
Raynsford, Nick
Sedgemore, Brian
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Spearing, Nigel
Sproat, Iain
Stern, Michael
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waterson, Nigel
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Willetts, David
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Gyles Brandreth and
Mr. George Kynoch.

NOES

Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Cox, Tom

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Roger Evans and
Mr. Michael Bates.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Clause read a Second time.

It being after half-past Two o'clock, further consideration of the Bill stood adjourned.

Bill to be further considered upon Friday 21 October.

Remaining Private Members' Bills

CIVIL RIGHTS (DISABLED PERSONS) BILL

Order read for further consideration, as amended (in the Standing Committee).

Hon. Members: Object.
To be further considered upon Monday 18 July.

ASSISTANCE FOR LOCAL AUTHORITY LEASEHOLDERS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Not moved.

WATER CHARGES (AMENDMENT) (NO. 2) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

PUBLIC RECORDS (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

SOCIAL SECURITY REGULATIONS (CHRONIC BRONCHITIS AND EMPHYSEMA) (AMENDMENT) (NO. 2) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 21 October.

TRADE DESCRIPTIONS (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 21 October.

MARRIAGE (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 21 October.

REGULATION OF COSMETIC SURGERY BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 21 October.

HEREDITARY PEERS (DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 21 October.

HOMICIDE (DEFENCE OF PROVOCATION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 21 October.

CONTAMINATED LAND (REMEDIATION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 21 October.

HORSES (PROTECTIVE HEADGEAR FOR YOUNG RIDERS) (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

TAMPONS (SAFETY) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 21 October.

REGULATION OF DIET INDUSTRY BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 21 October.

NURSERY EDUCATION (ASSESSMENT OF NEED) BILL

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Second Reading [18 February].

Hon. Members: Object.
Debate further adjourned till Friday 21 October.

LANDLORD AND TENANT (COVENANTS) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

FREEDOM TO ROAM (ACCESS TO THE COUNTRYSIDE) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 21 October.

CHILDREN ACT 1989 (PROHIBITION OF CORPORAL PUNISHMENT) AMENDMENT BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 21 October.

FINE DEFAULTERS (RESTRICTION OF POWER TO IMPRISON) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

TREASURE BILL [*LORDS*]

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 21 October.

PARDON FOR SOLDIERS OF THE GREAT WAR BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 21 October.

WATER (DOMESTIC DISCONNECTIONS) BILL

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Second Reading [*25 February*].

Hon. Members: Object.
Debate further adjourned till Friday 21 October.

PUBLIC CONVENIENCES (NO. 2) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 21 October.

UNFAIR DISMISSAL (INSOLVENCY OF EMPLOYER) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 21 October.

TRADE BOYCOTTS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

PUBLIC INQUIRIES (IMPROVED PROCEDURES) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 21 October.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Tuesday 19th July, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business), the Speaker shall put the Questions on the Motions in the names of Mr. Secretary Patten relating to the draft Education (Assisted Places) (Amendment) Regulations 1994 and Mr. Secretary Gummer relating to the draft Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994, respectively, not later than one and a half hour after each Motion has been entered upon; and the said Motions may be entered upon and proceeded with, though opposed, after Ten o'clock.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Earlier this morning, a statement was made about the important matter of Government consultation on discrimination against disabled people and a document was placed in the Vote Office. I do not know whether it is a Command Paper and therefore I cannot tell whether it will be formally placed before Parliament. Can you ascertain whether that is so? Will the facts in the paper that is laid before the House, particularly those on page 13, be examined by a Select Committee?

Madam Deputy Speaker: I have no information on the main point. I can cause inquiries to be made.

Mr. Roger Berry (Kingswood): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. In his statement this morning, the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People said that the Government had always opposed rights-based legislation to outlaw discrimination against disabled people. Given that, on Second Reading, not a single hon. Member—

Madam Deputy Speaker: This is quite irregular. That is not a point of order for the occupant of the Chair. *[Interruption.]* Order. The hon. Gentleman must be guided by me.

Palestinian Refugees (Lebanon)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

2.35 pm

Mr. John Gunnell (Morley and Leeds, South): A visit by members of the parliamentary Labour party to Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Gaza and Jericho provided many memories: the destruction still so overpowering in the centre of Beirut; the quiet tension of the artificial border on the Golan heights; the sense of progress in Amman; and the atmosphere of fresh celebration, liberty and hope on the streets of Gaza and Jericho. Yet for me, as a member of that party, no memory will be more lasting or more poignant than that of a visit to the camps of the Palestinian refugees at Shatila and Burj El-Barajneh in Beirut.

Our Lebanese hosts were not encouraging when we said that we wanted to go there, but they recognised our determination and the strong wish of Lionel Brisson, the director of United Nations Relief and Works Agency affairs in Lebanon, to meet us at the camps.

The discussion that we held with the group of residents who represented them all gave us the starkest reminder of the distance that the peace process has to travel. The men whom we met had lived in compulsory exile for 46 years. They were stateless; they were not allowed to obtain jobs outside the camps; and they could not get education beyond secondary schools. They lacked those most basic rights, but they had great dignity.

Some of the older men showed us their British birth certificates. Two of them produced documents showing that, under the British mandate, they served in the police force. Others had spent the whole of their lives in the camps and had no reason to suppose that they would ever see the villages around the lake of Tiberias which their parents called home.

Given their experience and the role that Britain, under a Labour Government, had played in their fate, they were surprisingly free from rancour; however, they were more critical, and I think more fearful, of the current peace process, for they could see that it had passed them by. Perhaps it would develop, but the more it did and succeeded, the more they would be left trapped in time, but without space. They would be the long-term victims, first of war and then of peace. They also know that there is now a concentration of resources from many nations on Gaza and Jericho, but that means fewer resources for them. They are the real losers in the peace process.

It is easy to cast stones: at Lebanon, because refugees in Syria and particularly those in Jordan have a far better deal; at Israel for bombing and raiding the camps during its invasion as far north as the outskirts of Beirut; at the PLO, as the fate of these people was not remotely on the agenda in the negotiations; and at ourselves for our role in the creation of the problem. It is easy to cast stones, but it is not constructive. We must address what measures we ought, through the United Nations, to argue for and be prepared to contribute to in the short and long terms.

The members of the camp council whom we met made it clear that they supported Hamas, which was to be expected. The policy of destroying Israel made sense to them. How else, they argued, could they recover their homelands? But they recognised that that was not on our agenda or on those of Lebanon, Syria or Jordan. It is a political and military non-starter, so how can we prevent these refugees from becoming the forgotten of the region?

First, we must accept that they are not simply Lebanon's responsibility. Lebanon makes it quite clear that they are unwelcome and that, however long they have stayed, they cannot settle. That exacerbates the refugees' problems. Many of the Lebanese camps suffered enormously during the Israeli invasion and in the Lebanese civil war. Shatila was almost destroyed, as was two thirds of Burj-El Barajneh.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency has spent money on building blocks of flats in Shatila, replacing with homes the rubble left by Israeli raids. It wants to build more, including schools and infrastructure for water and sanitation, but the Lebanese Government say no. Permanent structures create a feeling of permanence and that cannot be allowed, so far more people live in and among the debris than need be the case.

It is true that Beirut has massive reconstruction problems: years of huge expense lie ahead. It is also true that, after the disastrous civil war, the balance between the Christian and other communities is delicate and would be upset by the acceptance of about 300,000 Palestinians as citizens. Lebanon cannot act alone, but must be part of a comprehensive solution.

United Nations resolution 194 affirms that Palestinian refugees have the right either to return to their former areas or to be compensated for their losses. The Jordanian parliamentarians whom we met affirm their continuing support for that resolution to be implemented as part of a lasting peace settlement. Jordan, of course, has far more than the 300,000 refugees in Lebanon—it has upwards of 1 million. The parliamentarians made it clear that the settlement of the refugee issue on a comprehensive basis was for them an absolutely integral part of the peace process.

Britain, too, should confirm its support for resolution 194 and work for its acceptance by all parties. Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, as well as Israel and the PLO, will have to reach accord if the region is to gain the level of stability that will enable all the nations involved to give economic and social development the priority that they could have if all national securities were guaranteed. That cannot happen if the 1948 exiles are simply ignored or if those in Lebanon, who are the ones with the greatest difficulties, remain the only group not affected by an agreement. They would then become irrevocably committed to a radical solution, but without any of the means of achievement or even self-expression, let alone of escape.

We must accept that, historically, the United Kingdom has a level of direct responsibility, which I am sure we will be glad to share with our European partners. We must support UNRWA and ensure that, in stepping up the aid we provide to the new Palestinian authority—the Minister is well aware of my support for the measures taken to assist it—we must be careful not to remove aid from the work that UNRWA is doing with refugees, especially its budget for Lebanon.

There are real worries about that budget. It has not kept pace with local inflation and the Palestinians say that in the closure of a hospital, in reduced levels of health care and in the contributions that they are asked to make, there is evidence of a reducing budget.

We should be willing to back the agency's planned capital programme for the camps. We should raise with it

the current concerns of the Palestinians, and we should use our relationship with the Lebanese Government to get permission for that capital work to go ahead.

Britain is currently 10th on the list of contributors to UNRWA. We do not sponsor specific projects. It would be timely to back one of the new facilities needed and give it the level of support that would ensure that it was provided. In those circumstances, the Lebanese Government would give permission for the work to go ahead. I am sure that it is much easier in this country to get public backing for a school or a housing project than it is to get aid for general purposes.

I was one of the first group of parliamentarians to visit Beirut for 20 years. We found Britain well regarded because our embassy, unlike most others, stayed open throughout the civil war. As Prime Minister Hariri told us, that should provide opportunities for the involvement of British firms in the huge programme of renewal. However, it also gives us the ability to ask questions about the status of the refugees.

Our ambassador played a direct part in ensuring that we visited the camps. We should say that, while we fully understand why Lebabon denies citizenship for internal reasons, the legal status of the refugees should give them the rights of residence, shelter, work, education, health, social security, the protection of the law and democratic freedom. We must recognise that Lebanon alone cannot deal with that and that solutions within a wider context are essential—solutions guaranteed and underpinned by a UN framework.

Visually, Beirut is still disturbing, but the experience of Shatila and Burj-El-Barajneh and our talks with their people was not just physically but emotionally unsettling. The peace process has brought flickers of hope to many. We must work to stop it bringing, at the same time, despair to others.

Britain, in Europe, has an important role. Historically, we know the region and its peoples. We must strengthen those forces and agencies for conciliation and help Lebanon to improve the prospects for all who live there, including those who, after 46 years, are still unwelcome guests.

2.49 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Douglas Hogg): I am glad that the hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Gunnell) has chosen to raise this important subject on the Adjournment. I am also glad to see two of my hon. Friends here: my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-East (Mr. Kirkhope) has a particular interest in the middle east, and my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) is well known for his concern about all matters relating to Israel.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that the problem of refugees in the middle east goes somewhat wider than outlined by the hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Gunnell)? Does he accept that, in the immediate aftermath of the formation of the state of Israel, there were also a large number of Jewish refugees, and that the difference between the state of Israel and the state of Lebanon was that Israel provided jobs and houses for the Jewish refugees? Is it not a pity that Lebanon, Syria and Jordan did not do the same for the refugees that they received?

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend has shown his customary ingenuity in making the point that I knew he wanted to raise. However, it enables me to welcome the fact that my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) is also here. He, too, has a well-known concern for the affairs of Israel.

The serious problems of the 1948 Palestinian refugees have always been a major concern of the international community. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency —UNRWA—was set up to deal with just those problems. UNRWA established its headquarters in Beirut in May 1950 and, since then, has played a significant role in the lives of Palestinian refugees living in Lebanon.

UNRWA provides services to some 2.8 million registered refugees in the region. Those services include basic education, health, social services and income generation. The United Kingdom sits on the seven-member advisory commission to UNRWA in Vienna and we fully support its work throughout the region.

UNRWA quoted the number of registered refugees in Lebanon as around 335,000 at the end of last year. Of these, more than 150,000 live in 12 camps run by UNRWA, and 95 per cent. of the Palestinians living in UNRWA refugee camps in Lebanon are 1948 refugees.

No one doubts that the hardships faced by the Palestinians who went to Lebanon in 1948 have been especially severe. Not only did they leave their houses in 1948, but they subsequently found themselves in the middle of a brutal civil war. The horrors of the massacres in Sabra and Shatila refugee camps are known to us all. UNRWA itself was forced to move its headquarters from Beirut to Vienna.

The refugees in Lebanon today still find themselves in a difficult political environment, in many ways outside the society that hosts them. That problem was described by the hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South. UNRWA is working to rehouse refugees who have been displaced from property in which they sheltered during the war, property which the Lebanese are now hoping to restore to its rightful owners during the process of reconstructing Lebanon.

Although the delicate situation in Lebanon has affected the situation of the Palestinians there—through no fault of their own—we must recognise the contribution made to those refugees by their hosts. We welcome that help.

We are concerned about the continuing difficulties in the south of Lebanon, not least because they periodically affect the refugee population. We are supporting fully the peace process which we hope will lead to a permanent peace settlement. We have welcomed Israeli Government statements to the effect that they have no claims on Lebanese territory or water resources. We hope that they can be translated into action and look forward to the full implementation of Security Council resolution 425.

We have consistently called for the withdrawal of all foreign troops from Lebanon as provided for in the Taif accord. In this context, we have been encouraged to see the Lebanese armed forces play a far more active role in maintaining peace and security in Lebanon. They will have a key role to play in the establishment of lasting stability.

Lebanon has now embarked on an ambitious programme of reconstruction which the British Government whole-heartedly support. There is a renewed mood of confidence, and British companies are actively participating in the reconstruction process. We recognised the progress that Mr. Hariri's Government had made when we restored Export Credits Guarantee Department cover in

[Mr. Hogg]

January. Since then, the political situation in Lebanon has remained stable. The enormous progress made should have a beneficial effect on the lives of everyone there.

There is a widespread perception—one to which the hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South referred—that the 1948 refugees are the forgotten victims of the breakthroughs in the middle east peace process that have taken place in the past year. They have not been forgotten by either the negotiators or the aid agencies.

The 1993 declaration of principles signed by the Palestine Liberation Organisation and Israel provided for discussion of the 1948 refugees as a permanent status issue. Permanent status talks are to begin on or before 4 May 1996. Other permanent status issues include settlements and Jerusalem. While those are some of the most difficult issues, they are also some of the most important to an overall settlement and there is no danger of their being overlooked.

The declaration of principles stated explicitly for the first time that the peace process and the negotiations of permanent status would lead to the implementation of resolutions 242 and 338. Resolution 242 affirms the necessity of achieving a just settlement of the refugee problem. We will do all we can to ensure that the peace talks address that issue.

We continue to stress to all our interlocutors the importance that we attach to a just, lasting and comprehensive settlement. That is not to say that a solution to the problem will be easy or quickly found, but we are urging all parties to proceed with all speed to reach solutions to the refugee question on both the Palestinian and the Lebanese track. In that context, we welcome the recent progress on the Jordanian track, and greatly welcome the speech made by His Majesty the King of Jordan.

We will continue to urge progress on all aspects of the peace process, including the multilateral tracks. We participate in all the working groups of the multilateral talks, not least the refugee working group. In April, a mission went to the refugee camps in Lebanon. UNICEF is also involved in projects for the Lebanese through the working group.

The European Community is holding its second inter-sessional activity of this working group in Bristol next week. It will work on an inventory and assessment of the assistance available to all refugees. We very much hope that progress in the peace talks will enable Lebanon to join in the multilateral talks, and particularly the refugee working group.

Our assistance to UNRWA is mostly in the form of a contribution to the regular budget. At present, we contribute £6 million annually, which makes us the fifth largest donor. Our contribution is used by the Commissioner-General to meet his general priorities, rather than being earmarked for specific needs.

To take up a point made by the hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South, our contribution is more useful if it is available for general needs. As the hon. Gentleman said, it is sometimes easy to find money for specific projects. Schools and housing were the two examples that he gave. By making it available for general needs, we make money available for what might otherwise be seen as somewhat less glamorous causes.

Mr. Gunnell: I accept what the Minister says. I accept that we put in a considerable amount of money. I wondered whether perhaps some additional specific aid might be given. I agree that public support is more easily gained for specific aid, but I do not suggest that we should reduce the amount that we give to the general UNRWA budget.

Mr. Hogg: I understand that. The impression I gained from the hon. Gentleman—I am not being critical about this—was that he suggested that we should focus more than we do on special projects. I make the point that there are advantages in putting the money into the general spending policy because that requirement is less glamorous. The Commissioner-General finds it more difficult to find support for general outgoings than for specific projects, which attract general support.

We also contribute to UNRWA through the EC. The EC contributes at present about 30 million ecu a year, of which the UK's share is around one sixth, or about £6 million a year.

UNRWA's peace implementation programme, which was drawn up in response to the declaration of principles, deliberately included provision for refugees in Lebanon, Syria and Jordan. In Lebanon, there is a health programme, an education programme and a relief and social services programme.

Our own bilateral programme also addresses the situation of the Palestinians in Lebanon. Recently, the Overseas Development Administration agreed to spend nearly £200,000 in support of Palestinian refugees living in Lebanon.

The largest part of that funding is going through the charity Medical Aid for Palestinians—MAP—which works closely with the refugees and the Palestinian Red Crescent Society in the area of health. They are working on projects to restructure health services and develop primary health care and medical training in south Lebanon.

We also provided £10,000 in emergency aid through MAP to the Palestinians in Lebanon after the Israeli bombardment of southern Lebanon last July. That is another example of a situation where we cannot solve the root cause of the trouble, but we can, and do, play our part in easing the symptoms. This is always in parallel with the political pressure on the parties to reach agreement between themselves to solve the underlying dispute.

That is the approach which we will continue to adopt. Our support for all tracks of the peace process will continue unabated, both politically and economically. Only the success of that peace process will be able to find a permanent solution to the problem of Palestinian refugees. We hope that that settlement is not long in coming.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at Three o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 4 July 1994

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Recycled Paper

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what percentage of his Department's *(a)* press releases and *(b)* written answers are printed on recylced paper.

Mr. John M. Taylor: None. However, the paper used for press releases and written questions is classified as "environmentally friendly".

Courts Services Agency

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what amounts have been paid out, and to whom, by way of fees for consultation about the setting up of the Courts Services Agency; what sums he plans to pay out in this respect in the future; and to whom.

Mr. John. M. Taylor: The Department has paid £15,500 in fees to Dent Lee Witte and KPMG Peat Marwick for work assisting with the setting up of the Court Service Agency. One contract is still continuing, with further costs of £3,000 expected. A further contract to design the launch documents is currently out to tender. There are no other plans to use consultants to assist with establishing the agency, but the Department will assess whether their assistance may be appropriate as work progresses.

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is his latest estimate of *(a)* the costs incurred so far and *(b)* the costs yet to be incurred in the setting up of the Courts Services Agency.

Mr. John. M. Taylor: The preparatory work started in July 1992 and has cost £362,000 up to June this year. Costs of £246,000 are expected to be incurred from June this year to the launch of the agency in April 1995.

Courts and Court Buildings

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what plans he has to allow notices to be posted with regard to consultation about the proposed closures of courts and court buildings in the public areas of the courts and court buildings concerned.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The consultation procedure for the proposed closure of a court requires the circuit administrator to consult a wide range of local interests. Also, it is open to a circuit administrator to post a notice on the court notice board.

Judicial Appointments

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department on what date the changes announced on 7 July 1993 to the judicial appointments system take effect.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Clywd, North-West (Mr. Richards) on 19 May, *Official Report*, column 529. The Lord Chancellor's proposals for implementing the changes announced in his speech were set out in a consultation paper, copies of which were placed in the Library.

The closing date for responses to the consultation paper was 30 June. The Lord Chancellor is now considering the responses received and will make an announcement as soon as practicable.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Recycled Paper

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Attorney-General what percentage of the Law Officers' departments' *(a)* press releases and *(b)* written answers are printed on recycled paper.

The Attorney-General: Nil.

PRIME MINISTER

"The Downing Street Years"

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what clearance the Cabinet Secretary gave to Lady Thatcher's book on the Downing street years in respect of *(a)* relations with Libya and the 1986 raid and *(b)* the Falklands War.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. and noble Friend, Lady Thatcher, submitted the manuscript of "The Downing Street Years" to the Cabinet Secretary in accordance with the recommendations of the Radcliffe committee on ministerial memoirs. The Cabinet Secretary, acting at my request and on my behalf, examined the manuscript in respect of national security, the preservation of international relations and the treatment of confidential relationships. Exchanges between the Cabinet Secretary and former Ministers in respect of their memoirs are confidential.

EC Rebate Mechanism

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list those statements made by the United Kingdom heads of Government stating that the United Kingdom EC rebate mechanism could not be changed without the consent of the United Kingdom Government.

The Prime Minister: The abatement is an integral part of the own resources decision—ORD. The ORD, including the abatement, continues in force unless or until changed or replaced. Change or replacement requires unanimity in the Council followed by adoption of the new arrangements by member states according to their respective constitutional procedures. In the case of the United Kingdom, this means the passage of an Act of Parliament. This has been made clear on many occasions.

Pensions

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Prime Minister how many representations he has received in the most recent 12 months for which figures are available calling for the

unfreezing of the British state pensions of those pensioners living in countries where annual upratings are not made by the Department of Social Security; and what is the explanation for the discrimination against such pensioners.

The Prime Minister: In the last 12 months, I have received representations from the Governments of Australia and Canada. I have also received numerous letters from pensioners overseas.

It would cost an additional £230 million a year to uprate British pensions worldwide. In view of the continued need to contain public expenditure, we have no plans to change this long-standing policy.

SCOTLAND

Enzootic Bovine Leukosis

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) of 22 June, *Official Report*, column 231, what was the location of the cattle aged 30 months or under with enzootic bovine leukosis.

Sir Hector Monro: The information requested is as follows:

Enzootic bovine leukosis reactors (Under 30 months)

Location	*Number*
Grampian	1
Dumfries and Galloway	1
Strathclyde	6

Fisheries

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he proposes to introduce precautionary limits on the industrial fishery catch permitted on the Wee Bankie.

Sir Hector Monro: The industrial fishery on Wee Bankie by non-United Kingdom fishermen is carried out beyond the United Kingdom's 12-mile territorial sea and United Kingdom catch levels in this fishery are minimal. Any limits on catch levels for all member states would require the agreement of the Council of Ministers in Brussels. In the light of further scientific work being carried out on the impact of industrial fishing, the United Kingdom will consider whether further controls on the North sea fishery should be proposed.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion by weight of the the total fish catch in International Council for the Exploration of the Sea area VI, *(a)* is taken by industrial fishermen and *(b)* comprises sandeels.

Sir Hector Monro: Data on total international catches for all species in sub-area VI—West of Scotland and Rockall—are available in the publication "ICES Fisheries Statistics (Bulletin Statistique des Peches Maritimes)". The most recently available volume is dated November 1992 and is for the year 1988.

On the basis of the information contained in that publication, figures for the years 1985-88 are as follows:

"Industrial" catch as percentage of total catch	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
Division VIa (West of Scotland)				
Sandeels (per cent)	2·2	3·1	1·9	3·4
Norway pout (per cent.)	1·1	—	5·0	—
Blue whiting (per cent.)	24·3	33·6	17·8	14·7
Total (thousand tonnes)	857·4	794·3	767·4	719·5
Division VIb (Rockall)				
Sandells (per cent.)	—	—	—	—
Norway pout (per cent.)	—	—	—	—
Blue whiting (per cent.)	1·4	2·5	30·0	3·9
Total (thousand tonnes)	31·7	28·4	44·4	36·1

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what was the catch by the industrial fisheries on the Wee Bankie, Firth of Forth, in *(a)* 1991, *(b)* 1992 and (c) 1993;

(2) what proportion of the industrial sandeel catch on the Wee Bankie is taken by British fishermen.

Sir Hector Monro: Total international catch data are published only for larger areas than Wee Bankie. Available data for the area off the Firth of Forth, however, show that catches in that area totalled 39,000 tonnes in 1991 and 60,000 tonnes in 1992. Published data are not yet available for 1993.

No United Kingdom vessels landed sandeels from that area in 1991 or 1993. In 1992, United Kingdom vessels landed just over 1,000 tonnes. The precise proportion this comprises of the entire sandeel catch on Wee Bankie in that year is unclear because of the factors explained above; but the information available indicates that the proportion will be less than 2 per cent.

Agriculture

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many *(a)* farmers and *(b)* holdings there were in (i) each region and (ii) less-favoured areas and non-less-favoured areas in Scotland in 1993.

Sir Hector Monro: The figures for main holdings at June 1993 are as follows:

Region	*Number of holdings*	*Number of farmers*
Borders	1,740	1,346
Central	1,088	732
Dumfries and Galloway	3,022	2,434
Fife	1,047	785
Grampian	6,520	4,708
Highland	4,672	3,063
Lothian	1,137	720
Strathclyde	5,706	4,099
Tayside	2,904	2,087
Orkney, Shetland, Western Isles	4,256	2,796
Less Favoured Area[1]	20,692	15,081
Non Less Favoured Area	11,400	7,689

[1] Holdings where 50 per cent. or more of the land is classified LFA for subsidy purposes.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is *(a)* the amount of land in hectares in each region, *(b)* the number of farmers and *(c)* the cost of the five-year set-aside scheme in Scotland in (i) 1993-94 and (ii) 1994-95; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: The areas and numbers of farmers as reported and the aid paid to date under the five-year set-aside scheme in each region of Scotland in respect of 1993-94—that is, for the set-aside year ending on 30 September 1993—are as follows:

Region	Number of farmers	Area Hectares	Amount paid £
Borders	44	2,219	348,309
Central	26	1,042	201,406
Dumfries and Galloway	7	115	20,938
Fife	34	1,327	173,398
Grampian	444	10,301	1,778,760
Highland and the Islands Councils	72	2,447	428,603
Lothian	23	1,025	208,185
Strathclyde	44	615	119,599
Tayside	118	4,675	711,533
TOTALS	812	23,766	3,990,731

Estimated expenditure for 1994-95 is some £2 million in respect of 350 set-aside agreements covering around 12,000 hectares. It is not possible to give a regional breakdown as the 1994-95 payments will not commence until after the claims have been received in respect of the set-aside year which ends on 30 September 1994. The difference between the 1993-94 and 1994-95 figures is the result of some farmers having completed their five-year agreements and others having taken advantage of the option to terminate agreements early in order to join the arable area payments scheme.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if she will give the payment rates made per hectare under the arable area payments scheme for *(a)* cereals, *(b)* oilseeds, *(c)* proteins, *(d)* linseed, *(e)* set-aside and *(f)* the simplified scheme paid in (i) the first year and (ii) the second year of the scheme in both the less-favoured area and the non-less favoured area of Scotland.

Sir Hector Monro: The payment rates per hectare in Scotland for the first and second year of the scheme are set out below. The actual rates payable in 1994 may be reduced if base areas are exceeded and the rate for oilseeds may be adjusted to reflect changes to the reference price.

	1993		1994	
	LFA (£/hectares)	Non-LFA (£/hectares)	LFA (£/hectares)	Non-LFA (£/hectares)
(a) cereals	114.0746	131.3893	156.9785	181.7817
(b) oilseeds	368.8521	445.6669	402.8383	489.3607
(c) proteins	296.5939	341.6122	291.5314	337.5946
(d) linseed[1]	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)
(e) set-aside	205.3342	236.5008	255.6506	296.0445
set-aside reduced rate[2]	(—)	(—)	179.4040	207.7505
(f) simplified scheme	114.0746	131.3893	156.9785	181.7817

[1] Linseed was not incorporated into the Arable Area Payments Scheme until 1994. The payment rate for 1994 has not yet been fixed by the EC Commission.
[2] There is a reduced payment rate for voluntary set-aside in excess of the applicant's cropped area; voluntary set-aside was not available in 1993.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 11 January, *Official Report*, column *88*, if he will now give (i) the number of holdings in Scotland in 1993 for *(a)* cereals, *(b)* potatoes, *(c)* linseed, *(d)* sugar beet, *(e)* horticultural produce and *(f)* oilseeds in each region and in the less-favoured area and non-less-favoured areas.

Sir Hector Monro: The figures for main holdings at June 1993 are as follows:

Region	Cereals		Potatoes		Linseed		Horticultural Crops		Oilseeds	
	Holdings	Area (ha)	Holdings	Area (ha)	Holdings	Area (ha)	Holdings	Area (ha)	Holdings	Area (ha)
Borders	838	53,179	139	1,791	27	406	105	1,341	220	6,787
Central	375	10,991	45	123	—[1]	—[1]	28	76	70	1,209
Dumfries and Galloway	902	16,804	92	365	0	0	34	36	21	401
Fife	681	37,495	260	2,633	10	175	147	2,639	294	6,339
Grampian	4,010	124,726	1,139	5,989	39	673	323	2,121	981	22,961
Higland	1,253	27,679	573	927	—[1]	—[1]	108	151	131	2,604
Lothian	618	35,853	138	2,069	—[1]	—[1]	116	1,016	185	4,213
Strathclyde	1,303	21,046	310	933	—[1]	—[1]	172	342	22	286
Tayside	1,758	78,591	1,048	11,451	32	513	496	5,473	714	15,092
Orkney, Shetland, Western Isles	1,014	4,191	1,012	317	—[1]	—[1]	185	51	7	33

[1] Less than 5 holdings.
Figures for sugar beet are not collected.

	Cereals		Potatoes		Linseed		Horticultural Crops		Oilseeds	
	Holdings	Area (ha)	Holdings	Area (Ha)	Holdings	Area (ha)	Holdings	Area (ha)	Holdings	Area (ha)
Less Favoured Area[1]	5,974	96,175	2,213	2,403	30	530	467	955	332	5,614
Non Less Favoured Area	6,778	314,381	2,543	24,196	89	1,370	1,247	12,290	2,313	54,311

[1] Holdings where 50 per cent. or more of the land is classified less favoured area for subsidy purposes.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate of the take-up of the arable area payments scheme in hectares for *(a)* the simplified scheme, *(b)* cereals, *(c)* oilseeds, *(d)* proteins, *(e)* linseed and *(f)* set-aside in (i) the less-favoured areas and (ii) the non-less-favoured areas in Scotland for 1994.

Sir Hector Monro: Officials are currently analysing claims made in 1994 by Scottish farmers under the arable area payments scheme. Until this analysis is complete, it is not possible to determine what this year's uptake has been.

Mineworkings

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will detail the most recent information available to him on the stability of old mineworkings which lie under the town of Johnstone and the village of Elderslie; how many houses have been demolished in the area because of subsidence caused by old mineworkings; if he will give the year of demolition; what measures have been taken to minimise the risk of further subsidence; if he will commission a study into the need for further ground stabilisation measures; which public bodies have responsibility for monitoring the situation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 24 June 1994]:* The information the hon. Member seeks is not held centrally. It is not clear from the hon. Member's question what type of mining operations are being referred to. However, in the case of coal mining subsidence where properties suffer damage, British Coal is responsible for repair or compensation, as appropriate, under the Coal Mining Subsidence Act (1991). Following privatisation, claimants' rights regarding coal mining subsidence damage will remain unaffected, although British Coal's responsibilities will pass either to the Coal Authority or to the new mine owner.

If the hon. Member is concerned about a specific coal mining related matter, he may care to direct his inquiry to British Coal.

Road Haulage Industry

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will make a statement on the current issues and problems facing the road haulage industry in Scotland;

(2) if he will make a statement on the current issues and problems facing the excavation and heavy plant hire sector of the road haulage and contracting industry in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 1 July 1994]:* My right hon. Friend and I are not aware of any particular issues and problems that are peculiar to the road haulage industry in Scotland. The road haulage industry in the United Kingdom is generally acknowledged as being one of the most efficient, reliable and cost-effective within the European Union. It has a continuing and important role to play in the economy of Scotland.

Correspondence

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the average time his Department takes in replying to letters from right hon. and hon. Members; and what is *(a)* the shortest time and *(b)* the longest time it has taken to reply in full in the last Session of Parliament.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 1 July 1994]:* Information is not held currently in precisely the form requested. My Department has a target of issuing replies to correspondence from hon. Members and others within 17 working days of receipt. Statistics of performance are held by calendar year and in 1993, 52 per cent. of replies to hon. Members were within that 17 working day target. The time taken to answer individual items of correspondence in 1993 ranged from fewer than five working days to over 30 working days of receipt of the correspondence. Some 85 per cent. of correspondence warranting a ministerial reply in 1993—10,320 items out of a total of 12,089—received a full reply within 30 working days.

Renfrewshire Enterprise

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the identifiable *(a)* capital and *(b)* revenue or current expenditure by Renfrewshire Enterprise by regional council electoral division, or on any other geographical basis on which the data is collated or accounted, in each year since 1990; how much in both expenditure categories is (i) legally committed and (ii) planned for fiscal years 1994-95 and 1995-96; what is the pro-rata expenditure in each category for each regional council electoral division, expressed as a percentage of the total capital and revenue budgets measured against their respective populations; if he will rank the regional council electoral divisions in decending order by level of expenditure in both categories; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 1 July 1994]:* The overall budget allocation for Scottish Enterprise is determined by my right hon. Friend. The distribution of funds from Scottish Enterprise to the local enterprise company network is an operational matter for Scottish Enterprise. I shall ask the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Local Enterprise Companies

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what decisions his Department has taken in respect of local enterprise companies over the last 12 months; and if he will make a statement on his Department's involvement with LECs over the same period.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 29 June 1994]:* My right hon. Friend and the Scottish Office set the operating frameworks within which Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise contract with the local enterprise companies, but do not have any direct, formal relationship with the local enterprise companies themselves. Scottish Enterprise requires the approval of the Scottish Office before making material changes to the local enterprise company operating contracts or articles and memoranda of association. One such case has been referred to the Scottish Office in the past year. In addition, there are frequent informal contacts between Scottish Office Ministers and officials and the local enterprise companies.

Habitats Directive

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what measures he proposes to introduce to implement the EC habitats directive 92/43/EEC; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland, for Wales and for the Environment have today laid before Parliament a set of draft regulations which would, subject to approval by both Houses, give legislative effect to the directive in Great Britain.

The measures set out in the draft regulations build on our existing nature conservation legislation and provide increased protection on land and at sea for the most internationally important sites for nature conservation in Great Britain. They form part of the Government's wider action to promote nature conservation and biological diversity, as set out in "Biodiversity: The United Kingdom Action Plan", launched by the Prime Minister in January this year.

The draft regulations also reflect the comments made when the Government consulted a wide range of conservation, farming, fisheries, economic, recreational and other interests in the autumn of 1993 about implementation of the habitats directive. The 94 responses received in Scotland emphasised to the Government both the widespread support for the nature conservation objectives of the directive and the need to implement the directive in partnership with those who earn their living from our countryside and our sea.

The draft regulations apply to special protection areas designated under the EC wild birds directive and to special areas of conservation to be identified by the Government in accordance with the habitats directive. Together, these sites will contribute to a European network of sites of high biodiversity significance to be known as Natura 2000.

In brief, the regulations contain the following provisions:

- duties are placed on Ministers and the statutory nature conservation agencies—for Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage—to fulfil the requirements of the habitats directive;
- duties are placed on other statutory authorities to address the requirements of the habitats directive in the exercise of their functions;
- new provisions build on those in the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to give additional protection to Natura 2000 sites. Existing restrictions on potentially damaging operations may be toughened where necessary, and farmers and landowners will be compensated for any losses which they sustain because of this. Special nature conservation orders will give indefinite protection to the conservation interests of Natura 2000 sites from proposals to carry out damaging operations. In the last resort, Scottish Natural Heritage would be obliged to use its compulsory purchase powers to protect Natura 2000 sites from deterioration or where no satisfactory management agreements could be concluded following the making of a special nature conservation order. This power should seldom, if ever, be used given that SNH will be seeking to address the inappropriate management of land by the negotiation of voluntary management agreements;
- some technical measures supplement the species protection provisions of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981;
- an innovative set of measures is proposed to secure the protection of Natura 2000 sites in the marine environment. Ministers and statutory authorities would be obliged to use their powers to protect the integrity of marine Natura 2000 sites. SNH would advise relevant authorities on the conservation objectives of marine Natura 2000 sites. Where desirable, the relevant authorities concerned would cooperate in drawing up a management scheme for the marine Natura 2000 site. Ministers would have reserve powers to ensure that management schemes were developed where necessary and to ensure these schemes effectively address the issues facing the site;
- provisions are made to ensure that planning authorities, and other authorities giving consent for developments or operations potentially damaging to the integrity of Natura 2000 sites, cannot give consent to developments if they would damage the integrity of a Natura 2000 site. Authorities would be required to review, and where necessary modify or revoke, existing permissions whose implementation would be damaging to a Natura 2000 site, and compensatory provisions are established for developers who incur loss because of this. The Government will consider sympathetically requests from planning authorities for reimbursement of the costs of compensation necessarily incurred by them in revoking or modifying planning permissions under these regulations. Provisions governing simplified planning zones and enterprise zones are amended by the draft regulations so as not to give permission for developments damaging to the integrity of a Natura 2000 site. The General Permitted Development Order is being amended similarly following a separate consultation in the late summer of 1993.

Further minor measures will be introduced after the summer recess bringing the exercise by relevant authorities of powers under specific statutes into line with the requirements of the directive. The Government also expect in the autumn to consult owners, occupiers and other relevant interests on a draft list of proposed special areas of conservation. The Government believe this consultation to be important even though it is not required by the directive.

The Government intend, subject to the regulations coming into force, to issue a circular to the relevant authorities detailing the effect of the regulations.

The Government consider that the draft regulations set out before Parliament a balanced and effective range of measures to establish and protect Great Britain's valuable contribution to the Natura 2000 network.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Hospital Services

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what efforts he is making to assist with the marketing abroad of Britain's hospital services in both private and NHS sectors.

Mr. Needham: Promotion of health care exports is primarily the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health. However, our two Departments work closely together on export promotion and we are currently in the process of setting up a health care sector group under the auspices of the Overseas Projects Board. For my own part, I have sought to promote British health care expertise during my visits abroad, most recently during my programme of calls earlier this month in Asia and the middle east.

Company Inspections

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what records of time, expenses and costs are kept where his Department's officers act as inspectors under the Companies Acts.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Records are kept of the expenses incurred by departmental inspectors and, since 1991, of the time spent on individual inspections. Time costs are calculated taking into account salaries, associated costs, and general overheads including accommodation costs.

Indonesia (Trade)

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he is taking to encourage British manufacturers to export goods and services to Indonesia.

Mr. Needham: Indonesia is one of my Department's priority markets. Last year, we effectively doubled the number of staff working on promoting trade to Indonesia and engaged a secondee from industry specifically for that purpose. In 1993, I led three business delegations to Indonesia and the DTI financially supported a further 150 British business visitors: it is likely that a similar number will receive support this year.

Ernst and Young

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what action has been taken against Ernst and Young and its partners, following the criticisms made by the inspectors in their report on *(a)* Rotaprint plc and *(b)* Sound Diffusion.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: In the case of Rotaprint plc, the investigation committee of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales reprimanded and fined Mr. R. H. Legge FCA, the engagement partner for the audit in question. In the case of Sound Diffusion plc, the investigation committee concluded earlier this month, after taking leading counsels' opinion, that there was no prima facie case against the institute members responsible for auditing the accounts of the company in 1986 and 1987, the years in question. Consequently, the investigation committee decided not to refer formal complaints to the institute's disciplinary committee.

Staff Surveys

Mr. Radice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what surveys of the views, opinions and attitudes of the staff of his Department have been carried out in the last two years; and if he will place copies of the findings in the Library.

Mr. Eggar: Few surveys of this kind have been conducted in the DTI during the past two years, and they relate to the operation of internal management procedures. They are confidential to management and to the staff involved.

Receivers

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what consideration he has given to proposals for legislation under which receivers would owe a duty of care to *(a)* the shareholders and *(b)* the employees of a company in receivership.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: If the hon. Member will detail the proposals to which he refers, I will ensure they are given careful consideration.

Moizer Report

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what consideration he has given to proposals for the creation of a single independent body to monitor the work of auditors;

(2) when he will lay Professor Moizer's report before the House.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I am still considering Professor Moizer's report on audit monitoring.

Alexander Howden

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what action he has taken against the auditing firm and partners criticised in the inspectors' reports on Alexander Howden; and what has been the outcome.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: A copy of the inspectors' report into the affairs of Alexander Howden Holdings plc—formerly Alexander Howden Group plc—was passed to the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales in August 1990. The matter was then referred to the joint disciplinary scheme. In December 1992, a joint disciplinary scheme committee of inquiry, noting that the events which were the subject of the inquiry took place prior to 1982, found that no criticism was made out concerning the conduct, efficiency or competence of two members and, in respect of the others under inquiry, decided that it would not now be able to reach a finding on their conduct, efficiency or competence.

J. S. Bass and Co.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will appoint inspectors to investigate the liquidation of J. S. Bass and Co.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: No.

WMD Underwriting Agencies

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what action he has taken against the auditing firm and partners criticised in the inspectors' reports on WMD Underwriting Agencies; and what has been the outcome.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: A copy of the inspectors' report into the affairs of Minet Holdings plc and WMD Underwriting Agencies Limited was passed to the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales in August 1990. The matter was then referred to the joint disciplinary scheme. In December 1992, a joint disciplinary scheme committee of inquiry, noting that the events which were the subject of the inquiry took place prior to 1982, decided it would not now be able to reach a finding on the conduct, efficiency or competence of the members under inquiry.

Insolvency

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will introduce legislation to impose on the regulatory bodies responsible for insolvency a duty care to individual shareholders, employees and unsecured creditors.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I have no such plans.

Receivers

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will introduce legislation to impose on receivers a duty of care to individual shareholders, employees and unsecured creditors.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I have no plans to do so.

EC Industry Council

Mr. Barnes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Shoreham (Mr. Stephen) of 28 June, *Official Report*, column *467*, what was the voting record of each member state on each item agreed and adopted at the meeting of the European Community's Industry Council held on 22 June.

Mr. Sainsbury: No votes were taken on any of the issues on the agenda of the Industry Council on 22 June.

Sanctions (Nigeria)

Sir Michael Grylls: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the impact upon British industry of those military and defence sanctions which have already been imposed against Nigeria; when those sanctions will be lifted; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 30 June 1994]*: It is not the intention of the measures we introduced to damage our economic relations with Nigeria. We and our partners are keeping those measures under review, and will modify them in the light of progress towards democracy in Nigeria.

Councils of Ministers

Mr. Barnes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list all qualified majority votes on the single market programme at European Councils of Ministers since 1989, giving in each case the voting record of each member state.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 29 June 1994]*: The information requested by the hon. Member is not readily available. I shall write to him with a substantive reply, giving as much information as possible, in due course and place a copy of the letter in the Library of the House.

TREASURY

Exchange Rates

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what importance he attaches to the exchange rate in determining the competitiveness of United Kingdom manufacturers at home and overseas; and if he will publish his estimate of the amount by which unit costs of labour would have to fall in the import-competing and export industries to compensate for an increase of 5 per cent. in the nominal exchange rate;

(2) what importance the Government attach to the exchange rate in the management of the United Kingdom economy; and for what purposes the exchange rate is managed.

Mr. Nelson: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 21 March 1994, *Official Report*, column *15*. The United Kingdom's price competitiveness depends fundamentally on improving productivity and controlling costs. Policies directed at permanently low inflation and competitive markets provide the best environment in which to achieve this. A policy of continued devaluation would only raise inflation and would be damaging to long-run economic success.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) to what extent the Government's monetary and exchange rate policies are designed to eliminate the deficit in the balance of payments on current account.

(2) to what extent the Government's monetary and exchange rate policies are designed to increase *(a)* employment and *(b)* output in manufacturing industry.

Mr. Nelson: It is the role of monetary policy to deliver low inflation. Decisions are based on an assessment of a range of monetary indicators and other data, in particular the growth of narrow and broad money and movements in the exchange rate and asset prices. Low inflation on permanent basis combined with sound public finances provide the stable and macro-economic framework needed for sustained growth in output and employment.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will publish a table based on table 7.1A of "CSO Financial Statistics, May 1994", showing the pound sterling exchange rate index against non-European monetary system currencies on a 1985 basis for each year since 1975, the fourth quarter of 1976, the second quarter of 1979, the first quarter of 1981 and each quarter since the fourth quarter of 1986, together with the corresponding figures for the pound sterling exchange rate index;

(2) whether it is the Government's policy to reverse the fall in the real exchange rate against the ecu between October 1990 and February 1993; and if he will publish a table showing the real exchange rate against the ecu and non-ecu currencies in the fourth quarter of 1976, October 1990, February 1987 and at the latest available date for countries for which figures are available measured in terms of *(a)* relative unit export values for manufactures and finished manufactures, *(b)* terms of trade for semi-finished manufactures, finished manufactures and manufactures, *(c)* relative producer prices and *(d)* relative average export values for manufactures and finished manufactures;

(3) if he will publish a table based on table 13.1 of CSO Financial Statistics, July 1988, showing the pound sterling exchange rate index against non-EMS currencies on a 1975 basis for each year since 1975, the fourth quarter of 1976, the second quarter of 1979, the first quarter of 1981 and each quarter since the fourth quarter of 1986 together with the corresponding figures for the pound sterling exchange rate index;

(4) if he will publish a table based on table 7.1A of CSO Financial Statistics, May 1994, showing the pound sterling exchange rate index against European monetary system currencies on a 1985 basis for each year since 1975, the fourth quarter of 1976, the second quarter of 1979, the first quarter of 1981 and each quarter since the fourth quarter of 1986;

(5) if he will publish a table based on table 13.1 of Central Statistical Office financial statistics showing the sterling exchange rate index against European monetary system currencies on a 1975 basis for each year since 1975, the fourth quarter of 1976, the second quarter of 1979, the first quarter of 1981 and each quarter since the fourth quarter of 1986.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answers 28, 29, 30 June 1994]*: Single sterling exchange rate indices for EMS and non-EMS currencies are not available. I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 11 January 1994,

Official Report, column *19*, where I gave a reference for the weighted composition and methodological construction of sterlin's exchange rate index.

The tables to which the hon. Member refers give figures for sterling's exchange rate index. Sterling real exchange rates defined in various ways can be found in "International Financial Statistics", published by the IMF, and in "Economic Trends", published by the CSO. Export and import unit values of manufactures and wholesale prices for the United Kingdom and its main trading partners can be found in "International Financial Statistics". Average export values of manufactures can be found in the "Monthly Bulletin of Statistics", published by the United Nations. The other data needed to calculate the information requested may be available from the national authorities of the countries concerned.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 21 March 1994, *Official Report*, column *15*, where I made a statement about the role of the exchange rate in monetary policy.

Hydrocarbon Oil

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 26 May, *Official Report*, column *306*, what is the annual operating cost of the 17 regional road fuel testing units assigned to control the illegal use of hydrocarbon oil.

Sir John Cope: The latest figures available show that the annual operating cost of the regional road fuel testing units assigned to control the illegal use of hydrocarbon oil was some £1·6 million in the year ending 31 March 1993.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 26 May, *Official Report*, column *306*, how many vehicles were tested by the 17 regional road fuel testing units assigned to control the illegal use of hydrocarbon oil, in each of the last three years; and what proportion were found to have illicit fuel.

Sir John Cope: The numbers of vehicles tested by the regional road fuel units, and the numbers found to be running on illicit fuel, are:

Year ending 31 March 1992	84,614 tested and 1,594 on illicit fuel
Year ending 31 March 1993	73,051 tested and 1,607 on illicit fuel
Year ending 31 March 1994	66,259 tested and 1,682 on illicit fuel

Valuation

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is *(a)* the average and *(b)* the maximum time taken between the completion of a new dwelling and the completion of its valuation for council tax purposes.

Mr. Nelson: This information is not available.

Policies

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if his speech to the Konrad Adenauer Foundation on 29 June represents Government policy.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Yes.

Recycled Paper

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of his Department's *(a)* press releases and (ii) written answers are printed on recycled paper.

Mr. Nelson: No Treasury press releases or answers to parliamentary questions are currently printed on recycled paper. However, most of the paper used by the Department is environmentally friendly paper which is total chlorine free. The Department's policy on the use of recycled and environmentally friendly paper is reviewed regularly.

Contracts

Mr. Byers: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many contracts the Inland Revenue has entered into with the computer company EDS-Scion or its predecessor EDS; when the contracts were entered into; what is their total value; and what is the subject matter of each contract.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 1 July 1994]:* On 23 May 1994, the Inland Revenue signed contracts with Electronic Data Systems Ltd. for the supply of information technology services to the Department over the next 10 years, starting on 1 July 1994. Over 100 agreements make up the contracts with EDS covering such matters as the pricing and regulation of the service arrangements, the transfer of assets from the Revenue to EDS, the transfer of staff, the leases and licenses to property which EDS will occupy, services which the Revenue will supply to EDS on shared sites, third party agreements allowing EDS the right to various services already supplied to the Revenue and various other documents and side letters.

The 10-year contract is estimated to be worth around £1 billion, and is expected to enable the Inland Revenue to make savings of 15 to 20 per cent. in the costs of its information technology support.

ENVIRONMENT

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list his Department's advisory non-departmental public bodies which are required to publish their advice to Government;

(2) if he will list the advisory non-departmental public bodies sponsored by his Department what are required to lay their annual reports before Parliament;

(3) if he will list his Department's advisory non-departmental public bodies which are required to produce annual reports;

(4) if he will list the advisory bodies he has set up in his Department since the publication of "Public Bodies 1993";

(5) if he will list the advisory non-departmental public bodies sponsored by his Department which have a statutory basis;

(6) if he will list those of his Department's advisory non-departmental public bodies which the Government are required to consult prior to legislation proposals; and in respect of which bodies the Government must publish their response to advice supplied by them.

Mr. Gummer: My Department currently sponsors 14 advisory non-departmental public bodies, information

about which is in the table below. Publication of advice and reports is usually for the NDPBs and the Department to determine rather than a statutory requirement. "Going for Green" and the Government's panel on sustainable development have yet to determine their working methods. Those two bodies, plus the Assessment Panel for Construction Research and the Local Government Staff Commission (England) have been set up since the qualifying date for "Public Bodies 1993".

There are statutory requirements for Ministers to consult the Advisory Committee on Hazardous Substance, the Building Regulations Advisory Committee, the Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council and the Local Government Commission for England in specified circumstances. In addition, the Government regularly seek advisory NDPBs' views on a range of issues. There are no stautory requirements for the Government to publish responses to advice from advisory bodies, but responses are published, or other action taken, when it is appropriate to do so.

Advisory non-departmental public body	*Date set up*	*Advice published*	*Produces annual report*	*Report laid before Parliament*	*Statutory basis*
Advisory Committee on Business and the Environment	1991	Yes	Regular progress reports	Progress reports placed in the Library	No
Advisory Committee on Hazardous Substances	1991	Available for public scrutiny	Yes	Placed in the Library	Environmental Protection Act 1990, s.140
Advisory Committee on Releases to the Environment	1990	Available on public registers	Yes	No	Environmental Protection Act 1990, s.124
Assessment Panel for Construction Research	1994	No	Yes	No	No
Black Country Limestone Advisory Panel	1983	Yes	Yes	No	No
Building Regulations Advisory Committee	1962	Some papers available on request	No.	n/a	Building Act 1984, s.14
Going for Green	1994	—	—	—	No
Government's Panel on Sustainable Development	1994	—	—	—	No
Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council	1968	Sometimes	Yes	No	Transport Act 1968, s.110
Local Government Commission for England	1992	Yes	Yes	Yes	Local Government Act 1992, s.12
Local Government Staff Commission (England)	1993	Yes	No	n/a	Local Government Act 1992, s.23
Property Advisory Group	1978	No	No	n/a	No
Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee	1978	Normally published	Yes	Placed in the Library	No
Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution	1970	Yes – presented to Parliament	No	n/a	Royal Warrant

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidelines he has issued as to the propriety of *(a)* chairmen of public bodies with a specific responsibility for the natural environment and *(b)* the chairman of English Nature in particular, holding paid advisory or managerial positions with (i) private companies involved in waste disposal or (ii) privatised water companies.

Mr. Atkins: Revised rules were drawn to the attention of the chief executives of the Department's sponsored bodies and discussed with them in April 1991. Following this, the board or council of each body was asked to review its arrangements and report the results to the Department. The essence of our guidance is that relevant interests should be declared on a register and members should refrain from discussion or decisions when matters affecting such an interest come before the board or council. I wish strongly to repudiate the inference in the hon. Gentleman's question that the chairman of English Nature might be acting improperly in holding advisory or main board non-executive appointments in private companies. Precisely the reverse—we expect the services of people we appoint to public bodies for their eminence and expertise to be sought by others in related spheres and I believe that it does nothing for good government to impugn their reputation when they have observed the rules about disclosure of interest in the letter and in the spirit.

Housing Vacancies

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the vacancy rate in each housing sector.

Sir George Young: The latest available information on the numbers and percentages of vacant dwellings in England is set out below. For local authorities and housing associations, figures are also given for management vacants.

Vacant dwellings at 1 April 1993

	Number	Percentage of dwellings
Local authorities[2]		
Management vacants[1]	39,700	1·1
All vacant dwellings	70,900	1·9
Housing associations[3]		
Management vacants[1]	17,200	2·4
All vacant dwellings	27,600	3·9
Government departments[4]	16,000	15·0
Private sector[5]	765,000	5·0

[1]Those available for letting immediately or after minor repairs.

Sources:

[2]Annual Housing Investment Programme (HIP1) returns.

[3]Annual Housing Corporation HAR10/1 returns.

[4]Based on data collected from Government Departments by the Task Force on Government Department's empty houses.

[5]Annual Housing Investment Programme (HIP1) returns. Local authorities are asked to provide estimates of the number of private sector vacant dwellings in their area on these returns but there are doubts about the quality of the estimates provided by some authorities. Alternative survey information suggests that the numbers of private sector vacants reported on these returns may be an over-estimate.

The figure for housing association vacant dwellings includes around 10,500 dwellings purchased in the last weeks of the financial year under the housing market package announced in the 1992 Autumn Statement.

Recycling

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made since his statement in 1991 that the Government intended to bring forward legislation to introduce recycling plans with firm targets.

Mr. Atkins: Section 49 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, which came into force on 1 August 1991, places a duty on waste collection authorities in England, Scotland and Wales to prepare and issue waste recycling plans. The Department's guidance emphasises the value of local targets in those plans, to supplement the Government's national target of recovering 25 per cent. of household waste by 2000. Authorities in England were asked to prepare draft recycling plans by 1 August 1992. Some 98 per cent. of those plans have been approved by the Department as meeting the statutory requirements.

A new waste management order for Northern Ireland is currently being prepared and will require district councils to provide recycling plans in line with section 49 of the 1990 Act.

Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps the Government will adopt fully to comply with the international recommendations from the Paris Commission in relation to BNFL THORP at Sellafield; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The recommendations of the Paris Commission are not binding. The United Kingdom complies with those recommendations that it accepts. Since 1987, there have been nine Paris recommendations on radioactive issues. The United Kingdom has accepted all of those except for recommendation 93/5.

The United Kingdom, together with other contracting parties, placed a reserve on recommendation 93/5 because it failed to meet the standard of clarity desirable in an international agreement and sought to give the Paris Commission an inappropriate role in the authorising of individual projects.

Fuel Emissions

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what provisions Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution makes for testing emissions from the burning of a fuel which has a variable composition.

Mr. Atkins: HMIP requires all operators to use appropriate means to monitor emissions from their processes whatever the fuel.

Cemfuel

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultations have taken place on the subject of Cemfuel between the north-west regional office and the midlands regional office of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution.

Mr. Atkins: There have been extensive consultations between the two HMIP regional offices on the subject of Cemfuel.

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what criteria will be used by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution when assessing the results of the Cemfuel trials at Ribblesdale, Lancashire to decide whether to grant an authorisation for continued burning of the substance.

Mr. Atkins: No authorisation will be granted until HMIP is fully satisfied that the requirements of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 are complied with.

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment at how many locations authorisation for trial burning of Cemfuel has been granted; when these authorisations were granted; and how long each of these trials is expected to continue.

Mr. Atkins: Only one plant is authorised to undertake trial burning of Cemfuel. An integrated pollution control authorisation for this plant was issued on 30 November 1993. These trials are scheduled to be completed by the end of 1994.

Hazardous Waste (Burning)

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the permitted level of dioxins which may be produced as a result of burning hazardous waste in *(a)* an incinerator and *(b)* a cement kiln.

Mr. Atkins: The permitted level of dioxins is $1ng/m^3$ for both types of plant.

Objective 1 Status, Merseyside

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on liaison between his Department and the officials of DGXVI of the European Commission representing the Commission in Merseyside.

Mr. Baldry: The lengthy negotiations with DGXVI officials on the Merseyside single programming document were conducted constructively and in a business-like way, and have now been concluded. Liaison with DGXVI will continue, through its membership of the monitoring committee overseeing the objective 1 programme, and its membership of the two technical panels supporting that committee.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to make copies of the agreed objective 1 programme for Merseyside available to those entitled to benefit from it.

Mr. Baldry: Extensive guidance material on the objective 1 programme, including simple question/answer sheets, more detailed general guidance, and special guidance for small and medium-sized enterprises is already available through the Government office for Merseyside and other agencies. Copies of the full document will become available once the Commission has completed its legal procedures on the document and a final text is available.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what were the reasons for the refusal on 22 June of the application made by Mr. Peter Johnson, managing director of Rea Metal Windows (Liverpool) Ltd., on behalf of his company to the Merseyside task force for financial support to expand the business and increase its number of employees; and what account was taken in considering the company's application of the company's rights under the agreed objective 1 programme, 1994 to 1999.

Mr. Baldry: The Merseyside objective 1 programme agreed with the Commission provides that grants will be paid to the private sector through intermediaries, to be designated by the monitoring committee. That cannot take place until the Commission completes its legal processes on the document. Mr. Johnson was seeking a form of assistance not provided there. Mr. Johnson was therefore encouraged by the objective 1 secretariat to speak to staff more directly concerned with business support, to see how his business might be assisted. He has now been sent an information pack about business support on Merseyside, which he is encouraged to follow-up with the Government office there.

Coastal Management

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to make a full statement on the outcome of his consideration of his consultation on coastal management.

Mr. Atkins: I hope to make a statement shortly.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the total capital grant funds to each metropolitan district in England in 1992-93 and 1993-94, and the projected allocation to be completed at the end of the financial year 1994-95.

Mr. Baldry: Capital grants are issued by a number of Government Departments.

The total amounts of capital grants for the various services for local authorities in England are published annually by Her Majesty's Treasury at the conclusion of each public expenditure survey. Outturn information for the years 1990-91 to 1993-94 and the plans for 1994-95 were published in February 1994 in the public expenditure statistical supplement to the "Financial Statement and Budget Report 1994-95".

Information for individual authorities about capital grants is not held centrally and could be collated only at disproportionate cost.

County Hall

Sir Terence Higgins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what powers he has to control the display of advertisements on the former County hall.

Mr. Baldry: Control over the display of outdoor advertisements is the local planning authority's responsibility. It is for Lambeth borough council to control advertisements on the former County hall.

Energy Saving Trust

Mr. Robathan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action his Department is taking to improve funding for the Energy Saving Trust.

Mr. Atkins: An inter-departmental group of officials has been asked to review options for the future funding of the Energy Saving Trust and its schemes.

Dog Fouling

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects his Department's advisory group on litter to make a recommendation on national legislation for dog fouling and the definition of dog mess as litter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Soon.

Local Government Commission

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what weight he will give to the results of the Local Government Commission's current public consultation exercise in Cheshire in deciding the future structure of local government in that county.

Mr. Baldry: It is for the Local Government Commission to consider the results of public consultation on its draft proposals for Cheshire when drawing up its final recommendations to the Secretary of State.

All representations to the Secretary of State on the Commission's final recommendations will be taken into account before decisions about the implementation of any changes are made. Final decisions will be for Parliament.

Fire Advisory Panel

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many members serve on the fire advisory panel; and how many of those members are also members of the Institute of Fire Safety.

Mr. Baldry: The fire advisory panel has 29 members, of whom I understand 10 are also members of the Institute of Fire Safety.

Homelessness

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much money his Department has provided for each year from 1991-92 to 1994-95 for helping homeless people.

Sir George Young *[holding answer 29 June 1994]:* My Department's housing expenditure in the years in question is set out in its annual report 1994, Cm 2507. Some £7·4 billion will be spent in 1994-95. The vast majority of that spending goes to help those who are in housing need, who need help with the repair of their housing or who have difficulty paying their local authority rent.

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many local authority, housing association and voluntary sector hostel bedspaces for single homeless people there were in England on *(a)* 31 December 1993 and *(b)* 31 March 1994, or the most recent figures available.

Sir George Young: Information available to my Department relates to bedspaces in hostels owned by registered housing associations. There were a total of 69,500 bedspaces in those hostels on 31 March 1993, the most recent date for which a figure is available. Those hostels cater not solely for single homeless people but for single people with a variety of special needs, many of whom are homeless.

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy annual homelessness statistics publication includes data on the numbers of local authority hostel bedspaces for single homeless persons. A copy of the latest edition—"Homelessness Statistics 1992/93 Actuals"—is in the Library.

Information on hostel bedspaces for single homeless people in the voluntary sector is not held centrally.

Peat Extraction

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to phase out peat extraction.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps she is taking to phase out peat extraction.

Mr. Baldry: I have been asked to reply.

Government policy in respect of peat extraction is currently under review. The Government recognise the nature conservation value of the peatland resource and wish to encourage the use of suitable alternative materials while recognising the value of peat for some technically demanding uses by the horticultural industry in particular. The working group on peat extraction, 7 July 1992, *Official Report,* column *158,* is considering a range of policies to secure the protection and rehabilitation of the most important sites and limiting new extraction to areas where no damage to nature conservation interests would arise. I will be publishing the outcome from the group's work later this year. My Department has also supported English Nature in safeguarding, for nature conservation, important vegetated areas on some existing peat workings, which were previously planned for extraction.

Emergency Planning, Sellafield

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the basis for and outcome of the recent Oscar IV emergency planning exercise held at Sellafield.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

Exercise Oscar IV was the level III—national—civil nuclear emergency exercise for 1993. It was held in November and formed part of an on-going programme to demonstrate the off-site emergency arrangements at each civil nuclear site in the United Kingdom every three years.

The exercise was a successful demonstration of the off-site emergency planning arrangements for BNFL's Sellafield plant, fulfilling the licensing criteria set by the Health and Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate.

Habitat and Species Directive

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will announce the measures he proposes to introduce to implement the European habitat and species directive; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I am pleased to say that the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Wales and I have today laid in draft, for approval under the affirmative procedure, the Conservation (Natural Habitats etc.) Regulations under section 2(2) of the European Communities Act 1972, to effect transposition of the directive in Great Britain. The regulations mark an important step forward in nature conservation and consolidate our policies and practices in respect of sites and species of international importance.

On 4 October last year, the Government consulted on the proposed implementation in Great Britain of the Council directive on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild flora and fauna, the EC habitats directive. I am grateful to all those bodies and individuals who responded to the consultation, of which there were 144 in England and Wales and 94 in Scotland. The responses have been placed in the usual Libraries. Departments are writing to each of the respondents explaining the Government's consideration of the points raised and our detailed conclusions. A copy of this letter will be placed in the House Libraries.

The Government firmly support the directive's objective to contribute to the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora throughout the European Union. The Government's proposals for implementation reflect that important aim. The legal measures necessary for transposition of the directive into national law contained in the draft regulations are complemented by broader initiatives in the countryside as a whole to respond to the wider objectives of the directive. We shall deliver the latter in the medium and long term through the strategy set out in the biodiversity action plan published in January this year.

The draft regulations comprise a thorough implementation package. They build largely on the existing extensive legislative basis which provides a strong framework for nature conservation in this country. They introduce some new provisions and apply existing legislation amended as required by the directive's obligations. The EC birds directive is amended by the habitats directive in respect of special protection areas, and the draft regulations also give effect to this. United Kingdom special protection areas and

special areas of conservation will together contribute to the European Union network of designated areas known as Natura 2000.

In summary, the draft regulations cover:

new provisions for site selection and designation;

new duties on Ministers and nature conservation agencies to use their powers in accordance with the requirements of the Directive;

application of the present SSSI and NNR legislation amended to ensure that the procedures can be operated in accordance with the Directive;

a new basis for the conservation of marine sites in which relevant Ministers and local bodies will be under a duty to exercise their existing powers in accordance with the Directive often within the framework of an agreed inter-agency scheme of management;

a number of technical amendments to the existing species protection legislation;

application of the Directive's requirements for approval and review of schemes which could significantly adversely affect the conservation value of the sites in respect of the Town and Country Planning, Highways, Transport and Works, Electricity and Pipe-lines Acts as well as pollution control, waste management and water discharge consents in the Environmental Protection and Water Resources Acts.

Further regulations will be laid before Parliament in due course to ensure that other activities for which statutory consents and permissions are required and which could have a significantly adverse effect on the nature conservation interests of a protected site are brought within the provisions of the directive.

The Government are committed to consultation on the sites to be proposed under the directive. The regulations make formal provision for designation but the processes leading to that point will be non-statutory. English Nature, the Countryside Council for Wales and Scottish Natural Heritage, co-ordinated through the Joint Nature Conservancy Council are working on their advice to Government about the United Kingdom contribution to the Natura 2000 network in the light of the directive's scientific criteria. When the Government have considered the agencies' advice, we shall decide to publish our proposals and the consultation process will begin. Individual owners and occupiers of sites will be fully involved.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Sudanese Peace Talks

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the outcome of the Sudanese peace talks held in Nairobi from 16 to 20 May.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: On 17 May, the Government of Sudan and SPLA factions signed an agreement on the opening of specific air destinations and surface corridors to humanitarian relief supplies. A draft declaration of principles was circulated to all parties for consideration in advance of the next round of talks scheduled for 18 July.

Sudan

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what measures are presently being pursued by Her Majesty's Government to curtail the flow of arms to all parties to the Sudanese conflict.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: On 8 March, the European Union agreed an arms embargo. This reinforced our own policy of not selling lethal weaponry to Sundan.

Recycled Paper

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what percentage of his Department's *(a)* press releases and *(b)* written answers are printed on recycled paper.

Mr. Goodlad: All the press releases and written answers from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office are currently printed on paper which is manufactured from renewable sources.

Immigration Cases

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) for what reasons Mrs. Sahib Jee—Ref: V93/21255—was refused a visa to visit the United Kingdom by the High Commission in Islamabad last October; what information she was given at that time on whether the decision to refuse a visa would prejudice a subsequent application at a further date; for what reason Mrs. Sahib Jee was sent away from the post in Islamabad on 30 May 1993 and told that having been refused a visa she could make no further application; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will review urgently the application made to the British High Commissioner in Islamabad by Mrs. Sahib Jee—Ref: V93/21255—to visit the United Kingdom;

(3) if he will urgently review the refusal by the British High Commission in Islamabad to grant a visa to visit the United Kingdom to Mrs. Maskeena Jan—Ref. V94/9363; TH/14866; TH/1912/92; IMM/V9005055—and if he will make a statement;

(4) what recommendations he has sent to the British High Commission in Islamabad regarding applications made to visit the United Kingdom by Mrs. Maskeena Jan —Ref. TH/14866; TH/1912/92; and IMM/V9005055—what decision was made on 15 May in relation to Mrs. Jan's latest application to visit the United Kingdom—Ref. V94/9363—and if he will recommend that Mrs. Jan be issued with a visa to visit the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In the absence of any information in London about these cases, I have asked the entry clearance officer at the high commission in Islamabad to let me have a report. I shall arrange for the hon. Member to receive a substantive reply from the migration and visa correspondence unit of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office as soon as possible.

Visas

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in how many cases since the right of appeal was abolished to those refused a visa to visit the United Kingdom second applications made to the British High Commission in Islamabad have been *(a)* granted, *(b)* refused or *(c)* deferred for inquiries to be made; in how many such cases advice has been offered to the applicant or sponsor to make the application acceptable; and in how many cases an applicant wishing to make a second application was turned away and told they were unable to lodge a second application as their first application had been refused.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The high commission in Islamabad does not keep statistics about the outcome of second applications, nor does it keep statistics on what advice an entry clearance officer may pass on to an applicant following refusal to entry clearance. No applicant will be advised that he is unable to lodge an application. If he wishes to lodge a second application, he is free to do so. In Islamabad, a preliminary assessment of all non-settlement applications is carried out before an application is formally accepted and a visa fee taken. This is done in the interests of both the applicant and the high commission. The ECO may advise that, on the documentary evidence available, an application seems unlikely to succeed. An applicant is not obliged to follow the ECO's advice and if he decides to pursue the application, a formal interview is then arranged.

Tibet

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has received about the continuing Chinese occupation of Tibet.

Mr. Goodlad: Hon. Members of the all-party parliamentary group for Tibet called on me on 28 June to discuss Tibet. Human rights abuses there are a matter of continuing concern to the British Government. We regularly raise the subject with the Chinese authorities.

Nigeria

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations the British Government have made to the Nigerian Government about the release of Moshood Abida.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We strongly regret the arrest of Chief Abiola and called on the Nigerian military Government to engage all sides in a constructive political dialogue. The European Union issued a statement on 30 June condemning the arrest and urging respect for human rights.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Bovine Somatotropin

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the differences in amounts of protein, casein and fat levels in milk coming from a dairy cow treated with synthetic bovine somatotropin and a dairy cow not treated with synthetic BST.

Mr. Soames: Many studies have been carried out to examine the effect of manufactured BST on milk composition. A review of those studies, which includes details of the amounts of protein, casein and fat, is to be found in the proceedings of the BST world-wide symposium held in August 1989 and reproduced in the "Journal of Dairy Science (1991), Volume 74 (Supplement 2), pages 2 to 11, a copy of which I have placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research has been undertaken into IGF-1 levels in cows treated with synthetic BST; and to what extent these levels are different from those in cows not treated with synthetic BST.

Mr. Soames: Considerable research has been undertaken on IGF-1 levels in cows treated with manufactured BST. A review of the published studies is to be found in the 24 August 1990 edition of the journal "Science, Volume 249", pages 875 to 884, a copy of which I have placed in the Library of the House.

Consultants

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many contracts and for what total sum were let out by her Department and agencies for which it is responsible to *(a)* Coopers and Lybrand, *(b)* KPMG Peat Marwick, *(c)* Ernst and Young, *(d)* Price Waterhouse, *(e)* Arthur Andersen, *(f)* Touche Ross, *(g)* Grant Thornton, *(h)* Robson Rhodes and *(i)* Pannell Kerr Forster for (i) privatisation, (ii) market testing, (iii) management advice, (iv) accounting, (v) audit, (vi) consultancy and (vii) other services in (1) 1980 to 1983, (2) 1984 to 1987, (3) 1988 to 1991 and (4) 1992-93.

Mr. Jack: The table gives the aggregate costs of contracts with each of the nine named consultants for the financial years 1990-91 to 1993-94 let by the Department and its agencies, excluding the Intervention Board executive agency.

Consultant	*1990-91 to 1993-94* £	*Number of contracts*
Coopers and Lybrand	662,065	18
KPMG Peat Marwick	518,343	6
Ernst and Young	2,683,262	8
Price Waterhouse	849,919	20
Arthur Andersen	0	0
Touche Ross	844,580	10
Grant Thornton	[1]—	1
Robson Rhodes	0	0
Pannell Kerr Forster	0	0

[1] Single contract cost not given for reasons of commercial confidentiality.

The partial cost of some contracts started before 1990 are included in those figures. Neither records relating to individual consultants before 1990 nor breakdowns by type of contract are held centrally and those details could be made available only at disproportionate cost.

Agriculture

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is her estimate of the take-up of the arable area payments scheme in hectares for *(a)* the simplified scheme, *(b)* cereals, *(c)* oilseeds, *(d)* proteins, *(e)* linseed and *(f)* set-aside in England for 1994.

Mr. Jack: This information is as follows:

	(hectares)
Simplified scheme	158,758
Cereals (including maize)	2,142,426
Oilseeds	365,000
Proteins	239,925
Linseed	75,000—80,000
Set-aside	624,812

Estimates based on the area aid applications actually submitted for 1994 are not yet available.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much was spent in each European

Union country in pounds sterling, and what was the take-up in hectares, in 1993 on *(a)* the set-aside part of the arable area payments scheme or its equivalent and *(b)* set-aside measures introduced prior to the CAP reform of May 1992; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: Provisional European Commission figures for the area of land set aside in each member state in 1993 under the arable area payments scheme and the five-year set-aside scheme are set out below, together with expenditure in ecus to the end of 1993. A sterling equivalent has been included for illustrative purposes.

Member State	*Area Set Aside* ('000 ha)	*Payments* ('000 ecu)	*Sterling Equivalent (rounded)* (£'000)
Arable Area Payments Scheme			
Belgium	19	6,356	4,847
Denmark	205	55,963	42,674
Fed. Rep. of Germany	1,063	320,591	244,465
Greece	17	2,625	2,002
Spain	909	115,854	88,344
France	1,589	516,430	393,801
Republic of Ireland	24	0	0
Italy	207	23,742	18,104
Luxembourg	2	391	298
Netherlands	8	2,711	2,067
Portugal	78	877	669
United Kingdom	556	153,799	117,279
Total	4,674	1,199,339	914,550
Five-Year Set-Aside Scheme			
Belgium	1	195	149
Denmark	7	-2	-1·5
Fed. Rep. of Germany	415	3,396	2,590
Greece	1	0	0
Spain	95	5,101	3,890
France	214	7,001	5,339
Republic of Ireland	2	196	149
Italy	639	3,604	2,748
Luxembourg	0	0	0
Netherlands	15	0	0
Portugal	0	0	0
United Kingdom	133	30,795	23,483
Total	1,522	50,286	38,345

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will give the payment rates made per hectare under the arable areas payments scheme for *(a)* cereals, *(b)* oilseeds, *(c)* proteins, *(d)* linseed, *(e)* set-aside and *(f)* the simplified scheme paid in (i) the first year and (ii) the second year of the scheme in England.

Mr. Jack: The payment rates per hectare in England for the first and second years of the scheme are set out below. The actual rates payable in 1994 may be reduced if base areas are exceeded. The rate for oilseeds may change subject to the possible penalties resulting from the EC-US oilseeds agreement, and to adjustments dependent on the observed reference price. Set-aside land which is used to grow sugar beet for industrial purposes does not qualify for payment.

	1992-93 £	*1993-94* £
(a) cereals	140	193
(b) oilseeds	400	436
(c) proteins	365	359
(d) linseed[1]	—	—
(e) set-aside	253	315
set-aside: reduded rate[2]	—	220
(f) simplified scheme	140	193

[1] Linseed was not incorporated into the arable area payments scheme until 1993-94. The payment rate for 1993-94 has not yet been fixed.

[2] There is a reduced payment rate for voluntary set-aside in excess of the applicant's cropped area.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to her answer of 11 January, *Official Report*, column *56*, if she will now give (i) the number of hectares taken up and (ii) the number of holdings in each county in England in 1993 for *(a)* cereals, *(b)* potatoes, *(c)* linseed, *(d)* sugar beet, *(e)* horticultural produce and *(f)* oilseeds.

Mr. Jack: The table gives the requested information.

June 1993 census of agriculture and horticulture results by English counties[1,2]

	[3]Area of cereals Hectares	*Number of holdings growing cereals*	*Area of potatoes* Hectares	*Number of holdings growing potatoes*	*Area of sugar beet* Hectares	*Number of holdings growing sugar beet*
Avon	11,284	412	201	97	0	0
Bedfordshire	38,750	662	682	163	499	29
Berkshire	24,467	280	101	22	0	0
Buckinghamshire	32,585	640	[4]—	[4]—	[4]—	[4]—
Cambridgeshire	133,160	2,514	10,725	980	23,261	1,367
Cheshire	21,803	1,114	4,317	568	193	20
Cleveland	11,911	260	208	46	0	0
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	34,357	2,094	3,952	733	110	8
Cumbria	20,060	1,390	498	300	0	0
Derbyshire	25,766	1,016	992	259	313	15
Devon	52,652	2,916	1,576	602	51	3
Dorset	40,464	668	203	65	82	4
Durham	31,533	773	841	124	0	0
East Sussex	18,105	455	288	73	0	0
Essex	121,736	1,744	5,174	380	4,128	206
Gloucestershire	49,521	995	815	160	157	10
Greater London	3,110	72	108	14	0	0
Greater Manchester	4,975	192	539	92	54	8
Hampshire	77,038	829	[4]—	[4]—	[4]—	[4]—
Hereford and Worcester	70,588	2,369	7,150	750	4,370	278

	[3]Area of cereals Hectares	Number of holdings growing cereals	Area of potatoes Hectares	Number of holdings growing potatoes	Area of sugar beet Hectares	Number of holdings growing sugar beet
Hertfordshire	45,323	547	333	50	186	6
Humberside	148,659	2,402	7,713	668	9,571	654
Isle of Wight	6,142	135	237	29	0	0
Kent	66,171	1,238	3,893	329	6	3
Lancashire	14,355	663	2,575	474	287	28
Leicestershire	64,048	1,350	1,263	154	982	46
Lincolnshire	236,403	3,940	16,964	1,640	34,073	2,015
Merseyside	7,630	239	859	133	230	25
Norfolk	179,750	3,264	13,525	1,022	57,496	2,354
North Yorkshire	163,031	3,730	11,232	1,117	12,586	886
Northamptonshire	64,946	1,012	660	70	406	24
Northumberland	65,827	1,077	1,040	92	0	0
Nottinghamshire	61,441	1,241	5,206	342	8,411	386
Oxfordshire	73,325	1,004	649	83	125	6
Shropshire	70,530	1,932	7,737	489	10,061	428
Somerset	33,130	1,202	1,630	299	366	19
South Yorkshire	27,473	664	1,620	218	1,888	93
Staffordshire	35,425	1,040	3,856	315	2,498	104
Suffolk	137,376	2,253	5,019	365	23,717	945
Surrey	8,572	226	83	28	0	0
Tyne and Wear	5,482	132	65	16	0	0
Warwickshire	47,543	1,056	2,251	236	139	5
West Midlands	4,046	139	289	57	173	7
West Sussex	28,923	501	883	76	0	0
West Yorkshire	18,469	492	948	175	396	31
Wiltshire	81,162	1,045	666	111	89	4

[1] Excluding estimates for minor holdings.
[2] Crops grown on set-aside land are not included.
[3] Excluding maize.
[4] Data suppressed to prevent disclosure of information about individual holdings.

June 1993 census of agriculture and horticulture results by English counties[1,2]

	[3]Area of horticultural crops Hectares	Number of holdings growing horticultural crops	Area of oilseed rape Hectares	Number of holdings growing oilseed rape	Area of linseed Hectares	Number of holdings growing linseed
Avon	388	197	1,192	60	720	49
Bedfordshire	1,947	341	7,996	246	2,233	100
Berkshire	458	81	4,270	91	2,191	85
Buckinghamshire	507	133	8,180	283	2,129	88
Cambridgeshire	9,863	855	15,301	552	7,077	426
Cheshire	1,123	323	1,495	88	365	19
Cleveland	34	23	2,026	107	90	5
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	3,110	740	1,036	64	2,007	147
Cumbria	203	116	334	17	61	3
Derbyshire	600	144	3,408	187	322	18
Devon	1,892	652	1,526	82	3,424	267
Dorset	512	223	1,799	60	2,827	113
Durham	133	57	5,593	309	606	39
East Sussex	1,442	291	2,840	121	3,418	149
Essex	5,413	846	20,623	722	7,370	394
Gloucestershire	1,501	373	9,201	299	6,611	251
Greater London	669	139	600	27	179	10
Greater Manchester	787	135	424	31	[4]—	[4]—
Hampshire	3,368	502	8,229	244	7,098	249
Hereford and Worcester	9,406	1,291	6,979	366	1,745	132
Hertfordshire	388	199	6,918	233	2,141	85
Humberside	12,408	711	16,042	808	5,065	332
Isle of Wight	355	70	909	32	945	46
Kent	21,004	1,399	15,080	449	7,963	389
Lancashire	5,147	901	1,036	70	190	13
Leicestershire	423	135	13,089	491	3,381	161
Lincolnshire	33,778	1,971	27,782	1,072	14,470	700
Merseyside	1,081	172	646	41	[4]—	[4]—
Norfolk	20,743	1,293	5,497	243	10,106	520
North Yorkshire	2,152	384	15,480	922	5,104	352
Northamptonshire	223	97	17,819	515	3,192	147
Northumberland	434	62	11,238	443	966	45
Nottinghamshire	2,710	242	10,120	465	4,648	221

	[3]Area of horticultural crops	Number of holdings growing horticultural crops	Area of oilseed rape	Number of holdings growing oilseed rape	Area of linseed	Number of holdings growing linseed
	Hectares		Hectares		Hectares	
Oxfordshire	897	151	15,896	451	5,827	248
Shropshire	878	196	2,805	150	1,393	91
Somerset	2,244	513	1,565	91	1,831	134
South Yorkshire	626	112	4,795	242	3,412	156
Staffordshire	1,368	231	3,175	153	1,116	61
Suffolk	11,295	702	11,303	480	7,571	406
Surrey	1,223	275	1,506	64	1,583	70
Tyne and Wear	99	25	1,485	67	90	8
Warwickshire	1,418	189	10,544	408	3,268	143
West Midlands	304	63	680	39	45	4
West Sussex	1,691	505	3,295	134	4,180	193
West Yorkshire	953	208	2,457	142	444	33
Wiltshire	542	164	10,236	349	6,828	280

[1] Excluding estimates for minor holdings.
[3] Crops grown on set-aside land are not included.
[5] Excluding peas for harvesting dry and mushrooms.
[4] Data suppressed to prevent disclosure of information about individual holdings.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much was spent in pounds sterling, and what was the take-up in hectares, in 1993 on the arable area payments scheme or its equivalent in each European Union country; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: I understand from working papers of the European Commission that the situation was as follows. The sterling figure is for illustrative purposes.

Member State	Area In Scheme ('000 ha)	Payments in 1993 ('000 ecu)	Sterling Equivalent (rounded) (£'000)
Belgium	410	77,729	59,272
Denmark	1,805	309,630	236,107
Federal Republic of Germany	9,328	1,570,326	1,197,442
Greece	1,267	301,440	229,861
Spain	8,435	589,182	449,277
France	12,920	2,627,735	2,003,763
Republic of Ireland	269	60,182	45,891
Italy	3,701	520,063	396,571
Luxembourg	36	4,679	3,568
Netherlands	334	63,017	48,053
Portugal	684	28,658	21,853
United Kingdom	3,978	906,036	690,892
Total	43,166	7,058,677	5,382,551

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to her answer of 24 June, *Official Report*, column *391*, what estimates she has for the amounts to be paid out for linseed in 1993-94 under the arable area payments scheme in *(a)* each county and *(b)* each region in England; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: It will not be possible to produce estimates for the amounts to be paid out for linseed in 1994 until the payment rate has been agreed by the Council of Ministers.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many *(a)* farmers and *(b)* holdings there were in each county in England in 1993.

Mr. Jack: The information requested is set out in the table.

Number of holdings and farmers, partners and directors in England[1] in 1993

County	Number of holdings	Number of farmers, partners and directors[2]
Avon	2,227	2,246
Bedfordshire	1,244	1,450
Berkshire	886	829
Buckinghamshire	1,937	2,131
Cambridgeshire	3,518	4,046
Cheshire	4,450	5,003
Cleveland	435	528
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	7,082	7,758
Cumbria	6,544	7,755
Derbyshire	3,963	4,450
Devon	11,453	12,681
Dorset	3,070	3,412
Durham	2,184	2,664
East Sussex	2,328	2,435
Essex	3,796	4,347
Gloucestershire	3,517	3,674
Greater London	463	492
Greater Manchester	1,522	1,624
Hampshire	3,159	3,267
Hereford and Worcester	6,907	7,691
Hertfordshire	1,378	1,478
Humberside	3,632	4,507
Isle of Wight	526	567
Kent	4,288	4,694
Lancashire	5,712	6,441
Leicestershire	3,062	3,307
Lincolnshire	5,970	7,334
Merseyside	493	596
Norfolk	5,321	5,864
North Yorkshire	8,633	10,621
Northamptonshire	2,138	2,361
Northumberland	2,393	2,925
Nottinghamshire	2,097	2,459
Oxfordshire	2,137	2,314
Shropshire	5,034	5,742
Somerset	6,048	6,360
South Yorkshire	1,497	1,714
Staffordshire	4,785	5,130
Suffolk	3,659	4,205
Surrey	1,855	1,810

County	Number of holdings	Number of farmers, partners and directors[1]
Tyne and Wear	268	305
Warwickshire	2,504	2,817
West Midlands	483	520
West Sussex	2,335	2,335
West Yorkshire	3,297	3,401
Wiltshire	3,192	3,360
England	153,422	171,650

Source: 1993 June Agricultural and Horticultural Census.

[1] Excluding minor holdings.

[2] Excludes spouses of farmers, partners and directors though they themselves may be partners or directors.

Subsidies and Grants

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what amount of money was paid out by each of her regional service centres for each *(a)* agricultural subsidy scheme and *(b)* grant scheme to farmers in 1992-93.

Mr. Jack: Information in the form requested by the hon. Member could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Summaries of the outturn on various grants and subsidy schemes in 1992-93 on a United Kingdom or on an all-England basis are included in the HM Treasury publication "Supply Estimates 1994-95 (Class III Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and Intervention Board —Intervention Agency)", a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

Set-aside Scheme

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much land in each county in England was under the five-year set-aside scheme in *(a)* 1993-94 and *(b)* 1994-95 at the latest available date; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: The latest information on land in the five-year set-aside scheme which is available on a county basis relates to the scheme year 1992-93, which ended on 30 September 1993, and is set out below.

Five Year Set-Aside Scheme

1992-93 scheme year County	Area Set-aside
Avon	1,900
Bedfordshire	3,050
Berkshire	3,250
Buckinghamshire	6,400
Cambridgeshire	4,500
Cheshire	850
Cleveland	100
Cornwall	1,800
Cumbria	350
Derbyshire	1,050
Devon	3,300
Dorset	1,950
Durham	1,200
East Sussex	3,900
Essex	5,100
Gloucestershire	5,250
Greater London	550
Greater Manchester	100
Hampshire	4,450
Hereford and Worcester	2,000
Hertfordshire	2,950
Humberside	2,450
Isle of Wight	50
Kent	6,150
Lancashire	250
Leicestershire	1,600
Lincolnshire	3,550
Merseyside	400
Norfolk	3,250
North Yorkshire	3,650
Northamptonshire	4,100
Northumberland	1,300
Nottinghamshire	950
Oxfordshire	6,800
Shropshire	600
Somerset	2,400
South Yorkshire	400
Staffordshire	1,400
Suffolk	4,700
Surrey	2,300
Tyne and Wear	500
Warwickshire	2,750
West Midlands	200
West Yorkshire	400
West Sussex	3,300
Wiltshire	4,500
Total	111,950

Note: figures rounded to nearest 50ha.

Animal Welfare

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps she is taking to discourage *(a)* tail docking of piglets and *(b)* beak trimming of egg-laying hens; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: The draft Welfare of Livestock Regulations 1994, which were laid before Parliament on 14 June, provide that tail docking of piglets may be carried out routinely only where there is evidence on the farm that injuries to other piglets have occurred or are likely to occur as a result of not carrying out this procedure. In addition, the codes of recommendations for the welfare of pigs and of domestic fowl, made under section 3(1) of the Agriculture (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1968, make it clear that tail docking and beak trimming should be carried out only as a last resort. The Department also addresses means of controlling aggression in pigs and laying hens in its research programme.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proportion of the United Kingdom's pig herd was tail-docked in the last 12-month period for which figures are available.

Mr. Soames: Figures on the number of pigs which have been tail docked are not available.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proportion of the United Kingdom's flock of egg-laying hens was beak trimmed in the last 12-month period for which figures are available.

Mr. Soames: Figures on the number of egg-laying hens which have been beak trimmed are not available.

Bovine Immuno-deficiency Virus

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what tests for BIV are carried out on imported milk;

(2) what evidence of BIV infection has been found in *(a)* British and *(b)* imported milk supplies; on how many occasions; and what action was taken.

Mr. Soames: The Importation of Milk Regulations 1988, as amended, require all imports of milk from member states to be accompanied either by a health certificate certifying that the milk meets specified standards of production and hygiene or a commercial document or EC health mark indicating that it meets requirements in EC directive 92/46 on milk hygiene. All imported drinking milk is pasteurised, sterilised or ultra heat-treated. Imports of milk from third countries are currently prohibited. No tests for bovine immunodeficiency-like virus are carried out on British or imported milk. However, experience with other viruses suggests that pasteurisation would kill BIV. There is no evidence that BIV affects humans.

Beef Imports

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what percentage of beef imported into the United Kingdom per annum originates in Mexico; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 30 June 1994]:* There were no recorded United Kingdom imports of beef of Mexican origin during 1993.

Correspondence

Mr. Colin Shepherd: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many letters are received by her Department each year in respect of the problems encountered by the constituents of hon. Members; what is the average time of response and when the hon. Member for Hereford can expect to receive a reply to the letter he sent on behalf of his constituent Mr. Peter Symonds of Llandinabo on 7 December 1993 and about which follow up letters were sent on 4 March and 10 May 1994.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 1 July 1994]:* The number of letters received from hon. Members enclosing correspondence from their constituents or from noble peers in the last three calendar years and the percentage replied to within MAFF's target of 15 days are set out in the table:

Year	*Number*	*Percentage replied to within 15 days*
1991	9,976	76
1992	10,974	81
1993	11,141	67

Figures are not collected on the average time taken to respond to hon. Members' letters.

The letter of 7 December 1993 from the hon. Member sent on behalf of his constituent, Mr. Peter Symonds of Llandinabo, concerned a commercial appraisal carried out by ADAS. The correspondence was accordingly forwarded to ADAS for reply. However, neither the letter of 13 December nor the follow-up letters were received by ADAS and the Chief Executive was therefore unaware that the matter had been delegated until 29 June.

I understand that the chief executive of ADAS replied to the hon. Member's letter on 30 June.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list his Department's advisory non-departmental public bodies which are required to produce annual reports.

Mr. Howard: The Animal Procedures Committee and the Parole Board.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the advisory non-departmental public bodies sponsored by his Department which are required to lay their annual reports before Parliament.

Mr. Howard: The Parole Board.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those of his Department's advisory non-departmental public bodies which the Government are required to consult before legislation proposals; and in respect of which bodies the Government must publish their response to advice supplied by them.

Mr. Howard: The Government are required to consult the following advisory non-departmental public bodies before legislation proposals:

Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs
Animal Procedures Committee
Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council
Parliamentary Boundary Commission for England
Parliamentary Boundary Commission for Wales
Poisons Board
Police Advisory Board
Police Negotiating Board

In addition, the Government's response to advice supplied by the following bodies must be published:

Parliamentary Boundary Commission for England
Parliamentary Boundary Commission for Wales

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the advisory bodies he has set up in his Department since the publication of "Public Bodies 1993".

Mr. Howard: The National Board for Crime Prevention.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the advisory non-departmental public bodies sponsored by his Department that have a statutory basis.

Mr. Howard: The Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs, the Animal Procedures Committee, the Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council, the Local Review Committees, the Parliamentary Boundary Commission for England, the Parliamentary Boundary Commission for Wales, the Parole Board, the Poisons Board, the Police Advisory Board, the Police Negotiating Board.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list his Department's advisory non-departmental public bodies which are required to publish their advice to Government.

Mr. Howard: The information requested is as follows:
Parliamentary Boundary Commission for England
Parliamentary Boundary Commission for Wales

Caravans

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate he has made of the number of caravans intended for permanent occupation entering the United Kingdom; and what steps he is taking to stop their entry.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The importation of caravans is not a matter for my Department.

People travelling to the United Kingdom within the common travel area which comprises the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man and the Republic of Ireland do not pass through immigration controls. Nationals of countries in the European Economic Area may enter the United Kingdom from outside the common travel area in accordance with Community law and are subject to a passport and identity card check.

Firearms Certificates

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place in the Library a copy of the report of Ernst and Young on the administration of firearms certification.

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the report by Ernst and Young on the administration of the firearms licensing system.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Copies of the Ernst and Young report on the cost of the administration of the firearms licensing system will be made available and a copy placed in the Library when an announcement is made about the current reviews of firearms fees.

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement as to whether Mr. Joseph Cowlam had a firearms licence.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I understand that Mr. Cowlam did not hold a firearm certificate.

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he has taken to see that police forces adopt the recommendations of Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary concerning the administration of firearms certification.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The administration of firearms licensing is a matter for individual chief officers of police. I understand, however, that the chairman of the Association of Chief Police Officers crime committee sub-group on the administration of firearms licensing has written to chief constables commending the recommendations of the report of Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary to them. In addition, Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary will pay particular attention to this subject in its annual inspections of forces.

Cruelty to Livestock

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions for cruelty to livestock were brought in each year since 1985; and how many in each case were brought by *(a)* the Government and *(b)* the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Information held centrally by the Home Department does not identify the individual summoning body. The table shows the number of prosecutions under the Protection of Animals Act 1911 and Agriculture (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1968 by type of proceedings from 1985 to 1992. The 1993 data will not be available until the autumn.

Number of prosecutions under the Protection of Animals Act 1911 (as amended)[1] and Agriculture (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1968 by type of proceedings 1985-1992

England and Wales

Offence/Year	*Type of Proceedings*			
	Apprehensions	*Summons by Police*	*Summons other*	*Total*
Protection of Animals Act 1911[1]				
1985	53	372	564	989
1986	71	316	638	1,025
1987	59	288	684	1,031
1988	91	278	655	1,024
1989	117	264	669	1,050
1990	88	300	779	1,167
1991	82	255	865	1,202
1992	83	276	795	1,154
Agriculture (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1968—Sections 1, 2 & 6 (relating to welfare of livestock)				
1985	—	—	3	3
1986	—	1	10	11
1987	—	3	8	11
1988	—	8	12	20
1989	—	3	12	15
1990	1	2	10	13
1991	—	1	17	18
1992	—	2	14	16

[1]Cannot distinguish between offences involving livestock or other animals.

Note:—The statistics of court proceedings are based on returns made by the police to the Home Office and although these include offences where there has been no police involvement, such as those prosecutions instigated by government departments, private organisations and individuals, the reporting of these types of offence is known to be incomplete. Where proceedings involve more than one offence, the table records the principal offence.

Community Care

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were imprisoned in each year since 1990 for non-payment of the community charge in each district council area in Wales and for Wales as a whole.

Mr. Maclean: The information requested is not available. The available information on where prisoners originate is for the county of the sentencing court. The table shows the number of receptions recorded centrally for non-payment of community charge by county in Wales.

Receptions into Prison Service establishments sentenced by a Welsh Court for non-payment of community charge, 1990-1994

County of Welsh court sentencing	*Number received for non-payment of community charge*				
	1990	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*[1]	*1994*[1,2]
Clwyd	—	—	—	—	1
Dyfed	—	—	1	—	—
Gwent	—	—	—	1	—
Gwynedd	—	—	—	—	—
Mid Glamorgan	—	2	1	—	1
South Glamorgan	—	—	—	—	—
West Glamorgan	—	4	1	2	3
Powys	—	—	—	—	—
All Wales	—	6	3	3	5

[1] Provisional figures.
[2] January to May only.

Criminal Injuries Compensation

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for compensation were made to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board by police officers in each year since 1988; what was the average compensation in each year expressed in constant 1994 prices; and what proportion of total claims in each year were made by police officers.

Mr. Maclean: I regret that the available records do not separately identify applications from, or payments made to, the police or other occupational groups.

Private Prisons

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will place in the Library a copy of the heads of agreement between the Home Secretary and Group 4 in respect of The Wolds prison;

(2) if he will place in the Library a copy of the heads of agreement between the Home Secretary and Premier Prison Services Ltd. in respect of Doncaster prison;

(3) if he will place in the Library a copy of the heads of agreement between the Home Secretary and United Kingdom Detention Services Ltd. in respect of Blakenhurst prison.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for these matters has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 4 July 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Questions about the placing in the Library of a copy of the Heads of Agreement between the Home Secretary and Group 4, Premier Prison Services Limited, and United Kingdom Detention Services for Wolds, Doncaster and Blakenhurst prisons respectively.

Copies of the Heads of Agreement for Wolds and Blakenhurst will be placed in the Library. No Heads of Agreement were signed in relation to Doncaster prison, because Premier Prison Services Limited did not require them.

Police (Standard Spending Assessments)

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide tables showing *(a)* the standard spending assessment, *(b)* the figure his Department estimated as its contribution to spending at standard spending assessment level and *(c)* the actual figure paid out in respect of each police force in England and Wales for 1993-94 and for each of the previous three financial years.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The following table lists the standard spending assessment for each police force in England between 1990-91 and 1993-94. For Wales, provision for the police is included in the overall assessment made for Welsh county councils. Details of the initial estimate of grant and actual grant paid by the Home Office to all forces in England and Wales during the same period are also shown. The outturn figures for 1993-94 are provisional.

1990-91 *£ thousands*

	SSA	*Initial estimate of specific grant*	*Actual specific grant paid*
Avon and Somerset	50,802	49,157	52,199
Bedfordshire	18,039	16,836	18,155
Cambridgeshire	19,824	19,575	21,606
Cheshire	30,911	29,685	31,809
Cleveland	24,640	24,100	26,296
Cumbria	19,129	19,475	20,380
Derbyshire	29,670	30,038	31,243
Devon and Cornwall	47,096	50,267	53,887
Dorset	20,801	22,725	25,002
Durham	22,753	21,336	22,932
Essex	49,255	47,233	53,399
Gloucestershire	19,262	18,191	20,520
Hampshire	54,289	52,067	56,688
Hertfordshire	29,917	28,650	29,959
Humberside	32,963	33,610	35,545
Kent	51,544	49,767	55,597

	SSA	Initial estimate of specific grant	Actual specific grant paid
Lancashire	52,506	52,802	55,149
Leicestershire	29,124	30,615	31,250
Lincolnshire	19,576	20,641	21,214
Norfolk	22,538	22,496	24,539
Northamptonshire	18,550	20,159	20,443
North Yorkshire	22,886	23,721	24,172
Nottinghamshire	38,358	35,589	38,612
Staffordshire	36,207	35,203	37,879
Suffolk	19,626	20,646	21,934
Surrey	30,103	27,313	29,134
Sussex	50,825	44,907	47,425
Thames Valley	63,248	62,976	68,397
Warwickshire	16,415	16,727	18,402
West Mercia	32,946	33,311	35,041
Wiltshire	17,954	19,033	20,851
Greater Manchester	115,636	112,319	116,561
Merseyside	77,791	79,681	81,955
Northumbria	58,132	49,076	61,896
South Yorkshire	49,279	47,157	48,337
West Midlands	113,021	109,358	116,921
West Yorkshire	87,025	91,679	92,405
Metropolitan Police	613,875	624,636	622,941
City of London	17,983	18,965	18,908
Dyfed-Powys	—	15,555	15,748
Gwent	—	16,150	16,976
North Wales	—	21,837	22,810
South Wales	—	50,376	54,191

1991-92

£ thousands

	SSA	Initial estimate of specific grant	Actual specific grant paid
Avon and Somerset	55,443	57,543	56,870
Bedfordshire	20,238	19,198	19,965
Cambridgeshire	21,691	22,218	24,029
Cheshire	33,986	33,843	34,150
Cleveland	27,037	25,940	28,487
Cumbria	21,151	21,825	22,991
Derbyshire	32,276	34,993	33,684
Devon and Cornwall	51,536	58,579	59,892
Dorset	22,879	26,450	26,523
Durham	24,751	24,344	24,780
Essex	54,851	56,662	58,925
Gloucestershire	20,953	21,168	22,752
Hampshire	59,904	60,706	63,735
Hertfordshire	32,973	33,238	32,063
Humberside	36,128	38,749	39,472
Kent	57,435	59,156	65,654
Lancashire	57,873	58,383	62,230
Leicestershire	32,636	34,943	34,270
Lincolnshire	21,547	22,838	24,090
Norfolk	25,345	26,127	27,591
Northamptonshire	20,539	22,408	23,204
North Yorkshire	25,345	26,077	26,356
Nottinghamshire	42,194	41,071	42,141
Staffordshire	39,638	38,839	41,903
Suffolk	21,673	23,384	24,515
Surrey	33,255	30,409	32,344
Sussex	56,093	49,722	54,151
Thames Valley	70,893	70,881	76,201
Warwickshire	18,451	19,341	20,319
West Mercia	36,415	38,589	39,387
Wiltshire	21,115	21,423	23,570
Greater Manchester	126,349	124,535	126,895
Merseyside	84,622	89,383	91,231
Northumbria	63,939	65,099	67,741
South Yorkshire	53,967	53,406	52,615
West Midlands	124,080	120,723	127,915
West Yorkshire	95,027	102,676	100,585
Metropolitan Police	676,931	981,979	696,595
City of London	20,639	21,030	20,818
Dyfed-Powys	—	16,732	17,927
Gwent	—	17,756	18,708
North Wales	—	25,486	25,857
South Wales	—	57,446	60,454

1992-93

£ thousands

	SSA	Initial estimate of specific grant	Actual specific grant paid
Avon and Somerset	63,999	63,097	63,404
Bedfordshire	25,127	21,946	22,547
Cambridgeshire	26,516	26,116	25,513
Cheshire	39,805	38,449	37,213
Cleveland	31,139	31,785	30,499
Cumbria	24,609	24,635	25,246
Derbyshire	38,354	37,766	38,653
Devon and Cornwall	60,702	65,137	65,418
Dorset	26,993	30,222	28,378
Durham	28,796	27,719	27,145
Essex	64,662	64,547	64,175
Gloucestershire	24,546	24,804	24,514
Hampshire	71,551	68,522	69,071
Hertfordshire	38,803	36,214	34,947
Humberside	42,168	42,966	42,901
Kent	68,381	67,204	70,225
Lancashire	66,943	66,662	65,621
Leicestershire	38,416	37,774	37,120
Lincolnshire	25,002	25,643	26,043
Norfolk	29,978	29,662	30,133
Northamptonshire	24,671	24,711	25,815
North Yorkshire	29,398	29,218	29,806
Nottinghamshire	48,595	46,673	45,649
Staffordshire	45,921	45,787	44,748
Suffolk	25,562	26,513	25,873
Surrey	39,239	35,216	36,148
Sussex	60,754	57,327	58,708
Thames Valley	85,179	82,676	81,861
Warwickshire	21,520	22,244	21,669
West Mercia	42,562	42,356	42,162
Wiltshire	26,495	25,205	26,214
Greater Manchester	144,376	140,895	138,817
Merseyside	97,563	99,575	96,533
Northumbria	74,676	74,818	69,632
South Yorkshire	62,838	58,428	59,947
West Midlands	143,090	141,330	144,980
West Yorkshire	109,774	111,696	106,449
Metropolitan Police	729,511	751,921	756,059
City of London	23,187	22,855	22,565
Dyfed-Powys	—	18,826	19,837
Gwent	—	20,294	19,872
North Wales	—	27,268	28,584
South Wales	—	64,783	64,923

1993-94

£ thousands

	SSA	Initial estimate of specific grant	Actual specific grant paid
Avon and Somerset	66,489	66,123	66,215
Bedfordshire	26,498	23,289	24,494
Cambridgeshire	27,457	27,495	29,817
Cheshire	41,353	39,272	40,800
Cleveland	32,350	32,216	32,255
Cumbria	25,566	25,421	25,755
Derbyshire	39,846	39,457	40,959
Devon and Cornwall	63,064	70,144	68,802
Dorset	28,043	30,072	30,871

	SSA	Initial estimate of specific grant	Actual specific grant paid
Durham	29,917	28,362	28,519
Essex	67,767	67,815	68,820
Gloucestershire	25,501	26,113	27,045
Hampshire	75,453	69,198	72,382
Hertfordshire	40,290	37,203	37,582
Humberside	43,809	45,222	44,899
Kent	72,419	72,994	76,819
Lancashire	69,547	68,609	71,298
Leicestershire	39,910	39,068	38,182
Lincolnshire	25,975	25,855	27,574
Norfolk	31,144	31,933	32,064
Northamptonshire	25,630	27,834	28,306
North Yorkshire	30,541	31,346	32,201
Nottinghamshire	50,485	48,725	50,258
Staffordshire	47,707	46,854	46,413
Suffolk	26,557	27,355	27,078
Surrey	40,503	38,027	38,534
Sussex	64,004	63,511	62,281
Thames Valley	90,575	90,407	91,106
Warwickshire	22,443	22,477	24,225
West Mercia	44,218	45,322	45,200
Wiltshire	27,763	26,926	28,764
Greater Manchester	149,884	155,736	152,486
Merseyside	101,359	100,931	102,285
Northumbria	77,581	79,340	76,704
South Yorkshire	65,282	64,488	63,895
West Midlands	148,656	152,480	151,775
West Yorkshire	114,045	116,843	118,708
Metropolitan Police	761,712	793,317	791,091
City of London	26,570	25,125	26,054
Dyfed-Powys	—	20,980	21,493
Gwent	—	20,330	20,888
North Wales	—	29,479	30,590
South Wales	—	68,177	67,091

Blakenhurst Prison

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department who received the interest on the performance security provided by United Kingdom Detention Services Ltd. to his Department under the terms of the contract to manage Blakenhurst prison.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 4 July 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about who received the interest on the performance security provided by United Kingdom Detention Services Ltd. to his Depatment under the terms of the contract to manage Blakenhurst prison.

Under the terms of the contract to manage Blakenhurst prison the contractor is required to provide the Prison Service with performance security. This was provided by means of a Peformance Bond, and therefore the issue of any interest payments does not arise.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much money has been witheld from United Kingdom Detention Services Ltd. for loss, destruction or damage to Blakenhurst prison, listing the circumstances and amount of each separate penalty.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 4 July 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the amount of money witheld from United Kingdom Detention Services Limited for loss, destruction or damage to Blakenhurst prison.

The only occasion on which money was witheld from UKDS is set out in my letter to you of 29 June (*Hansard* Col. 627).

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many claims have been made against the public liability insurance policy held by United Kingdom Detention Services Ltd. and his Department in connection with Blakenhurst prison; what were the circumstances in each case; what were the amounts claimed; and how many claims have been successful.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 4 July 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the number of claims made against the public liability insurance policy held by United Kingdom Detention Services Limited and his department in connection with Blakenhurst prison; the circumstances; the amounts and the success of the claims.

There have been no claims made against the public liability insurance policy held by United Kingdom Detention Services Limited.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what contact *(a)* the Health and Safety Executive, *(b)* the environmental health office and *(c)* the fire service has had with Blakenhurst prison; how many inspections of Blakenhurst prison have been made by each of these bodies; and what were the findings in each case.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 4 July 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about what contact *(a)* The Health and Safety Executive, *(b)* the Environmental Health Office and *(c)* the Fire Service has had with Blakenhurst Prison.

Representatives of the Health and Safety Executive have visited on three occasions. On 19 February 1993 they made seven recommendations, all of which have been actioned. They visited again on the 14 October 1993 when a further seven recommendations were made, including a complaint about cleanliness. Again, all have been actioned. The last visit was on 10 March this year when they expressed general satisfaction in a verbal report.

The local Environmental Health Officer has visited on two occasions. The report of 19 November 1993 contained twenty recommendations. On 22 April this year the Environmental Health Officer assessed progress and found that nineteen of the original recommendations had been actioned satisfactorily. One recommendation is still outstanding.

Hereford and Worcester Fire Service have visited eleven times for exercises or familiarisation visits.

The Fire Service do not carry out full surveys or inspections. These are carried out by the Fire Safety Section of the Prison Service and they have visited on three occasions since Blakenhurst Prison opened.

A full fire survey was carried out in June 1993 and Fire Safety Section's recommendations are being actioned.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what changes have been made by his Department to the services provided by United Kingdom Detention Services Ltd. under the contract to manage Blakenhurst prison.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 4 July 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the changes made by his Department to the services provided by United Kingdom Detention Service Limited (UKDS) under the contract to manage Blakenhurst Prison.

The only occasion on which changes were made to the services provided by UKDS under the contract to manage Blakenhurst prison is set out in my letter to you of 29 June (Hansard Col. 627).

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much money has been paid by his Department for loss, destruction or damage to Blakenhurst prison, listing the circumstances and amount of each separate payment.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibilty for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 4 July 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the amount of money paid by his Department for loss, destruction or damage to Blakenhurst prison; the circumstances and the amount of each separate payment.

No money has been paid to United Kingdom Detention Services Limited for damage repair at Blakenhurst prison.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* staff and *(b)* people applying to become staff, at Blakenhurst prison, have been refused Home Office certification as fit to perform such duties; and, of these, how many have later reapplied and received such certification.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 30 June 1994]:* Responsibilty for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 4 July 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the number of staff and people applying to become staff at Blakenhurst prison that have been refused Home Office certification; and how many have later reapplied and become certificated.

Twenty people who applied to work at Blakenhurst as prison custody officers (PCO) have been refused Home Office certification. Of these one has been reconsidered and subsequently received certification.

Non-PCO do not require certification. All people who work at contracted out prisons are, however, subject to routine enquiries similar to those made for applicants for Prison Service employment.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what notification or advice United Kingdom Detention Services Ltd. gave the Home Office regarding the buildings, facilities and design at Blakenhurst prison; and what action has been taken as a result.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 30 June 1994]:* Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 4 July 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking what notification or advice United Kingdom Detention Services Limited (UKDS) gave the Home Office regarding the buildings, facilities and design at Blakenhurst prison; and what action has been taken as a result.

UKDS had no involvement in the original buildings, facilities and design at Blakenhurst. Since Blakenhurt became operational, UKDS have recommended changes to the existing conditions at Blackenhurst on a number of occasions. These have included fitting electric gates on house blocks; creating canteens in four house blocks; modifying the sewage system; installing television cameras in the walkways; modifying the holding cells in reception; providing power outlets and drainage in the industrial workshop; altering one spur of a house block to create a Vulnerable Prisoner Unit; changing the majority of spy-holes to polycarbonate; and installing a new bolt system for cell doors.

All these requests, which have come through the Controller at the prison, have been actioned.

It is common for modifications to be required in new prisons, especially in the first year of operation. UKDS has paid for a number of the alterations and the remainder have been paid for by the Prison Service.

Race Relations

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to respond to the Commission for Racial Equality's second review of the Race Relations Act 1976.

Mr. Howard: I have today written to the chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality setting out the Government's formal response. A copy has been placed in the Library.

Computer Contracts

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many contracts his Department has entered into with the computer company EDS-Scion or its predecessor EDS; when the contracts were entered into; what is their total value; and what is the subject matter of each contract.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 1 July 1994]:* The Home Office has let three contracts to the specified company amounting to a total value of £80,942·23.

Details of the contracts are given below:

Date Contract let and Subject matter of Contract

12 September 1991

Hardware Maintenance

10 July 1992
Software licences for London Fire and Civil Defence Authority
8 January 1993
Evaluation of Performance of Classifying Finger Printing Images for Police System Research and Development Group

United Kingdom Detention Services Ltd.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many occasions money has been withheld from United Kingdom Detention Services Ltd. for giving an unsatisfactory performance or failing to provide the required service; what were the circumstances on each occasion including dates and the nature of the failure; and what were the amounts witheld on each occasion.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 30 June 1994]:* Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 4 July 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the number of occasions money has been withheld from UKDS for giving an unsatisfactory performance or failing to provide the required service; the circumstances and the amounts withheld.

The only occasion on which money was withheld from UKDS is set out in my letter to you of 29 June (Hansard Col. 627).

SOCIAL SECURITY

Pensioner Incomes

4. **Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what has been the rise in pensioners' total average net income since 1979.

Mr. Hague: The estimated rise in pensioner's total average net income, in real terms, from 1979 to 1990-91 —the latest year for which figures are available—was:

Before housing costs:
42 per cent. in all pensioners
39 per cent. to pensioner couples; and
39 per cent. to single pensioners.
Source: The 1990-91 Family Expenditure Survey.

Child Support Agency

18. **Mr. Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the operation of the Child Support Agency.

Mr. Burt: The Child Support Agency has had a challenging first year and this is recognised in the report "The Child Support Agency: The First Two Years" which was placed in the Library today. Despite many difficulties, the agency achieved considerable successes in its first year. Over 850,000 cases were taken on and over 200,000 maintenance assessments were made. Nearly 60 per cent. of cases involved absent parents who were not paying maintenance. In 28,000 cases the agency successfully located absent parents for whom the parents with care of the children did not have an address—a success rate of 85 per cent.

Mr. Thomason: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the first year of the Child Support Agency's operations and its plans and targets for the second year.

Mr. Lilley: The Child Support Agency has today published "The Child Support Agency: The First Two Years". This provides the annual report for the year 1993-94—"Our First Year", and the business plan for the year 1994-95—"The Year Ahead". The agency's national client satisfaction survey 1993 has also been published today. Copies of both those publications have been placed in the Library. The annual report contains details of the agency 1993-94 performance against the standards of service as set out in the agency's customer charter. In addition, all local caller areas will, as from today, display posters detailing this information. The posters will be updated quarterly.

The targets that I have set the Child Support Agency for 1994-95 are as follows:

50 per cent. of people with care of children making eligible applications to the Child Support Agency to have maintenance arranged.
a score of 65 per cent. on an index of client satisfaction with the Agency's service, as determined by an independent national survey.
annual benefit savings of £460 million.
to manage the Agency's resources so as to deliver its Business Plan within a total budget of £184 million.
by the end of March 1995, no more than 40 per cent. of outstanding maintenance applications to be over 13 weeks old, no more than 15 per cent. over 26 weeks old, and no more than 1 per cent. over 52 weeks old.

The agency is making a number of operational and procedural changes this year which should significantly improve performance. The new targets, which are higher than the agency's achievements last year, take this expected improvement into account.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the total cost of information technology investment in the child support scheme; and what were the amounts of funding by *(a)* the Child Support Agency, *(b)* the Information Technology Services Agency and *(c)* his Department.

Mr. Burt: Some £52·3 million up to March 1994. All funding of information technology investment is met out of the DSS administration vote.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage availability has been achieved by the Child Support Agency computer system; and what penalty has been levied against *(a)* EDS and *(b)* ITSA.

Mr. Burt: Over the last six months, 93·5 per cent. availability has been achieved by the Child Support Agency computer system. No penalties have been imposed.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what *(a)* additional and *(b)* re-working payments have been made to the information technology contractors EDS in connection with the Child Support Agency computer system.

Mr. Burt: A development contract is in place with EDS, the terms of which permit EDS to charge for any additional changes requested. Since April 1993, such changes have resulted from policy requirements and amendments to working practices. The charge for additional development work during the period April 1993 to March 1994 was £1·1 million. Contractual arrangements with EDS provide for resolution of faults which are EDS's responsibility within the fixed price for the contract and at no additional charge.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what has been the cost of the hardware upgrades which the Child Support Agency computer system's IBM mainframe computer has had to have.

Mr. Burt: The Child Support Agency computer system has had one hardware upgrade at a cost of £5·19 million.

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security under what circumstances the Child Support Agency opens files for maintenance payments in respect of children who are both living with, and maintained by, both of their parents.

Mr. Burt: The Child Support Agency has no role where children and their parents all live in the same household. Where the parents live apart and the children spend on average at least two nights a week with each, the agency may arrange for the parent who provides the lesser amount of care to pay maintenance to the other parent.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what expenditure has been incurred in implementing the programming application on the Child Support Agency computer system.

Mr. Burt: Some £13·5 million, including all expenditure for ITSA, EDS and CSA user design.

24. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received in the last month concerning the CSA.

Mr. Burt: In the month up to 31 May 2,204 written representations were received by the headquarters of the Department and the Child Support Agency from both hon. Members and members of the public covering a wide range of views.

Social Fund

19. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of the social fund is currently spent on administration.

Mr. Scott: The cost of administering the social fund was equivalent to 35 per cent. of the gross expenditure, plus recoveries, in 1992-93, the last year for which figures are available. Each application to the discretionary part of the social fund receives a detailed personal assessment whether or not an award is made and recoveries cost money as well. However, the recycling of social fund loans ensures that more help goes to more people.

Adjudication Officers

20. **Mr. O'Hara:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to reform the regulations governing appeals against the decisions of adjudication officers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hague: We intend in the near future to consolidate the adjudication regulations. The appeals system is under constant review, but we have no plans at present to reform the regulations any further.

Mallinson Judgment

21. **Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement outlining his response to the Mallinson judgment; and what action will be undertaken by his Department resulting from the judgment.

Mr. Scott: The judgment in the case of Mallinson *v.* the Secretary of State for Social Security has extended the scope of attendance allowance and the care component of disability living allowance by allowing a wider range of activities to be considered as "attention in connection with bodily functions". Independent adjudication officers are applying the terms of the judgment to the decisions that they make.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security to what date the Government will backdate any changed entitlements to disability living allowance care component and the lower rate of attendance allowance following the Mallinson judgment.

Mr. Scott: The earliest date from which the benefit, or additional benefit, could become payable is 21 April 1994.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate how many existing disability living allowance claimants will be entitled to *(a)* the middle rate of the disability living allowance care component and *(b)* the lower rate of attendance allowance as a result of the Mallinson judgment; and what plans his Department has to initiate a review of these cases.

Mr. Scott: Reliable information is not available as to the numbers of people who are currently in receipt of disability living allowance or attendance allowance and might gain as a result of the judgment in the House of Lords in the case of Mallinson *v.* Secretary of State for Social Security. The Department has no current plans to initiate a review of those cases as major administrative disruption could be created in reviewing so many cases and the number of successful awards in the light of the judgment do not indicate that such disruption could be justified.

Social Security Payments

22. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment he has made of the level of basic social security payments relative to average income real terms in each member state of the European Union; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hague: Member states have different priorities, structures and methods of funding social security. Those differences, variations in definitions and lack of comparable data make comparisons difficult. We are committed to a social security system which is appropriate to modern needs and protects the most vulnerable while not outstripping the nation's ability to pay.

Post Offices (Benefits Delivery)

23. **Mrs. Roe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether pensioners will be able to choose to have their benefits paid through the Post Office.

Mr. Hague: Pensioners and others will continue to be able to choose to collect their pensions and other benefits at the post office. We are well aware of the valuable role played by post offices, particularly in rural areas.

1994 Benefits Uprating

25. **Mr. Rathbone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the difference between the 1994 uprating of benefits for pensioners and sick and disabled people and the rate of inflation.

Mr. Hague: In addition to increases in all major benefits fully in line with inflation, people on income-related benefits received increases based on the Rossi index, which was higher than the retail prices index. Most pensioners and many sick and disabled people will also have received extra help for the effect of VAT on fuel over and above the normal uprating.

Housing Benefit

26. **Ms Janet Anderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to reform the present system of housing benefit.

Mr. Hague: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth).

Ms Hodge: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the total number and proportion of council tenants receiving housing benefit in *(a)* the London borough of Barking and Dagenham, *(b)* the London borough of Redbridge, *(c)* the Greater London area and *(d)* Great Britain.

Mr. Hague *[holding answer 28 June 1994]:* The latest available information is in the table.

Area	*Number of council tenancies*	*[1]Housing benefit rent rebate caseload*	*Percentage of council tenancies with housing benefit*
London Borough of Barking and Dagenham	25,624	14,382	56
London Borough of Redbridge	8,340	6,744	81
Greater London	657,096	[2]423,173	64
Great Britain	[3]4,581,171	[2]2,994,184	65

[1] Refers to benefit units, which may be a single person or a couple.
[2] Includes estimates for non-responding authorities.
[3] The total for Great Britain contains estimates for individual English authorities, and estimates of the totals for Wales and Scotland.

Data sources:
The 28 May 1993 Housing Benefit Management Information System Quarterly caseload count.
The 1 April 1993 Department of the Environment and Welsh Office counts of tenancies.
The 31 March 1993 Scottish Office count of tenancies.

Basic State Pension

27. **Mr. Kilfoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give the value of the basic state pension as a percentage of male average earnings in 1979 and at the latest available date for which figures are available.

Mr. Hague: The basic state pension represented 20·4 per cent. of average male adult earnings in November 1979 and 15·9 per cent. in April 1993.

Sources:
1. The Abstract of Statistics for Social Security Benefits and Contributions.
2. The Indices of Retail Prices and average earnings.

Pensioner Savings

28. **Mr. Gale:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received about the percentage of pensioners retiring *(a)* in 1979 and *(b)* in the latest year for which figures are available, who had incomes from savings; and what was the real average level of savings on each of these two dates.

Mr. Hague: The percentage of recently retired pensioner units receiving income from savings has grown from 68 per cent. in 1979 to 78 per cent. in 1990-91. Information about the average level of savings is not available, but it is estimated that the average level of income from savings of recently retired pensioner units has risen from £20·40 in 1979 to £49·90 in 1990-91.

Notes:
1. Source: 1979 and 1990-91 Family Expenditure Surveys.
2. A pensioner unit is defined as a single person aged at or above state pensionable age (SPA) or a couple where the husband is aged at or above SPA.
3. A recently retired pensioner unit is one where a single person, or the husband of a couple, is aged up to five years above state pension age.
4. The savings income figures are at 1991 prices.

Pensioner Assets

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received about the current value of the assets held by the average pensioner household; and what was the comparable position in real terms in 1978-79.

Mr. Hague: In 1990-91, 48 per cent. of pensioners owned their own homes outright, compared to 37 per cent. in 1979; the average weekly income for pensioners from savings and investments was £30·30, compared to £11·20 in 1979; and the value of accrued rights in occupational pension schemes had substantially increased compared to 1979.

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average weekly value of invalidity benefit.

Mr. Scott: The average amount of invalidity benefit in payment on 4 April 1992, the latest date for which information is available was £75·45.

Pensioner Incomes, Scotland

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many pensioners in Scotland *(a)* are dependent on income support and *(b)* have incomes less than £10 above income support levels.

Mr. Burt: The number of pensioners dependant on income support in Scotland is 170,000.

Using income bought to account for income support purposes, it is estimated that 95,000 pensioners in Scotland have income within £10 of income support thresholds.

Source:
Income Support Statistics Quarterly Enquiry August 1993.

Notes:
1. Figures have been rounded to the nearest thousand for the first part of the answer and to the nearest five thousand for the second part.
2. Pensioners dependant on Income Support are defined as claimants and partners over pensionable age.
3. The second part of the answer has been modelled from the 1989, 1990 and 1991 Family Expenditure data uprated to 1994-95 prices and benefit levels.
4. Income Support thresholds include Income Support housing requirements such as mortgage interest.

Scottish Homes (Successors)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what consideration he has given to allowing West Lothian district council and other successor housing authorities to Scottish Homes to operate benefit distribution on behalf of his Department.

Mr. Hague: Local authorities have a statutory duty to administer the housing benefit scheme, and we have no plans to alter this.

War Pensions

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list by local authority the consideration given to receipt of *(a)* war widows' pension and *(b)* war disability pension when assessing housing benefit and council tax payments.

Mr. Hague: Local authorities have the discretion to disregard up to the full amount of war widows' pensions and war disablement pensions when assessing entitlement to housing benefit and council tax benefit.

The information requested with regard to housing benefit has been compiled from the latest information from local authorities for the financial year 1990-91 and is listed in the table. No details are available for council tax benefit.

Local authorities operating a local scheme in housing benefit to disregard an amount of war disablement or war widow's pension in addition to the £10 statutory disregard.

Aberconwy
Aberdeen
Adur
Amber Valley
Angus
Annandale and Eskdale
Arfon
Argyll-Bute
Arun
Ashfield
Ashford
Aylesbury Vale
Badenoch
Banff and Buchan
Barking
Barnet
Basingstoke
Bassetlaw
Bath[1]
Bearsden and Milngavie
Berwickshire
Beverley
Birmingham
Blaby[1]
Blackburn
Blackpool
Blaenau Gwent
Bolton[1]
Boston
Bournemouth
Bracknell
Bradford
Braintree
Breckland
Brent
Brentwood
Brighton
Broadland
Bromley[1]
Bromsgrove
Broxbourne
Broxtowe
Burnley
Bury[1]
Caithness
Calderdale
Cambridge[1]
Camden
Cannock Chase
Canterbury
Cardiff
Carlisle
Carrick
Castle Morpeth[2]
Castle Point
Ceredigion
Charnwood
Chelmsford
Cheltenham
Cherwell
Chester[2]
Chesterfield
Chichester
Chiltern
Chorley
Christchurch
Clackmannan
Clydebank
Clydesdale
Colchester
Colwyn
Congleton
Copeland
Corby[1]
Cotswold
Coventry
Craven
Crawley
Crewe and Nantwich
Cumbernauld
Cumbernauld (DC)
Cumnock and Doon
Cunninghame
Dacorum
Darlington[1]
Dartford
Daventry
Delyn
Derby[1]
Derbyshire Dales
Doncaster[1]
Dover
Dudley
Dumbarton
Dundee
Dunfermline
Dwyfor
Ealing
East Cambridgeshire
East Devon
East Dorset
East Hampshire
East Hertfordshire
East Kilbride
East Kilbride (DC)
East Lothian
East Staffordshire[1]
East Yorkshire
Eastleigh
Eastwood
Eden
Edinburgh
Ellesmere Port
Elmbridge
Epping Forest
Epsom and Ewell
Erewash
Ettrick and Lauderdale
Exeter[1]
Falkirk
Fareham
Fenland
Forest Heath
Forest of Dean
Gedling

Gillingham
Glanford
Glasgow
Glenrothes (DC)
Gloucester
Glyndwr
Gordon
Gosport
Great Yarmouth
Grimsby[1]
Guildford
Hackney
Halton
Hambleton[1]
Hamilton
Hammersmith
Harborough
Haringey
Harlow
Harrow
Hart
Hartlepool
Hastings
Havant
Havering[1]
Hereford
Hertsmere
High Peak
Hillingdon
Hinckley and Bosworth
Holderness
Horsham
Hounslow
Hove
Huntingdon
Hyndburn
Inverclyde
Inverness
Ipswich
Irvine (DC)
Isles of Scilly
Islington
Islwyn
Kennet
Kilmarnock
Kincardine and Deeside
Kingston-upon-Thames
Kingswood
Kirkcaldy
Kirklees
Knowsley
Kyle and Carrick
Lambeth
Lancaster
Langbaurgh
Leicester
Lewes
Lewisham
Lichfield
Lincoln
Liverpool
Livingston (DC)
Llanelli
Lliw Valley
Lochaber
Luton
Macclesfield
Maidstone
Maldon
Malvern Hills
Mansfield
Medina
Meirionnydd
Melton
Mendip
Merton
Mid Bedfordshire
Mid Suffolk
Mid Sussex
Middlesbrough[1]
Midlothian
Milton Keynes
Mole Valley
Monklands
Monmouth
Montgomery
Moray
Motherwell
Nairn
Neath
New Forest
Newark
Newbury
Newcastle under Lyme
Newham
Newport[1]
Nithsdale
North Bedfordshire
North Cornwall
North Dorset
North East Derby
North East Fife
North Hertfordshire
North Kesteven
North Shropshire
North Tyneside
North Warwickshire
North West Leicester
North Wiltshire
Northampton
Northavon
Nottingham
Nuneaton
Oadby and Wigston
OGWR
Oldham[1]
Orkney
Penwith[1]
Perth & Kinross
Peterborough
Plymouth
Poole
Portsmouth
Preseli
Preston
Purbeck
Radnor
Reading
Redbridge
Redditch
Reigate and Banstead
Renfrew
Rhondda
Rhuddlan
Ribble Valley
Richmond-upon-Thames
Richmondshire
Rochdale
Rochester on Medway
Rochford
Ross and Cromarty
Rossendale
Rother
Roxburgh
Rugby
Runnymede
Rushcliffe
Rushmoor
Rutland
Ryedale
Salford
Salisbury
Sandwell
Scarborough
Scottish Homes
Scunthorpe
Sedgefield
Sefton
Selby
Sevenoaks

Shepway
Shetland
Skye and Lochalsh
Slough
Solihull
South Bedfordshire
South Bucks
South Cambridgeshire
South Derbyshire
South Herefordshire
South Holland
South Lakeland
South Norfolk
South Northants
South Oxfordshire
South Pembrokeshire
South Ribble
South Shropshire
South Somerset
South Staffordshire
South Tyneside
South Wight
Southampton
Southend on Sea
Southwark
Spelthorne
St. Albans
St. Helens
Staffs. Moorlands
Stevenage[1]
Stewartry
Stirling
Stockport
Stockton on Tees[1]
Stoke on Trent
Stratford-on-Avon
Strathkelvin
Stroud
Suffolk Coastal
Surrey Heath
Sutherland
Sutton
Swale
Swansea
Tameside
Tamworth
Tandridge
Teignbridge
Tendring
Test Valley
Tewkesbury
Thamesdown[1]
Thanet
The Wrekin
Three Rivers
Thurrock
Tonbridge and Malling[1]
Torbay[1]
Torfaen[1]
Tower Hamlets
Trafford
Tunbridge Wells[1]
Tweeddale
Vale of Glamorgan
Vale of White Horse
Vale Royal
Wakefield
Walsall
Waltham Forest
Wandsworth
Wansbeck
Wansdyke
Watford
Waverley
Wealden
Welwyn Hatfield
West Lothian
West Norfolk
West Oxfordshire
West Wiltshire
Western Isles
Westminster
Wigan
Wigtown
Winchester
Windsor and Maidenhead
Wirral
Woking
Wokingham
Wolverhampton
Woodspring
Worcester
Worthing
Wycombe
York[1]

[1] Denotes those authorities who operate a scheme to disregard War Disablement Pensions only.
[2] Denotes those authorities who operate a scheme to disregard War Widows' Pensions only.
[3] Denotes an authority which operates a scheme to disregard War Disablement Pensions and War Widows' Pensions for Housing Benefit rent rebates only.

Recycled Paper

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of his Department's *(a)* press releases and *(b)* written answers are printed on recycled paper.

Mr. Hague: The Department's policy is to use recycled paper where possible. The Department does not normally use recycled paper for press releases or written answers, because of cost and quality considerations. However, some replies to hon. Members from agency chief executives are on recycled paper, as are the great majority of letters signed by Ministers. We have also concentrated on ensuring that the paper we use is manufactured in the most environmentally friendly manner possible.

Pensions

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what account is taken of ability to pay in the time scale for recovery of money which has been overpaid in respect of pension provision;

(2) what is the normal interval between a change occurring in an individual's benefit arrangements and the notification by the DSS to the superannuation fund providing a pension to that individual of that change;

(3) how many individuals in the calendar years 1991, 1992 and 1993 were paid more than their overall pension entitlement as a result of the failure of the DSS to notify the superannuation funds providing them with a pension of the change in benefit payments made by the DSS.

Mr. Hague: The administration of state pensions is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. John Gunnell, dated 1 July 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Questions asking (i) how many individuals in the calendar years 1991, 1992, and 1993 were paid more than their overall pension entitlement as a result of the failure of the DSS to notify the superannuation funds providing them with a pension of a change in benefit payments made by the DSS and (ii) what is the normal interval between a change occurring in an individuals benefit arrangements and the

notification by the DSS to the Superannuation Fund providing a pension to that individual of that change and (iii) the repayment of money overpaid in respect of pension provision.

The arrangements which exist for the DSS to send notifications apply only to public service occupational pension schemes. The notifications are sent to tell the schemes that they do not need to inflation-proof the guaranteed minimum portion of the occupational pension because the DSS is doing so.

When a change occurs in the rate of Widow's Benefit or State Retirement Pension payable to a public service occupational pensioner, any notification which needs to be sent to the pension scheme will be issued within one week of the change in rate having been entered onto the pensions computer.

The system is designed to send the notifications automatically. We do not, therefore, have details of the number of notifications which should have been sent but were not. We are aware, however, that there have been instances of delay and recent exercises have been undertaken to identify these cases and ensure that the appropriate notifications are sent.

Although late notification from DSS can cause an overpayment this would be of occupational pension and as such it would be for the scheme to decide if recovery should be effected and if so, how. This is not a matter over which the Department has any control.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Recycled Paper

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what percentage of his Department's *(a)* press releases and *(b)* written answers are printed on recycled paper.

Sir John Wheeler: None.

Agriculture

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is *(a)* the amount of land in hectares in each county, *(b)* the number of farmers and *(c)* the cost of the five-year set-aside scheme in Northern Ireland in (i) 1993-94 and (ii) 1994-95; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: In Northern Ireland, the amount of land in each county included in the five-year set-aside scheme and the number of participating farmers in each county are as follows:—

	Hectares	*Farmers*
Co Antrim	49·904	7
Co Armagh	24·675	3
Co Down	155·419	13
Co Fermanagh	nil	—
Co Londonderry	138·906	11
Co Tyrone	nil	—

The cost of the set-aside scheme in Northern Ireland in 1993-94 was £62,865, while the anticipated cost for 1994-95 is £33,364.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give the payment rates made per hectare under the arable area payments scheme for *(a)* cereals, *(b)* oilseeds, *(c)* proteins, *(d)* linseed, *(e)* set-aside and *(f)* the simplified scheme paid in (i) the first year and (ii) the second year of the scheme in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ancram: The payment rates per hectare in Northern Ireland for the first and second years of the scheme are set out below. The actual rates payable in 1994 may be reduced if base areas are exceeded and the rate for oilseeds may be adjusted to reflect changes in the reference price.

	1992-93 £	*1993-94*[3] £
(a) Cereals	112	[156]
(b) Oilseeds	379	[421]
(c) Proteins	290	[290]
(d) Linseed[1]	—	—
(e) Set-aside	201	[247]
Set-aside (reduced rate)[2]	—	[174]
(f) Simplified Scheme	112	[156]

Notes:

[1] Linseed was not incorporated into the arable area payments scheme until 1993-94. The payment rate for 1993-94 has not yet been fixed.

[2] There is a reduced rate for voluntary set-aside in excess of the applicant's cropped area.

[3] The figures in brackets are provisional.

TRANSPORT

Motorway Services

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made on the guidelines for motorway services; and what facilities he will require for *(a)* women and *(b)* men truck drivers.

Mr. Key: Since 1 April, responsibility for managing, maintaining and improving the national road network in England, including the provision of motorway service areas, has rested with the Highways Agency. As the information requested by the hon. Member relates to operational matters of the Highways Agency, I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Ms Joan Walley, dated 30 June 1994:

Mr. Key has asked me to reply to your Parliamentary Question about motorway service areas since this is now a matter for the Highways Agency.

Roads Circular 1/94, which set out the Department's policy on motorway service areas (MSAs) and specified the minimum requirements for MSAs signposted from the motorway, was published on 9 May. I enclose a copy. The minimum requirements include a specified number of lorry parking spaces, calculated on the basis of the motorway traffic flow.

Lorry drivers will also benefit from some of the other minimum requirements, such as the availability of 24 hours a day of toilets and fuel, and free access to MSAs for those carrying out emergency repairs to broken down vehicles. Whether to go beyond this and provide other facilities aimed specifically at either male or female lorry drivers is, however, a matter for individual MSA operators.

Roads Circular 1/94
(Department of Transport)

Circular 34/94
(Welsh Office)

Joint Circular from the

Department of Transport
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 3EB

Welsh Office
Ty Glas Road
Llanishen
Cardiff CF4 5PL

Dear Sir

Motorway service areas

1. Circular Roads 4/88 gives advice on the control of development on trunk roads. This Circular supplements that advice so far as the development of motorway service areas is concerned. Further advice on the considerations which local planning authorities should take into account when considering planning applications for service areas on motorways and trunk roads is given in Planning Policy Guidance Note 13 "Transport" (PPG13).

2. Government policy until 1992 was to promote the development of MSAs providing a standard range of minimum requirements on Department of Transport-owned sites at intervals of around thirty miles while operators in Wales have provided single sided sites on private land at intervals of around fifteen miles. A network of MSAs has been provided on this basis on most motorways though, in England, there are still routes with exceptional gaps in services.

3. In August 1992 the Government announced that in future the private sector should take the initiative in identifying and acquiring MSA sites and seeking planning consent from local planning authorities for these schemes as for any other development.

4. However, the Departments will continue to have interests in MSAs in relation to motorway safety and traffic management. They will wish to see a balance struck between, on the one hand, the necessary provision of opportunities for motorway travellers to stop and obtain essential services at reasonable intervals; and on the other, the avoidance of unnecessary traffic movements on and off the motorway. This guidance is issued so that potential developers and local planning authorities may have regard to the Departments' policy accordingly.

Spacing

5. The Departments will generally not expect to provide signs or (in respect of sites not accessed from an existing motorway junction) to allow access to the motorway for any services development less than fifteen miles from the nearest existing MSA (or MSA site with planning consent and for which signing has been agreed). Exceptions to this minimum interval may be agreed, for example, where existing sites are a little less than thirty miles apart and additional services are proposed roughly half way between them. Where a new MSA is proposed less than fifteen miles from an existing MSA (or MSA site for which signing has been agreed), the Departments will consider the case for signing, but the shorter the gap the stronger the case for an exception to the normal fifteen mile interval will need to be. The Departments will not, in any event, expect to sign more than one additional site between any two existing "thirty mile" MSAs.

6. This minimum spacing between sites should not be taken to mean that the Departments see a need for MSAs every fifteen miles regardless of local circumstances. Their only prescriptive view is that, for safety and traffic management reasons, drivers should not have to travel for long distances without finding services on the motorway (whether accessed directly or via a junction). Intervals between existing services have not been much more than thirty miles. That remains a desirable general aim from the transport point of view. It cannot be a hard and fast rule, particularly in areas of planning restraint. Local planning authorities should take into account the need for and road safety benefits of MSAs; and the greater the distance between existing facilities and a new proposal, the more weight should be placed on the needs of motorway users.

Parking

7. MSAs contribute to road safety by allowing drivers regular opportunities to rest in the course of their journeys. These safety benefits will be lost unless measures are taken to ensure that all sites have sufficient parking capacity to cater for the demands placed on them by motorists needing only to stop and rest as well as those making use of other MSA facilities. In order to qualify for signing from the motorway, therefore, an MSA developer will be expected to demonstrate that he can provide parking for:—

cars:	0·5 per cent.	of the light vehicle annual average daily traffic flow fifteen years after opening;
HGVs:	0·35 per cent.	of the heavy vehicle annual average daily traffic flow fifteen years after opening;
coaches:	0·1 per cent.	of the heavy vehicle annual average daily traffic flow fifteen years after opening;

8. Advice on predicted traffic flows is available from Regional Network Management Divisions of the Highways Agency of the Highways Directorate of the Welsh Office.

9. Developers need not necessarily provide the full fifteen year parking levels as soon as the site opens, but will be expected to build up to the final provision in suitable stages over the fifteen year period.

Other requirements

10. In addition to the parking quantities specified above, the Department will require MSA operators to provide from the outset at least a standard range of minimum facilities. MSAs which do not meet the minimum requirements will not be signed nor, in the case of sites not reached by way of an existing junction, will they be allowed to take access from the motorway. The *minimum* requirements are that MSA operators should ensure that:—

- free short term parking for all types of vehicle, free toilets (in sufficient quantity to cater reasonably for the traffic flow on the motorway) and a picnic area are available, and fuel is on sale, 24 hours a day every day of the year;
- access is allowed for up to two hours for those carrying out emergency repairs to broken down vehicles;
- all facilities are available to disabled people; and
- there is no sale or consumption of alcohol on the site.

11. Enforcement of these minimum standards will be achieved through a formal signs agreement between the relevant Department and the MSA operator under which signs from the motorway to the MSA will be permitted and maintained so long as the operator continues to meet the minimum requirements in full. Before entering into signs agreements the Departments will need to be satisfied that planning permission has been obtained, that the proposed MSA is capable of meeting all the minimum requirements and that it is acceptable in traffic, safety and spacing terms.

Access to motorways

12. While it will in future be for the private sector to initiate MSA proposals, the Department will maintain their strict policy of restricting access to the motorway to junctions with other roads, MSAs and maintenance compounds. They will not therefore agree to the provision of accesses to the motorway from private developments other than MSAs which meet the standard range of minimum requirements; nor will they permit the development of activities within MSA sites which are unconnected with motorists' use of the road and which would therefore lead to the site becoming a destination in its own right. The Departments will be prepared where necessary to direct refusal of planning applications which would conflict with this principle. To ensure that this policy is maintained it is important that the Departmentss are kept informed of proposals affecting existing and proposed MSAs. Local planning authorities are therefore requested to consult the relevant Regional Network Management Divisions of the Highways Agency, or the Highways Directorate of the Welsh Office, wherever development is proposed of services facilities wholly or partly within 400 metres of the boundary of a motorway. They should consult similarly wherever development is proposed for an area exceeding 2 hectares which includes the provision of fuel and refreshments and lies within 1 kilometre of a motorway junction.

13. The Departments will also be concerned to ensure that MSAs do not come to be used as routes from the motorway through to other nearby developments; that is, as all purpose motorway junctions. At sites accessed direct from the motorway, therefore, the Departments will be reluctant to agree to the provision of rear access roads connecting to the local road network. Where such accesses may be agreed, the Departments will expect to require developers to enter into arrangements to ensure their use is restricted to staff, deliveries and the emergency services. Other onward access will not be countenanced.

14. In considering issues affecting the motorway itself, traffic flow and safety considerations are of great importance and good visibility is essential. Any access provided direct to a motorway would need to conform fully to the Departments' standards. At all MSAs, it will be particularly important to avoid the risk of congestion or slowing on the main carriageway. Advice on these aspects should be sought from the relevant Regional Network Management Division of the Highways Agency, or the Highways Directorate of the Welsh Office.

15. The full cost of any access provided direct to a motorway, or direct to a trunk road at or near a motorway junction, including those elements of the works within the motorway or trunk road boundary, will fall to be met by the developer by means of an agreement with the Secretary of State under Section 278 of the Highways Act 1980. Advice on this is provided in Circular Roads 6/91 and Welsh Office Circular 65/91.

Election Campaigns

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the Government's policy on publishing statistics relating to budgetary restraint within the period of an election campaign; and if he will make a statement on the conventions involved.

Mr. MacGregor: Guidance to officials stresses the need to ensure that statistics are presented in an objective and impartial manner and that care is taken on the timing and announcement of sensitive decisions. The convention is that Ministers, too, seek to defer announcing sensitive decisions during an election period.

Railtrack

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which of his officials attended a meeting with members of the Railtrack board on 9 June; who else was present; and what was discussed.

Mr. Freeman: Meetings between the Department and the Government companies and nationalised industries for which it is responsible are frequent, and mostly informal; the substance of any discussions are confidential to the participants. It is not our practice to identify individual officials present at such meetings.

Road-building Contracts

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the 20 contractors who have received the largest share of motorway and trunk road contracts in the financial year April 1991 to April 1992, giving for each contractor the value of the contracts received.

Mr. Key: Since 1 April, responsibility for managing maintaining and improving the national road network in England has rested with the Highways Agency. As the information requested by the hon. Member relates to these responsibilities, I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Ms Joan Walley, dated 30 June 1994

You put down a Parliamentary Question for answer by the Secretary of State for Transport asking him to list the 20 contractors who received the largest share of motorway and trunk road contracts in the financial year April 1991 to April 1992, giving for each contractor the value of the contracts received.

As the information you asked for concerns operational matters for which the Highways Agency is now responsible, as promised by the Minister, Robert Key, I am replying to your Question.

The information requested (but excluding contracts below £1m in value for which records are not currently held centrally) is set out in the attached tables.

List of top 20 contractors for financial year April 1991 to April 1992

	£
1. Balfour Beatty Limited	95,813,750
2. Tarmac Construction Limited	95,395,774
3. John Laing Construction Limited	59,368,900
4. Tarmac Quarry Products Limited	38,209,542
5. Costain Civil Engineering Limited	37,534,578
6. Amey Construction Limited	23,656,803
7. Norwest Holst Construction Limited	21,684,567
8. Birse Construction Limited	21,040,596
9. A F Budge (Contractors) Limited	19,967,881
10. Associated Asphalt Limited	16,614,224
11. Fitzpatrick Contractors Limited	14,882,556
12. Lilley Construction Limited	12,175,042
13. Galliford (UK) Limited	10,767,262
14. Alfred McAlpine Construction Limited	10,719,283
15. Edmund Nuttall Limited	10,219,417
16. Eden Construction Limited	8,504,752
17. Miller Construction Limited	7,908,250
18. Colas Roads Limited	7,052,620
19. Henry Boot (Southern) Limited	7,042,636
20. Fairclough Civil Engineering Limited	6,923,494

List of the 20 Contractors receiving the largest share of Motorway and Trunk Road Contracts in the Financial Year April 1991 to April 1992

Contractor and Scheme name	*Award date*	*Award price (£)*
Amey Construction Ltd.		
A 34 Between A4130 Junction—A417 Overbridge	22 August 1991	1,613,206·00
A421 Bicester Bypass	18 September 1991	3,904,118·00
A 41 Berkhamstead Bypass, Contract 4B	11 December 1991	18,139,479·00
	Total	23,656,803·00
Associated Asphalt Ltd.		
M5 Between Junctions 24-25—Huntworth—Blackbrook	3 April 1991	730,869·00
A3 Reconstruction, Eshep Bypass	24 May 1991	1,420,897·00
M25 Junctions 13-14	5 August 1991	3,559,223·00
M3 Junctions 4-5 Overlay, Frimley to Hook, Hampshire	14 August 1991	2,236,246·00
A30 Pearces Hill to Cutteridge	9 October 1991	2,470,273·00
M5 Junctions 24-25, Stage 7, Huntsworth—Blackbrook	28 October 1991	545,488·00
A27 Crossbush, 2km East of Arundel	2 January 1992	2,951,714·00
A27 Lewes Bypass Maintenance	14 January 1992	1,529,660·00
A40 Oxford Northern Bypass, Banbury Road—Green LA	25 March 1992	1,169,854·00
	Total	16,614,224·00

Contractor and Scheme name	Award date	Award price (£)
Balfour Beatty Ltd.		
M62 Widening, Junctions 17-18, Manchester	17 April 1991	3,752,243·00
M25 Junctions 23-25	3 May 1991	5,207,194·00
M61 Junctions 9-6, Southbound	28 June 1991	2,412,919·00
M20 Junctions 5-8, Improvement	4 July 1991	68,304,939·00
M1 Junctions 5-6A	13 August 1991	1,936,854·00
A39 Waderbridge Bypass	27 September 1991	8,305,268·00
A38 Plympton Bypass (Northbound)	7 February 1992	970,683·00
M1 Junction 9—Southbound, Hertfordshire	13 March 1992	3,188,861·00
M5 Cullompton—Hele Straight	28 March 1992	1,234,789·00
	Total	95,813,750·00
Birse Construction Ltd.		
M25 Sevenoaks—Godstone, Junctions 5-6, Clacket Lane	5 November 1991	3,896,152·00
A20 Folkestone—Courtwood, Contract 2 (Viaduct)	5 December 1991	11,550,041·00
A638 Doncaster, North Bridge Relief Road	21 February 1992	5,594,403·00
	Total	21,040,596·00
Boot, Henry, (Southern) Ltd.		
M1-A1 Link, Thrapston—Brampton, Contract 8	5 July 1991	7,042,636·00
	Total	7,042,636·00
Budge, A. F. (Contractors) Ltd.		
A41 Kings Langley Bypass, Contract 3	19 June 1991	19,967,881·00
	Total	19,967,881·00
Colas Roads Ltd.		
M27 Between Junctions 9-10	10 April 1991	1,158,123·00
M27 Between Junctions 5-7	19 June 1991	868,773·00
M23 London—Crawley Junctions 9-10	2 September 1991	2,913,705·00
A40 Steppe House Farm to A4137, Reconstruction	13 December 1991	2,112,019·00
	Total	7,052,620·00
Costain Civil Engineering Ltd.		
A3 West of Milford, Carriageway Construction	4 October 1991	7,889,074·00
A23 Warninglid Flyover to Sayers Common	9 October 1991	15,685,563·00
A1 Apex Corner to Stirling Corner	14 October 1991	2,920,040·00
A339 North of Basingstoke, Hampshire	2 January 1992	8,597,625·00
M6 Junctions 9-10 Marker Posts 196/4—199/3	5 March 1992	2,442,270·00
	Total	37,534,578·00
Eden Construction Ltd.		
A1 Barnsdale Bar to Red House	11 April 1991	4,394,771·00
A1 (M) Blind Lane to Blackfell, Reconstruction	1 August 1991	1,882,572·00
M6 Junctions 42-39, Southbound Carriageway	14 August 1991	2,227,409·00
	Total	8,504,752·00
Fairclough Civil Engineering Ltd.		
A27 South East of Westhampnett	19 February 1992	6,923,494·00
	Total	6,923,494·00
Fitzpatrick Contractors Ltd.		
A47 East Dereham to North Tuddenham	21 June 1991	6,895,877·00
M1-A1 Link, Contract 5(N), A43 North of Kettering	26 November 1991	3,752,253·00
A2 Whitfield to Guston, Contract 11	13 March 1992	1,097,862·00
M20 Junction 3 (M26)—Junction 4 (A228)	20 March 1992	3,136,564·00
	Total	14,882,556·00
Galliford (U.K.) Ltd.		
A5 Little Brickhill Bypass	28 June 1991	5,837,410·00
M56 Junctions 10-11	13 August 1991	3,229,856·00
M1 Junctions 21-22 between Leicester Forest and Rathby	1 October 1991	1,699,996·00
	Total	10,767,262·00
Laing, John, Construction Ltd.		
M5 Widening, Junctions 6-8	6 June 1991	59,368,900·00
	Total	59,368,900·00
Lilley Construction Ltd.		
A1 Blyth Bypass	14 August 1991	1,412,961·00
A500 Potteries D Road between Etruria and Talke	3 October 1991	1,045,105·00
A11 Trunk Road between Four Went Ways and Newmarket Bypass	27 February 1992	9,716,976·00
	Total	12,175,042·00

Contractor and Scheme name	Award date	Award price (£)
McAlpine, Alfred, Construction Ltd.		
A595 Egremont Bypass	10 July 1991	6,666,666·00
A596 Wigton Bypass	10 July 1991	4,052,617·00
	Total	10,719,283·00
Miller Construction Ltd.		
A590 Dalton-in-Furness Bypass	11 November 1991	7,908,250·00
	Total	7,908,250·00
Norwest Holst Construction Ltd.		
A20 Courtwood—Dover, Contract 3	14 May 1991	21,684,567·00
	Total	21,684,567·00
Nuttall, Edmund, Ltd.		
M6 Reconstruction at Junction 20-21A (widening)	30 April 1991	1,812,266·00
A40(M) Westway, M41 Junction—Marylebone Flyover	20 August 1991	2,612,555·00
A420 Kingston Bagpuize Bypass	31 January 1992	4,296,787·00
M5 Oldbury Viaduct, R37	6 March 1992	1,497,809·00
	Total	10,219,417·00
Tarmac Construction Ltd.		
M25 Kent Boundary to Marker Post 37/0	18 April 1991	3,524,959·00
M40 London—Oxford, Junctions 1-2, Buckinghamshire	21 May 1991	6,610,000·00
M26 Between Junction 5—Junction 2A	29 August 1991	3,124,576·00
A30 Okehampton—Launceston	29 August 1991	26,809,215·00
A38 Swinfen Island to Cappers Lane	29 August 1991	1,827,919·00
M4 Junction 12, Theale Interchange	3 September 1991	1,516,553·00
M1-A1 Link, Thrapston—Brampton, Contract 9	9 October 1991	16,364,732·00
M1-A1 Link, Contracts 2 and 3, East of Naseby	19 November 1991	35,617,820·00
	Total	95,395,774·00
Tarmac Quarry Products Ltd.		
M61 Junctions 5 and 6 North West of Manchester	5 April 1991	5,929,014·00
M181 Interchange with M180 to A18	10 April 1991	2,197,728·00
A1 Grantham Bypass, Lincolnshire (Gorse Lane-A52)	15 May 1991	1,047,267·00
A1(M) Major maintenance, Wadworth	22 May 1991	1,836,153·00
M180 Junctions 1-2	5 June 1991	1,142,648·00
A38 Little Eaton to Coxbench, North East of Derby	18 June 1991	1,378,150·00
M11 Junctions 11-12	26 June 1991	1,383,682·00
M1 Junctions 41-43	15 July 1991	8,787,070·00
M6 Stafford Bypass	24 September 1991	3,150,544·00
M62 Junction 34 (Langham)—Junction 35 (Pollington)	1 October 1991	1,840,781·00
A1(M) Doncaster Bypass—Harworth of Tickhill	25 November 1991	1,566,762·00
M1 Junctions 38-39, 16 km South of Leeds	31 January 1992	2,307,460·00
M55 Junction 3—Resurfacing, Contract No. M610	7 February 1992	1,362,954·00
M56 Junctions 3-4, South of Manchester	27 February 1992	4,283,329·00
	Total	38,209,542·00

Traffic Flow Study

Mr. Butcher: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will undertake a study of the traffic flow consequences in the United States of allowing car drivers to proceed through red lights in order to turn right at specified junctions provided there is no car approaching the green light at that junction and the junction is not displaying a no right turn red sign; and if he will consider a further study of the traffic flow implications in the United Kingdom of allowing drivers in the United Kingdom to cross a red light to turn left in the equivalent circumstances.

Mr. Key: Differences in operating conditions between junctions in the United States and United Kingdom—particularly the use of vehicle-actuated signals in the United Kingdom—mean that, at best, only small improvements could be gained in junction efficiency by allowing drivers to turn left against a red light, and only at the risk of an increase in the number of accidents. We shall continue to monitor United States experience as it is reported.

Motorway Use

Mr. Butcher: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made as to trends in lane discipline on motorways.

Mr. Key: Poor lane discipline on motoways is a long-standing problem. Last autumn I discussed it with representatives of the police, the motoring organisations, commercial interests and others. It was agreed that our policy on lane discipline should remain broadly the same.

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will list his Department's advisory non-departmental public bodies which are required to produce annual reports;

(2) if he will list his Department's advisory non-departmental public bodies which are required to publish their advice to Government;

(3) if he will list those of his Department's advisory non-departmental public bodies which the Government are required to consult before legislation proposals; and in respect of which bodies the Government must publish their response to advice supplied by them;

(4) which of the advisory non-departmental public bodies sponsored by his Department are required to lay their annual reports before Parliament; and if he will list them;

(5) which of the advisory non-departmental public bodies sponsored by his Department have a statutory basis; and if he will list them;

(6) if he will list the advisory bodies which he has set up in his Department since the publication of "Public Bodies 1993".

Mr. Norris: The Department of Transport has two active advisory non-departmental public bodies, the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee and the Street Works Advisory Committee. Both committees are required to make annual reports to the Secretary of State. Neither is required to lay them before Parliament. There is no requirement for the Government to consult them on legislation proposals and they are not required to publish their advice. The DPTAC has a statutory basis under the Transport Act 1985. The SWAC is a non-statutory body.

Cycle Routes

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to introduce more cycle routes in *(a)* London and *(b)* the royal parks.

Mr. Norris: Responsibility for the provision of cycle routes in London rests primarily with the 33 London local authorities. The Government are supporting provision of the 1,000 mile cycle network in London which is being developed by the London Cycling Forum. Approximately a third of the network is in existence or in preparation. We are also supporting Sustrans' promotion of a "Thames cycle route" between Hampton Court and Dartford.

The royal parks are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage.

Heavy Goods Vehicles (Fatalities)

Mr. Hinchcliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many fatalities resulted from persons being struck by reversing heavy goods vehicles in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Key: The information is shown in the table.

Fatalities resulting from accidents involving a reversing HGV[1]: GB 1983-93
Casualties

	Killed
1983	8
1984	10
1985	6
1986	7
1987	6
1988	7
1989	12
1990	4
1991	5
1992	8
1993	2

[1] Goods vehicles with an unladen weight over 1·52 tonnes.

Recycled Paper

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of his Department's *(a)* press releases and (ii) written answers are printed on recycled paper.

Mr. Norris: None. My Department will examine the scope to use recycled paper.

EDUCATION

Private Health Insurance Schemes

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what guidelines he has issued in respect of the use of education funds for payment of contributions to private health insurance schemes for staff members and their families by colleges of further and higher education.

Mr. Boswell: It is for individual colleges to decide what they will pay their staff, within the resources available to them and within the framework of the Government's policy on public sector pay.

Access Funds

Mr. Bryan Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he expects the results of the monitoring requirement contained in the Higher Education Funding Council for England circular "Access Funds: Terms and Conditions for Payment" and notes of guidance for the academic year 1993-94 to be published.

Mr. Boswell: There are no plans to publish the results of the monitoring returns from higher education institutions on their use of discretionary access funds in 1993-94. In issuing revised guidance on access funds annually, my Department takes into account the report it receives each year from the funding council on the results of its monitoring exercise.

Mr. Bryan Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Education why the publication of the Higher Education Funding Council for England circular "Access Funds: Terms and Conditions for Payment" and notes of guidance for the academic year 1993-94 was delayed until April.

Mr. Boswell: In sending guidance on access funds to the Higher Education Funding Council for England in November 1993, we advised that an amendment was likely to be required following the European Economic Area agreement. The funding council decided to delay issue of its circular until details of the amendment were received, at the end of January 1994, so as to incorporate them. The council then issued its circular as soon as the high priority

work on the 1994-95 funding allocations allowed. It is its intention that allocations and conditions circulars for 1994-95 will be issued at the beginning of the new academic year.

New Schools

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will state the names and location of recently completed secondary schools, without sixth form provision, of eight or more form entries per year, distinguishing between *(a)* county schools, *(b)* voluntary-aided schools, *(c)* grant-maintained schools and *(d)* city technology colleges together with their costs, exclusive of site.

Mr. Robin Squire: Information on capital projects since 1987 indicates that the only secondary school, without sixth form provision, of eight or more forms of entry to have recently been completed is Tanbridge school —a county comprehensive—in Horsham, West Sussex. The cost of the school, exclusive of site, was £12·1 million.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what account he takes of the likely proportion of statemented children attending newly built schools to which his cost and other regulations apply.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend judges each case for a new school on its merits. Before approving new accommodation, the Secretary of State takes into account the extent to which the accommodation is consistent with his building guidelines and whether, in the case of accommodation for pupils with special educational needs, it is appropriate for those needs. The need for special accommodation for pupils with statements of special educational needs may form part of that consideration.

Staff Surveys

Mr. Radice: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what surveys of the views, opinions and attitudes of the staff of his Department have been carried out in the last two years; and if he will place copies of the findings in the Library.

Mr. Forth: The most recent staff attitude survey carried out in my Department took place in 1991. A copy of the findings was placed in the Department's library. I have arranged for a copy to be placed in the Library of the House.

Efficiency Grants

Mr. Bryan Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what guidance he has given to the Higher Education Funding Council for England to protect research resources in the allocation of planned efficiency grants.

Mr. Boswell: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) on 24 June at column *339*.

City Technology Colleges

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is his latest estimate of the cost *(a)* to public funds and *(b)* to private funds of the city technology colleges.

Mr. Robin Squire: Total spending on city technology colleges by the Department since 1987-88 and projected expenditure to 1994-95 are shown in the following table. This includes both capital and recurrent expenditure, the latter is broadly equivalent to that incurred in other secondary schools.

Financial Year	*DFE expenditure Cash (£m)*
1987-88	1
1988-89	14
1989-90	30
1990-91	58
1991-92	56
1992-93	50
[1]1993-94	50
[2]1994-95	52

[1]estimated outturn.
[2]plans.

Private sector contributions received by city technology colleges amount to £36·8 million.

Voluntary-aided Schools

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what arrangements are in place to enable a school to which he grants voluntary-aided status to repay private loans made to enable urgent capital works to be undertaken before his decision on the school's voluntary-aided status application was announced;

(2) what discretion he has to make loans to voluntary aided schools in respect of initial capital expenditure; what discretion he has to make loans to schools applying for voluntary aided status where applications are regarded by his Department as viable and deserving approval; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend has no power to provide a loan to promoters of proposed new voluntary aided schools to assist with costs incurred on capital work carried out before the decision on the statutory proposals has been made.

If proposals to establish a new voluntary aided school are approved, the promoters may apply for a loan under section 105 of the Education Act 1994 to assist them with their share of capital costs to provide the site or buildings for the new school. The site and buildings project plans and costs, which would be scrutinised by the Department's architects, would require the prior approval of the Secretary of State. A loan may be granted subject to availability of funds, the approval of building plans and the acceptance of a statisfactory loan agreement.

Teacher Education

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will provide figures on admissions to courses of initial teacher education starting in autumn 1994, broken down by gender for primary and secondary schools.

Mr. Robin Squire: Information on these courses will not be available to the Department until next year.

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what are the admission targets for initial teacher

education for 1994, 1995 and 1996, for school based and non-school based training; and what difficulties are expected in meeting the targets.

Mr. Robin Squire: The following recruitment targets for higher education institutions were notified to the Higher Education Funding Council for England—HEFCE—in January 1993.

	1994-95	*1995-96*	*1996-97*
Primary	12,930	12,115	10,855
Secondary	16,050	17,000	17,935
TOTAL	28,980	29,115	28,790

In addition, some 460 places are expected to be provided on approved courses of school-centred ITT—SCITT—in 1994-95. The targets are based on the best available information about the needs of the system and are reviewed annually.

Targets for 1995-96 and later years will be reviewed and notified to the Teacher Training Agency—TTA—in the autumn, subject to the passage of the Education Bill. It will be for the TTA to determine the allocation of places, both on SCITT courses and those in higher education institutions.

Recycled Paper

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what percentage of his Department's *(a)* press releases and *(b)* written answers are printed on recycled paper.

Mr. Forth: The Department's policy is to use recycled paper wherever possible. It is used for all headed paper, enveloped, file covers and forms. For printing purposes recycled paper is best suited to conventional printing processes and not to high speed electronic machines. The Department's press releases and written answers are printed using high speed electronic machines using environmentally friendly—chlorine free—paper.

Pupil Statistics

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list pupil to teacher ratios, average class sizes and the percentage of classes with more than 30 pupils for each year since 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: I refer the hon. Member to tables 3 and 7 in "Statistical Bulletin 8/94" published in June 1994, a copy of which is in the Library.

Class Sizes

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what evidence his Department has on the relationship between class size and pupil attainment.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Department has no evidence of a link between class size and pupil attainment in the United Kingdom. The Government agree with the authors of "Curriculum Organisation and Classroom Practice in Primary Schools that quality of teaching is of paramount importance.

Teacher Statistics

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will publish the gender profile, average length of service and average age of the teaching profession.

Mr. Robin Squire: The tables show the distribution by gender, the average age and the distribution by length of service of full-time teachers in the maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools sector in March 1992. It is not possible to calculate accurately the average length of service.

Table 1: Distribution of full-time teachers by gender in maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools
England and Wales: March 1992 *Percentages*

	Men	*Women*	*Total*
Nursery and Primary Schools			
Headteachers	6	6	12
Deputy heads	3	7	10
Standard scale	9	68	78
Total teachers	19	81	100
Secondary Schools			
Headteachers	2	1	2
Deputy heads	3	2	5
Standard scale	46	47	93
Total teachers	51	49	100
Nursery, Primary and Secondary Schools			
Headteachers	4	3	7
Deputy heads	3	4	8
Standard scale	28	57	85
Total teachers	36	64	100

Table 2: Mean age of teachers in full-time maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools
England and Wales: March 1992

	Mean age
Men	42
Women	41
All teachers	41

Table 3: Distribution of full-time teachers by length of service in maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools
England and Wales: March 1992 *Percentages*

Length of service in years	*Men*	*Women*	*All teachers*
Under 5	13	21	18
5 to 9	10	19	16
10 to 14	16	21	19
15 to 19	25	19	21
20 to 24	16	11	13
25 to 29	14	7	9
30 and over	6	2	4
Total	100	100	100

Parents Charter

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what action he intends to take to correct mistakes in the parents charter relating to parents' legal duty to provide education for their children; what additional cost will be incurred; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: The updated parents charter is a brief introduction to the operation of the school system, and explains many of the important changes that have taken place. It is a popular summary for parents and the general public as a whole, not a definitive guide to the law. My right hon. Friend sees no need to issue a correction in respect of parent's duty to provide education for their children.

Teachers' Pay

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement about teachers' pay in 1994-95.

Mr. Patten: I have today laid before Parliament a pay and conditions order bringing the provisions of the school teachers' pay and conditions document 1994 into force from 1 September 1994. Copies of this order are being sent to local education authorities, the chairmen of governors of grant-maintained schools and the teachers' and employers' associations.

The school teachers' pay and conditions document 1994 was published on 6 June following detailed consultation with the teachers' and employers' associations and representatives of the governors of voluntary schools and grant-maintained schools. The document sets out the statutory pay and conditions of service for teachers in maintained schools in England and Wales which will apply from 1 September.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Debt Forgiveness

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in which financial year Her Majesty's Government began including debt forgiveness in relation to officially supported export credits in the United Kingdom's total official development assistance figures.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In 1988-89. The country involved was Mali.

Sub-Saharan Africa

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the World Health Organisation about the adequacy of its services in sub-saharan Africa; and what undertakings he has received about improvements.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The World Health Organisation's activities in Africa, in common with its activities elsewhere, are examined each year by the WHO executive board, of which the United Kingdom is a member.

At World Health Assembly and WHO executive board meetings, we have supported WHO's efforts to improve the health conditions of the people in sub-Saharan Africa. At the May 1994 assembly, we supported resolutions requesting WHO to give special assistance to the peoples of Rwanda, and to continue its assistance to the peoples of Lesotho, Namibia and Swaziland and to those countries in sub-Saharan Africa affected by drought.

In reacting to a United Kingdom-chaired working group on WHO's response to global change, the organisation has undertaken to review the role of its country representatives —a matter of particular relevance to sub-Saharan Africa.

Aid Contributions

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what percentage of gross national product in rank order was contributed in aid by each member of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's development assistance committee in 1979.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The information requested is as follows:

Net Official Development Assistance as a percentage of Gross National Product—1979

DAC countries in rank order	*Percentage*
Sweden	0·94
Netherlands	0·93
Norway	0·93
Denmark	0·75
France	0·59
Belgium	0·56
Australia	0·52
United Kingdom	0·51
Canada	0·46
Germany	0·44
New Zealand	0·33
Japan	0·26
Finland	0·21
Switzerland	0·21
United States	0·20
Austria	0·19
Italy	0·08

Sudan

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what part of the further tranche of the £15 million provided for relief aid to the Horn of Africa will be spent in those areas under the jurisdiction of the Sudanese Government.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Harrogate (Mr. Banks) on 29 April, *Official Report*, column *368*. The funds are available to meet emergency humanitarian needs in rebel and Government-held areas.

Statistics

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 22 June, *Official Report*, column *322*, what was the source or sources of the information that *(a)* Britain's overseas aid expenditure in 1992 on basic needs was 10 per cent. of bilateral aid and *(b)* the United Kingdom is better than the average of all donors in that area; and if he will place the relevant statistics in the Library.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: *(a)* The 10 per cent. figure is an estimate based on 1992-93 figures and is calculated as follows:

	Expenditure £ million
Water and Sanitation[1]	25·8
Health and Population[1]	48·9
Block Grants to Non-Governmental Organisations[1]	12·8

	Expenditure £ million
Grant to International Planned Parenthood Federation[1]	8·0
Basic Education[2]	15·8
Total	111·3

[1] *Source:* British Aid Statistics 1988-89 to 1992-93, a copy of which is available in the Library.
[2] Estimated 15 per cent. of total education spending.

This represents 10·7 per cent. of ODA's bilaterial aid to developing countries. A more useful measure is aid for basic needs as a percentage of aid which is allocable by sector, estimated to be 16 per cent. in 1992-93. Neither estimate includes £150 million of bilateral emergency aid, most of which goes to meet basic human needs in times of crisis. In addition, much of the 46 per cent. of United Kingdom aid which is channelled through multilateral agencies is for basic needs.

(b) The average percentage of bilateral aid for human priorities among 15 development assitance committee countries was 7 per cent. between 1989 and 1991.

Statistics on aid for human priorities can be found in table 4.4 of the "Human Development Report 1994", a copy of which is available in the Library.

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 22 June, *Official Report*, column *253*, what was the source or sources of the information given *(a)* that Britain has one of the best records among the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's development assistance committee donors of allocating aid to the poorest countries and *(b)* that in each of the past five years between 80 per cent. and 85 per cent. of Britain's bilateral aid which is allocatable by income group has been spent in low-income countries defined as those with an income per capita of less than $765; and if he will place the relevant statistics in the Library.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: *(a)* The source of this information is table 37 of the development co-operation 1993 report published by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. This shows that the United Kingdom ranks fourth among DAC donors in the percentage of total aid to low income countries.

(b) This information is taken from Table A2 of "British Aid Statistics 1988-89 to 1992-93", published by the ODA.

Copies of both publications are available in the Library.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Public Service League Tables

36. **Mr. Michael Brown:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what plans the Government have to provide more league tables to assess the standards of public service.

Mr. David Davis: Publication of comparative information on the performance of schools and colleges is already well established. The first national tables on the performance of hospitals and ambulance authorities have just been published.

Later this year, the revised passengers charter will be published containing comparative information on the performance of railway routes. This will supplement the information on local performance already displayed monthly at each station.

Next year, the first national tables on the performance of local authorities, including the police, will be published.

Japan (Co-operation)

38. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps he has taken to increase co-operation with Japan in science and technology.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am happy to say that I visited Tokyo on 13 June where I signed a formal science and technology agreement with the Japanese Foreign Minister. This marks a further step in our excellent science and technology co-operation with Japan.

Charter Mark Winners

39. **Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what charter mark winners are doing to help advance charter principles in the public sector.

Mr. David Davis: Charter mark winners are a constant example to others in the public sector of the successful application of the citizens charter principles. The eight winners in Kent have been particularly helpful in acting as an inspiration to other organisations to implement the charter principles and improve services.

On a national basis, I am pleased to be able to say that 520 applications have been received for this year's charter mark scheme.

Government Expenditure

40. **Mr. Lidington:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what progress has been made through his Department's initiatives in obtaining best value for money in central Government expenditure.

Mr. Waldegrave: My Department co-ordinates a wide range of initiatives to improve value for money across Government, including the citizens charter, next steps, and competing for quality programmes. They have played their part in achieving a reduction in civil service numbers of nearly 30,000 since 1990, with savings of £150 million now estimated from the competing for quality initiative alone.

Citizens Charter

41. **Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what he estimates to be the total cost of the citizens charter initiative.

Mr. David Davis: The citizens charter initiative applies to all public services, and this is reflected in their individual expenditure programmes. Centrally, the cost of the charter unit between the inception of the citizens charter and 31 March 1994 was £8,005,980.

Duchy Benevolent Fund

42. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the total of charity donations made within the County Palatine from the Duchy Benevolent Fund during the last financial year.

Mr. Waldegrave: For the Duchy year ending 29 September 1993, donations from the Duchy Benevolent Fund made within the County Palatine totalled £127,444.

Market Testing

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is his latest assessment of the progress that has been made in the Government's market testing exercise; and what are his plans for the future.

Mr. Waldegrave: On the basis of the provisional information which is currently available, I am able to estimate that approximately £1·3 billion of activities have been market tested or otherwise examined. Annual savings from the competing for quality programme will be at least £150 million. I expect to report in more detail in the autumn.

Information

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what guidance was sought from his Department, and what advice was given, in regard to the request made by the *Financial Times* for details of decisions taken by qualified majority vote at ministerial meetings of the Foreign Affairs, Internal Market, Social Affairs and Agriculture Councils since 1989, under the EU code of conduct on public access to information.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Government have argued in the Council that the response to the *Financial Times* should be as helpful as possible. This position took account of advice provided by the Cabinet Office.

Recycled Paper

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what percentage of his Department's *(a)* press releases and *(b)* written answers are printed on recycled paper.

Mr. Waldegrave: My Department does not at present use recycled paper for press releases or written answers. However, in accordance with Government policy to use recycled and environmentally friendly paper wherever this is available, of adequate quality and where it represents value for money, all copy paper used by the Department is environmentally friendly. That includes paper used for the issue of press releases and for written answers.

Electronic Data

Sir Michael Marshall: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will outline work which is currently within his Department to ensure that all Government Departments and their agencies maximise the use of electronic data interchange.

Mr. Waldegrave: My Department recognises the significant benefits afforded by electronic data interchange, especially where those can improve the efficiency and quality of public services. The OPSS has been actively promoting the use of electronic data interchange through the activities of CCTA, the Government Centre for Information Systems. That work encourages Departments to use EDI as a strategic business tool.

The CCTA has recently published a best practice guide called "EDI in Government: the Business Opportunities" which draws on the experience collected from the Government interest section run jointly with EDI Association. I hope my hon. Friend will endorse its contents.

Ministerial colleagues and I are actively considering further ways to exploit the use of EDI in order to maximise the benefits to public service.

Lockerbie

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what assessment he has made of the implications of the open government initiative in relation to the destruction of Pan Am 103 over Lockerbie.

Mr. Waldegrave: The open government initiative does not override or disturb the existing arrangements for disclosure in legal proceedings.

DEFENCE

Aviation Medicine

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will make a statement on the future of the RAF Institute of Aviation Medicine;

(2) what are his plans for the future of the speciality of aviation medicine;

(3) if the RAF Institute of Aviation Medicine will continue with its present range of activities with particular reference to the full extent of its research work.

Mr. Aitken: In March this year, I endorsed a decision to bring together under the management of the chief executive of the Defence Research Agency all elements in the Ministry of Defence dealing with human factors research, including the RAF Institute of Aviation Medicine.

The RAF speciality of aviation medicine will continue under the control of the Director General of Medical Services (RAF).

The DRA has formed these elements into a new centre for human sciences which will seek to preserve the already well-established reputation and skill of establishments including the Institute of Aviation Medicine and build on these to offer a comprehensive and expert service to customers both inside and outside my Department.

These activities remain vote funded by my Department and staff conditions of service remain unchanged. It is planned, however, that by 1 April 1996 at the latest, all human factors research will be formally absorbed into the DRA's trading fund and under this regime it is for customers ultimately to decide what research they are prepared to pay for, although a strong demand and continued support of current activities is anticipated. No decisions have yet been taken about the final location of such work, although staff will be fully consulted before any changes are made.

Plutonium

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the United States Department of Energy informed his Department in advance of its intention to release information on 27 June that it had used reactor-grade plutonium imported from the United Kingdom in a test nuclear explosion conducted in 1962 at the Nevada test site.

Mr. Aitken: My Department was consulted about the announcement by the United States Energy Secretary on 27 June that the United States had conducted in 1962 a

nuclear test explosion using reactor-grade plutonium of British origin. We agreed to this information being released.

Our general policy is not to release information on the use of nuclear material for weapons purposes nor to comment on the details of any tests that may have been carried out. The 1962 test confirmed the technical feasibility of constructing a nuclear explosive device using reactor-grade plutonium. This fact was declassified by the United States in 1977. There are, though, significant technical difficulties which would complicate the manufacture and storage of any weapon based on reactor-grade plutonium.

It remains our policy that all grades of plutonium should be rigorously protected, and in accordance with our international non-proliferation obligations, stringent controls are applied to all forms of plutonium.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has received from the United States Government regarding the use to which plutonium exported to the United States under the United States–United Kingdom mutual defence agreement on atomic energy matters dated 1958, as amended in 1959, has been put since 1964 according to information provided by the United States Government.

Mr. Aitken: The assurance given in 1964 by the United States Government to the United Kingdom Government, that plutonium produced in United Kingdom civil reactors and supplied to the United States under the 1958 agreement would not be used for weapons purposes, remains valid. No such restrictions apply to plutonium originating from the United Kingdom military reactors at Calder Hall and Chapelcross. The use to which this plutonium has been put is a matter for the United States Government.

Departmental Accommodation

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many vacant dwellings are owned by his Department in each parliamentary constituency in Devon and Cornwall.

Mr. Hanley: As at 31 March 1994, my Department owned the following vacant dwellings in each parliamentary constituency in Devon and Cornwall:

	Service married quarters	*MOD civilian houses*	*Former married quarters in the process of sale*	*Total*
North Devon	27	0	0	27
Exeter	7	0	0	7
Honiton	14	0	3	17
Plymouth Devonport	182	5	17	204
Plymouth Drake	52	0	0	52
Plymouth Sutton	54	0	0	54
Torridge and West Devon	11	0	0	11
Falmouth and Camborne	0	0	0	0
North Cornwall	173	0	0	173
St. Ives	83	0	0	83
South East Cornwall	6	0	0	6

A large number of the vacant married quarters were either undergoing or awaiting major maintenance work or modernisation or were already allotted to service families due to move in shortly.

Royal Marines

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans his Department has to move the Royal Marines from Seaton barracks in Plymouth to Chivenor in north Devon; and when he expects to make an announcement.

Mr. Hanley: My Department is currently considering alternative defence uses of the Chivenor estate, including possible use by units of the Royal Marines. We hope to make an announcement soon.

Boarding School Allowance Scheme

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to reduce funding for the boarding school allowance scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: There are no current plans to change the rules concerning eligibility for my Department's boarding school allowance scheme. The rates at which the allowance is paid are reviewed annually. The hon. Member will be aware that service career and manpower structures and terms and conditions of service are the subject of an independent review which I announced on 30 March, *Official Report*, column *752*.

Devonport Dockyard

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his oral answer of 21 June, *Official Report*, columns 111-12, how many of the 850 job losses announced recently by the management of Devonport dockyard his Department estimates were due to efficiency measures.

Mr. Aitken: Employment levels at Devonport dockyard are primarily a matter for Devonport Management Ltd.

Recycled Paper

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what percentage of his Department's *(a)* press releases and *(b)* written answers are printed on recycled paper.

Mr. Hanley: It is departmental policy for recycled paper to be used wherever it can be obtained at reasonable cost and is adequate to the task. Press releases and written answers are almost invariably printed on recycled paper.

Procurement Contracts

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what was the annual value of defence procurement contracts placed into small and medium-sized enterprises since 1979 expressed in constant 1994 prices;

(2) what percentage of defence procurement contracts were placed by his Department with small and medium sized enterprises in each year since 1979.

Mr. Aitken: I regret that the information could be made available only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps his Department intends to take to increase the number of defence procurement contracts placed into small and medium-sized enterprises; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: Our aim in placing contracts is to secure best value for money for the defence budget. My Department's defence suppliers service has a specific remit to advise smaller firms on how to sell their products and services to the MOD.

Haymes Garth

Sir Jim Spicer: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what further information he has on the total cost of rebuilding and refurbishing Haymes Garth near Cheltenham, the official residence of the Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief, RAF Personnel and Training Command, Innsworth.

Mr. Hanley: A detailed internal investigation of the recent refurbishment of Haymes Garth has been carried out. This has shown that the total cost of the restructuring and refurbishment programme is likely to be some £387,000 during the two financial years 1992-93 and 1993-94, not £260,000 as indicated in my previous answer of 29 March, *Official Report*, column *732*. The exact figure will be dependent on the final settlement of some minor bills still outstanding. In addition, in 1993-94, some £9,000 was spent on routine maintenance. I very much regret that the figure given to the House in my earlier answer was incorrect; the full figures had not been reported to me at the time.

The circumstances in which the expenditure was authorised, incurred and notified have yet to be fully clarified. A high-level independent external investigation has been commissioned to look urgently into the apparent failure of the financial control system and to recommend appropriate action to ensure that there is no repeat.

We have also set in hand a separate audit of expenditure on official service residences to ensure that in other instances financial control mechanisms have functioned as they should.

I intend to make a full report to the House on the conclusions of all this work, and any action found necessary, as soon as possible after the House returns in the autumn. At the same time, I will reort to the House on the wider question of official service residences.

Danger Areas (Air Space)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the *(a)* statutory requirements and *(b)* requirements set out in service orders, for the operating authorities of military firing ranges and training areas to report infringements of danger area air space.

Mr. Hanley: I will write to the hon. Member.

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence who are the members currently appointed to the advisory council for the Royal Navy engineering college, Manadon.

Mr. Hanley *[holding answer 28 January 1994]:* The members of the advisory council for the Royal Navy Engineering College are as follows:
Professor Sir Hermann Bondi KCB FRS (Chairman)
R. J. Bull BSc FCCA
Dr. J. Daniel
Professor M. G. Farley CEng FRAeS FIMechE FIProdE DBIM
Dr. A. F. Frodsham CBE
Professor W. Gosling DSc FIEE FInstD
Sir Richard Morris CBE
Sir Alistair Pilkington FRS
Professor G. S. Sims OBE MSc PhD DSc LID FIEE FCGI FEng

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence who are the members currently appointed to the Armed Forces Pay Review Body.

Mr. Hanley *[holding answer 3 February 1994]:* The current members of the Review Body are as follows:
Gordon Hourston (Chairman)
Michael Bolton
John Cox CBE
John Crosby
Baroness Dean of Thornton-le-Fylde
Dorothy Venables
Air Chief Marshal Sir Roger Palin KCB OBE

WALES

Unemployment (Alyn and Deeside)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures he has taken to find work for the long-term unemployed of Alyn and Deeside.

Mr. Redwood: The North-East Wales training and enterprise council and the Employment Service provide a range of services to help the long-term unemployed of Alyn and Deeside back into work. These include the training for work programme, which offers the widest-ever range of measures available and focuses specifically on providing help to the long-term unemployed.

My Department and the Welsh Development Agency also provide a diverse range of measures aimed at combating unemployment through stimulation of the local economy.

Local Government Reform

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what action he proposes to take to deal with those councils which are using council reserves to undertake a general regrading of local authority staff in advance of consideration of staff transfer orders for the new unitary authorities elected under the local Government (Wales) Bill *[Lords]*.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Shadow Staff Commission for Wales is consulting local authorities about a draft circular on regrading in the period before local government reorganisation. If the commission decides to issue advice on this matter after Royal Assent to the Local Government (Wales) Bill [*Lords*], it would be open to my right hon. Friend to direct authorities to comply with the advice.

I informed the Association of District Councils at its conference on 29 June that my right hon. Friend and I are concerned about the marked increase in use of reserves by Welsh local authorities. Use of reserves is a matter for councillors. We do not propose to give special help to any new authority which finds that it has inherited only limited reserves from its predecessors.

Parents Charter

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will meet representatives of the teaching unions in Wales before drawing up a parents charter for Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend and I are always ready to consider requests from teaching unions for discussions about matters of common interest, but it is not always necessary to meet for views to be made known to us and we always welcome written comments from teaching unions and others.

Agriculture

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 11 January, *Official Report*, column 92, if he will now give (i) the number of hectares taken up and (ii) the number of holdings in each county in Wales in 1993 for *(a)* cereals, *(b)* potatoes, *(c)* linseed, *(d)* sugar beet, *(e)* horticultural produce and *(f)* oilseeds.

Mr. Redwood: The requested information, derived from the final results of the June 1993 agricultural census, is shown in the following tables.

Table 1: Crop areas at June 1993

	Hectares taken up by:					
	Cereals	*Potatoes*	*Linseed*	*Sugar beet*	*Horticultural produce*	*Oilseeds*
Clwyd	8,019	251	194	66	371	220
Dyfed	17,156	2,097	679	[1]—	366	325
Gwent	5,544	488	202	[1]—	265	268
Gwynedd	4,371	270	0	[1]—	98	[1]—
Mid Glamorgan	1,555	65	64	0	69	125
Powys	8,837	333	86	[1]—	73	248
South Glamorgan	3,344	64	97	0	62	110
West Glamorgan	1,019	281	0	0	210	[1]—
Wales	49,845	3,849	1,322	104	1,512	1,358

Source: June Agricultural and Horticultural Census.
Note.—Figures exclude minor holdings. County figures may not sum to Wales total due to rounding.
[1] Data withheld to avoid disclosure of information relating to any particular land or business.

Table 2: Holdings at June 1993

	Number of holdings growing:					
	Cereals	*Potatoes*	*Linseed*	*Sugar beet*	*Horticultural produce*	*Oilseeds*
Clwyd	583	124	13	8	89	12
Dyfed	1,535	526	54	[1]—	203	26
Gwent	294	141	14	[1]—	71	15
Gwynedd	461	218	0	[1]—	57	[1]—
Mid Glamorgan	50	25	3	0	18	4
Powys	629	131	8	[1]—	46	13
South Glamorgan	117	28	9	0	25	9
West Glamorgan	115	112	0	0	69	[1]—
Wales	3,784	1,305	101	15	578	85

Source: June Agricultural and Horticultural Census.
Note.—Figures exclude minor holdings.
[1] Data withheld to avoid disclosure of information relating to any particular land or business.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the payment rates made per hectare under the arable area payments scheme for *(a)* cereals, *(b)* oilseeds, *(c)* proteins, *(d)* linseed, *(e)* set-aside and *(f)* the simplified scheme paid in (i) the first year and (ii) the second year of the scheme in Wales.

Mr. Redwood: Payment rates under the arable area payments scheme in 1992-93 and 1993-94 are as follows:

	1992-93	*1993-94*	
	(£)	*LFA (£)*	*Non-LFA (£)*
Cereals	110·28	108·35	168·73
Oilseeds	453·12	445·39	445·39
Protein	286·73	201·22	313·35
Set-Aside	198·50	176·46	274·78
Simplified Scheme	110·28	108·35	168·73

Linseed was not included in the 1992-93 scheme and the rate for 1993-94 is not yet available. The rates payable in 1994 may be reduced if base areas are exceeded and the rate for oilseeds may be adjusted to reflect changes in the reference price.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the take-up of the arable area

payments scheme in hectares for *(a)* the simplifed scheme, *(b)* cereals, *(c)* oilseeds, *(d)* proteins, *(e)* linseed and *(f)* set-aside in Wales for 1994.

Mr. Redwood: The estimated take up of arable area payments in hectares for 1994 arable area payments scheme in Wales is as follows:

		Hectares
(a)	Simplified Scheme	22,289
(b)	Cereals	15,231
(c)	Oilseeds	1,365
(d)	Protein	843
(e)	Linseed	2,250
(f)	Set-Aside	3,474

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is *(a)* the amount of land in hectares in each county, *(b)* the number of farmers and *(c)* the cost of the five-year set-aside scheme in Wales in (i) 1993-94 and (ii) 1994-95; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Payments made to farmers in Wales under the five-year set-aside schemes for the financial year 1993-94 amounted to £349,937. Those payments relate primarily to land set aside during the scheme year October 1993 to September 1994 under 61 agreements covering some 1,936 hectares. Estimated expenditure for 1994-95 is about £286,000 based on 52 agreements for the 1993-94 scheme year covering about 1,608 hectares. The reduction is the result of some farmers completing their five-year agreements and others taking advantage of the option to terminate early in order to join the arable area payments scheme. It is not possible to give a breakdown to county level without disclosing information relating to any particular land or business.

Subsidies and Grants

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what amount of money was paid out by each of his divisional offices for each *(a)* agricultural subsidy scheme and *(b)* grant scheme to farmers in 1992-93.

Mr. Redwood: The information requested is set out in the following table.

Scheme	*Caernarfon* £	*Carmarthen* £	*Llandrindod Wells* £
(a) subsidy schemes			
Sheep Annual Premium	32,054,660	19,837,965	42,422,627
HLCA	10,680,187	7,034,460	16,430,743
Suckler Cow Premium	3,016,226	2,343,353	5,832,802
Farm Woodland Scheme	12,239	10,081	17,162
Milk Community Outgoers	23,262	41,298	2,220
(b) grants			
Farm Conservation	32,597	80,297	78,416
Grants scheme (1991) EC (1989): National	1,129,559	2,297,080	1,144,240
(1989): EC	161,591	238,493	374,595
Agricultural Improvement Scheme: EC	268,812	779,219	332,479
National	7,366	9,315	22,290
Agricultural and Horticultural Development Scheme	319,237	249,167	377,633
Farm Diversification:			
Capital	47,443	154,953	72,190
Marketing and feasibility	4,500	3,980	9,978
ESA	395,663	576,282	533,548
5 Year Set Aside	36,914	196,177	167,062

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many *(a)* farmers and *(b)* holdings there were in each county in Wales in 1993.

Mr. Redwood: The information is shown in the following table.

Farmers and farm holdings in Wales, June 1993

	Farmers, partners and directors[1]	*Holdings*
Clwyd	4,376	3,780
Dyfed	12,099	11,064
Gwent	2,439	2,185
Gwynedd	5,169	4,885
Mid Glamorgan	1,046	943
Powys	6,758	5,685
South Glamorgan	618	498
West Glamorgan	974	876
Wales	33,479	29,916

[1] Farmers, partners and directors working whole-time or part-time on farm holdings on 1 June 1993. Excludes wives/husbands of farmers, of partners and of directors, even if the wives/husbands themselves may be partners or directors.

Note: Excludes minor holdings.
Source: June Agricultural and Horticultural Census.

Ministerial Visits

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 14 June, *Official Report*, column *554*, what was the purpose of each of his visits to the Bridgend constituency.

Mr. Redwood: I have made three official and three political visits to the Bridgend constituency since I became Welsh Secretary.

Development Board for Rural Wales

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what guidelines he has given to the chairman of the Welsh Development Agency and to the board of the Development Board for Rural Wales concerning the co-ordination of policy and resources management in the present financial year and during 1995-96.

Mr. Redwood: I discuss a wide range of issues with the chairmen and the boards of the Welsh Development Agency and the Development Board for Rural Wales. I have considered with each of them their objectives and priorities and set targets for 1994-95. I will be making a statement about this matter shortly.

Cardiff Bay Barrage

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with *(a)* the chairman of the Cardiff Bay development corporation and *(b)* the Balfour Beatty/Costain consortium in relation to the commencement of construction of the Cardiff bay barrage indemnities sought and given thereto in respect of European environmental infraction proceedings under article 169 of the treaty of Rome; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: I myself have had no such discussions with either the chairman of the Development Corporation or the Balfour Beatty/Costain consortium.

Recycled Paper

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of his Department's *(a)* press releases and *(b)* written answers are printed on recycled paper.

Mr. Redwood: The answers are *(a)* 100 per cent.; (b) nil. Recycled paper suitable for general use, which includes the preparation of written answers, could not be found at reasonable cost. The position is kept under review.

Bed Provision

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the hospitals in Wales which have had to refer patients elsewhere because beds were not available during the last year, giving the number of days on which this has occurred and the places to which patients were referred in each case.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information requested is not held centrally but could be provided by the hospitals concerned.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 28 June, *Official Report*, column *516*, if he has received information from NHS trusts about changes in the number of people whom they employ.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: As there is no requirement on trusts to provide such information, the position across Wales is not known.

Standard Spending Assessments

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the standard spending assessment for each police force in Wales for 1994-95 and for each financial year since 1990, together with the police components of grant-related expenditure assessments for the years 1988-89 and 1989-90.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: There are no standard spending assessments for police authorities in Wales. The assessments for county councils include provision for police services. Assessments are unhypothecated as were grant-related expenditure assessments. Expenditure on police and other services is determined by county councils in the light of their statutory responsibilities, local needs and available resources.

EMPLOYMENT

National Union of Teachers

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 27 June, column *450*, what are the appropriate qualifications to be an auditor of a return of trade union numbers to the certification officer; and if he will list the names of the auditors used by the National Union of Teachers in its returns in each year since 1985.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Eligibility for an appointment as an auditor of a trade union is set out in the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992. Section 34(1) provides that a person is not qualified to be the auditor, or one of the auditors, of a trade union unless he is eligible for appointment as a company auditor under section 25 of the Companies Act 1989.

Before the commencement of the provisions in the 1992 Act in October 1992, the eligibility qualifications were set out in part I, schedule 2 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations Act 1974. This provided that a person would not be qualified to be the auditor, or one of the auditors of a trade union unless he is either:

a. a member of one or more specified bodies (ie the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales; the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland; the Association of Certified Accountants; the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Ireland; and any other body of accountants established in the United Kingdom and for the time being recognised for the purposes of the Companies Act 1985 by my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State); or

b. a person who is for the time being authorised by the Secretary of State under the 1985 Act as being a person with similar qualifications obtained outside the United Kingdom.

I understand from the certification officer, an independent statutory officer, that since 1985 the auditors of the accounts contained in the annual returns submitted by the National Union of Teachers have been Knox Cropper of 16 New Bridge street, London EC4V 6AZ, chartered accountants and registered auditor.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 27 June, column *450*, in which years each of the late returns of the National Union of Teachers were made; what were the reasons given in each case; and what penalties are imposed on trade unions making late returns.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I understand from the certification officer, an independent statutory officer, that the annual returns by the National Union of Teachers were submitted after the due date of 1 June in 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991 and 1992.

I also understand from the certification officer that he will consider representations from a trade union where circumstances make it difficult for a return to be submitted, in any year, by the statutory date. However, any reasons given at the time for the delay in making any of the NUT returns are not now available.

Under the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992, any trade union that refuses or

wilfully neglects to submit an annual return by the due date is liable for prosecution and, on conviction, a fine not exceeding level 3 on the standard scale.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 27 June, column *450*, how many of the members of the National Union of Teachers in the annual returns to the certification officer are retired teachers; and what figures his Department keeps on the numbers of people employed as teachers.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I understand from the certification officer, an independent statutory officer, that information regarding the number of members of the National Union of Teachers who are retired teachers is not available from the annual return submitted to him by that union.

Information on the number of people who are employed in teaching occupations is available from the quarterly labour force survey. Latest estimates from this show that there were 997,000 teaching professionals in Great Britain at winter 1993-94.

It is possible to perform detailed analysis of LFS data by a number of demographic characteristics including region of residence, age, sex and ethnic origin. All this information can be accessed via the Quantime LFS service available in the Library.

Sunday Trading

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of the effect of the changes in respect of Sunday trading on the employment rights of workers who deliver food and drink supplies to stores which will open seven days a week; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The employment rights of workers who deliver food and drink to stores which will open seven days a week will not be altered by the changes in respect of Sunday trading.

Asbestosis

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the incidence and geographical distribution of deaths from asbestosis and related diseases for the last 10 years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The numbers of death certificates mentioning asbestosis or the asbestos-related cancer mesothelioma in each of the last 10 years is shown in the following table:

Year	*Asbestosis*	*Mesothelioma*
1982	128	504
1983	121	578
1984	129	626
1985	140	615
1986	166	703
1987	144	809
1988	152	862
1989	157	899
1990	164	880
1991	163	1,018
Total	1,464	7,494

The geographical breakdown of these deaths was as follows:

Region	*Asbestosis*	*Mesothelioma*
North	267	811
Yorkshire and Humberside	155	604
North West	170	839
West Midlands	83	343
East Midlands	50	381
South West	114	704
East Anglia	30	231
South East	380	2,561
Wales	63	217
Scotland	152	803
Total (Great Britain)	1,464	7,494

Exposure to asbestos can also lead to lung cancer. Industrial cases cannot be distinguished medically from lung cancers due to other causes, principally smoking. The total of such cases is estimated from epidemiological evidence to be roughly twice the number of mesotheliomas.

Job Seekers Allowance

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the proposed job seekers allowance as it will affect north-east Wales.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: From 1996, job seekers allowance will replace unemployment benefit and income support for the unemployed. It will encourage wider and more effective job search, and bring improvements in the delivery of benefit to unemployed people throughout the United Kingdom.

Employment Service (Alyn and Deeside)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people in Alyn and Deeside have been placed in work by the Employment Service in the last 12 months.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. G. Johnson to Mr. Barry Jones, dated 4 July 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your Parliamentary Question about how many people in Alyn and Deeside have been placed into work by the Employment Service in the last 12 months. I am replying in the Chief Executive's absence.

There were 2,605 job placings made by the Employment Service in Alyn and Deeside in the 12 month period ending 3 June 1994. 2,300 of these were placings of unemployed people, 341 of which were people unemployed for more than six months and 52 of which were unemployed people with disabilities.

I hope this is helpful.

Acquired Rights Directive

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the Government's policy on the implementation of the acquired rights directive, following the recent decision of the European Court of Justice on the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981; and what steps he will take to ensure that the terms of the directive are being complied with when a transfer of work from the public to the private sector takes place.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The directive was implemented by the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981. Amendments to the regulations in the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Act 1993 had already dealt with all but one of the points in the European Court of Justice judgment of 8 June. The Government are presently considering what changes need to be made in respect of the outstanding issue which concerns consultation arrangements.

Detailed guidance on the application of TUPE to market testing was issued by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in the note entitled "Guidance on the Relevance of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations to Market Testing of Public Services", published on 11 March 1993, a copy of which is in the Library.

Recycled Paper

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of his Department's *(a)* press releases and *(b)* written answers are printed on recycled paper.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In line with Government policy, all the Department's *(a)* press notices and *(b)* parliamentary questions are printed on environmentally friendly paper.

HEALTH

Official Secrets Act 1989

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many persons were bound by, or required to sign declarations relating to, the Official Secrets Act 1989 in her Department and the NHS management executive in each year since 1990.

Mr. Sackville: All employees of the Department, including people seconded into the Department, are subject to the terms of the Official Secrets Act 1989. The amendments made in the 1989 Act mean that employees are no longer required to sign an "Official Secrets Act Declaration". They do sign an acknowledgement that they understand the terms and conditions on which they are employed including the terms of the Official Secrets Act.

Paramedics

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many qualified paramedics there are per head of population in *(a)* Wales, *(b)* Scotland, *(c)* Northern Ireland, *(d)* England and *(e)* the United Kingdom as a whole; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: These figures are not routinely collected centrally, but an informal survey in England showed that there were approximately 4,380 paramedics at the end of 1993—0·91 per 10,000 population. Comparative figures for other countries and the United Kingdom are not available. A target has been set of having an extended trained paramedic on every front-line ambulance by 1995.

Mental Health Task Force

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the mental health task force reported about its work in London; and when she expects to publish its report.

Mr. Bowis: The mental health task force is due to report to Ministers later this summer.

Skin Cancer

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received from Dr. Julian Verbov, consultant dermatologist, skin cancer co-ordinator Liverpool and Sefton, Broadgreen Hospital NHS trust concerning skin cancer; when those representations were received; and when she expects to reply.

Mr. Sackville: A number of letters were received from Dr. Verbov this year. A reply was sent to the hon. Member on 8 June which addressed the issues raised by Dr. Verbov.

Surgeons (Guidance)

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to ensure that surgeons adhere to the guidance issued by the Royal College of Surgeons regarding the training of specialists in minimally invasive techniques.

Mr. Sackville: Chief executives of national health service trusts and general managers of directly managed units are responsible for ensuring high standards of practice within hospitals. District health authorities also have a responsibility, through the contracting process, to ensure that their populations have access to high quality care.

Standards of postgraduate and continuing medical education are the responsibility of the medical royal colleges, which are independent bodies. A representative of the appropriate royal college sits on consultant appointment advisory committees. We have welcomed the Senate of Royal Surgical Colleges' statement on quality assurance. This will provide useful support for NHS management and dovetails well with our current initiative on continuing medical education.

Complementary Medicine Policy Unit

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the role, manpower and budget of the complementary medicine policy unit; when the unit was established; and what work it has undertaken to date.

Mr. Sackville: A complementary medicines unit has existed in the Medicines Control Agency since it was established as an executive agency in April 1989, and before this was part of the former medicines division of the Department of Health. The unit does not have a separate budget, and its staffing varies according to the resource requirements of work being undertaken. Principal tasks carried out by the unit in the past year include the implementation of the EC homoeopathics directive and the introduction of a new registration scheme for homoeopathic products. The unit provides the secretariat to the Advisory Board on the Registration of Homoeopathic Products and it also forms a focus for advice and expertise

on questions relating to complementary medicines. Other units within the agency have been responsible for major tasks in recent years, including a review of all herbal medicinal products covered by product licences of right.

National Health Service Managers

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to publish a strategy for training and retraining NHS managers throughout their career.

Dr. Mawhinney: The management development strategy for the national health service was launched by Sir Duncan Nichol in 1991, and copies are available in the Library.

Comfrey

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what plans she has to review the ban on the sale of comfrey products;

(2) what recent representations she has received concerning the ban on the availability of comfrey products; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: We have no plans at present to reconsider the withdrawal of certain comfrey products. We are currently considering the results of a survey received recently from the Society for the Promotion of Nutritional Therapy.

Pharmaceuticals

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to ensure that practitioners will adhere to the guidelines published in conjunction with the association of the British pharmaceutical industry regarding economic evaluation of pharmaceuticals; and how national health service purchasers will be trained to ensure that they can distinguish good from bad practice in economic evaluations of pharmaceuticals.

Mr. Sackville: If claims are made about the cost-effectiveness of a pharmaceutical product any doctor may call on the company to produce the full study justifying those claims. If they remain dissatisfied, they may refer the matter to the Prescription Medicines Code of Practice Authority, which has agreed to take note of the guidelines. The Department has established a centre for reviews and dissemination at the university of York whose functions include maintaining a register of quality assured cost-effectiveness studies and communicating the results to relevant audiences, including national health service purchasers. In addition, purchasers are able to seek advice on the availability and quality of research through regional research and development networks facilitated by regional directors of research and development.

Research and Development

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people were employed directly or indirectly to administer research and development in the national health service in 1992-93 and 1993-94; and what was the cost of employing these staff.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information requested is not available centrally.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many civil servants were employed in the administration of her Department's research and development programme in *(a)* 1990-91, *(b)* 1991-92, *(c)* 1992-93, *(d)* 1993-94 and *(e)* at the latest available date; how many contract staff were employed in research and development administration in each of those years; and what was the expenditure on these staff in each year.

Dr. Mawhinney: The numbers of civil servants and contract staff employed in the Department's research and development division, and the expenditure on these staff are as follows:

Year	Civil Servants		Contract staff	
	Number	Cost £ million	Number	Cost £
1990-91	56	1·18	1	4,165
1991-92	70	1·68	1	16,827
1992-93	85	2·04	4	83,105
1993-94	78	2·32	3	40,523
Current year	76	[1]2·36	2	9,050

[1] Planned spend for 1994-95.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many health service researchers are funded by *(a)* departmental and *(b)* national health service research and development expenditure; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: No central record is kept of the number of researchers engaged in health service research across the 230 contracts of the Department's centrally commissioned programme of health and social services research. Some 57 health service researchers are currently involved in national health service executive centrally funded research and development projects under the national health service research and development programme. No central records are kept of the number of health service researchers employed by the national health service itself.

Cancer Treatment

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the evidence supporting the conclusion that the creation of specialist centres for cancer treatment produce better outcomes than non-specialist centres.

Mr. Sackville: The recommendations set out in the consultation document "A Policy Framework for Commissioning Cancer Services" produced by the Chief Medical Officers' expert advisory group on cancer, were based on the knowledge and experience of the advisory group members and research findings, published and unpublished. Copies of the framework document are available in the Library.

Recycled Paper

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of her Department's *(a)* press releases and *(b)* written answers are printed on recycled paper.

Mr. Sackville: The Department's policy is to use only paper manufactured by elemental chlorine free—ECF—and totally chlorine free—TCF—processes, from countries who operate a tree farming policy, that is, planting two trees for every one used to make paper. All paper used for the Department's press releases and written answers is ECF.

Letterhead stationery is produced on pure recycled paper.

Confidentiality

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will issue guidance to ensure that case material and photographs gained by pathologists are subject to the same rules of confidentiality as medical records.

Mr. Sackville: All health information held by the national health service, including case material and photographs, is confidential and must be treated as such by all NHS personnel.

Patient Transport

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what vetting procedures are operated on the staff of taxi firms which operate patient transport services.

Mr. Sackville: The purchaser of any patient transport service should satisfy itself that the private contractor will employ staff who are sufficiently qualified and of good character. The competence required of staff can be specified in the contract conditions. Further guidance is in the code of practice for private ambulance operators—EL(93)109—and revised guidance on market testing in the national health service—EL(93)55. Copies of the guidance are available in the Library.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many accidents have occurred involving patient transport services operated other than by ambulance services.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what specialist training is given to staff of non-ambulance service passenger transport services.

Mr. Sackville: The purchasers of non-ambulance service patient transport services should identify their requirements and satisfy themselves that the staff providing the service are suitably trained to meet the standard expected. The Department's code of practice for private ambulance operators—EL(93)109—copies of which are available in the Library, gives further guidance to prospective purchasers.

London Ambulance Service

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what effect the overtime ban in the passenger transport operations of the London ambulance service is having on the ability of the service to meet contractual targets;

(2) how much money the patient transport operations of the London ambulance service received for new vehicles in each of the last three years; and how many vehicles were purchased in each year;

(3) what is the annual cost of management accommodation for the London ambulance service; what new buildings have been bought or leased in the last 12 months; and what was the cost of each building or lease.

Mr. Sackville: South Thames regional health authority has management responsibility for the London Ambulance Service. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. William Wells, chairman of the authority, for the information required.

Car Parking

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what guidance she has issued or intends to issue on the matters national health service trusts and health authorities should consider before introducing car parking charges;

(2) what the policy of her Department is regarding the introduction of charges for car parking at hospitals.

Mr. Sackville: Charges for car parking on national health service premises are a matter for local determination in the light of local circumstances, including the needs of patients, visitors and staff and the availability and cost of providing such facilities.

Community Nurses

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the current staffing plans for community nurses for each self-governing trust in the Greater London area for 1994-95, broken down by occupation of district nurses, health visitors, school nurses and community psychiatric nurses.

Mr. Sackville: Trusts are responsible for the deployment of staff to meet their contracts.

Transport

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research her Department has carried out on the modes of transport used by patients, visitors and staff to reach hospitals and other NHS facilities.

Mr. Sackville: The Department funded a research project on "Outpatients and their Doctors", which included a section on transport arrangements, and was published by HMSO in 1993. Copies of the project are available in the Library.

Breastfeeding

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what policy initiatives her Department is undertaking to encourage an improvement in the uptake of breastfeeding; and what plans she has to set targets for rates of breastfeeding at three and six months among mothers of new babies.

Mr. Sackville: The Department continues to support breastfeeding as the best way of feeding a baby. The national breastfeeding working group set up as part of the "Health of the Nation" strategy is working on a number of initiatives aimed to promote and protect breastfeeding including the drafting of guidance to the national health service which is likely to encourage district health authorities to consider setting local targets for breastfeeding rates.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether her Department submitted evidence to the Health and Safety Commission in response to the consultative document on proposals to implement the health and safety aspects of the EC pregnant workers directive; and what effect she expects the proposed amendments to the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations to have on breastfeeding rates among mothers of new babies.

Mr. Sackville: The Department has had discussions with the Health and Safety Executive about the proposals in its consultation document.

We do not foresee that those amendments will have any significant effect on the breastfeeding rates.

Non-medical Income

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the total income to the national health service was from *(a)* car parking, *(b)* patient television hire and *(c)* other non-medical services in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Sackville: The net income received from car parking charges was £1,238,000 in 1991-92, the only year for which figures are available centrally. Information on the net income for patient television hire and other non-medical services is not available centrally.

Transport Infrastructure

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance she has issued or intends to issue on taking into account the local transport infrastructure when considering the relocation, siting or closure of services.

Mr. Sackville: In considering the location of health services both purchasers and providers are required to consider accessibility to the local population. Guidance is contained in the capital investment manual, a copy of which is available in the Library.

"Making London Better"

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the expected savings in the acute sector in the current financial year from the implementation of "Making London Better"; what increases in resources in the primary health care sector she expects to result in the current financial year; and if she will identify the main categories of spending expected to benefit from the implementation of "Making London Better".

Dr. Mawhinney: Information on the breakdown of planned expenditure for the current year between acute and other services is not available centrally. Changes to the pattern of expenditure will depend on purchasing decisions taken locally by health authorities and general practitioner fundholders. As stated in "Making London Better", significant additional investment in primary and community services is taking place, including an additional £170 million capital investment over six years and an extra £7·5 million over three years for voluntary sector initiatives.

Lee Review

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she plans to announce the findings of the Lee review of the Health Education Authority.

Mr. Sackville: An announcement will be made when we have completed our consideration of the report.

Bath Community NHS Trust

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the recent reorganisation of community health services within Bath Community NHS trust, the implications for child protection advice and relations with general practitioner fundholders arising from it.

Dr. Mawhinney: The organisation of services in the Bath area is a local matter.

Hospital League Tables

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to include *(a)* the hours worked by junior doctors, *(b)* the number of patients dying on the waiting list for heart surgery, *(c)* the percentage of patients seen and treated by consultants and *(d)* the readmission rate after day surgery in the hospital league tables.

Dr. Mawhinney: We will consider what indicators to include in future national health service performance tables in the light of discussions with the professions, the NHS and the general public.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list for each NHS trust in the former South West Thames region, those chairman and non-executive directors who live outside the boundaries of the district health authority in which that trust is situated.

Dr. Mawhinney: Some 131 out of the 154—85 per cent.—chairmen and non-executive directors appointed to national health service trusts within the former South West Thames region live within the boundaries of the district health authorities in which that trust is situated. The names of the appointees who live outside the relevant district health authority boundaries are listed.

Kingston Hospital NHS Trust
Mr. Rowan Cole
Mr. Peter Jarvis
Mr. Alan Skinner
Mrs. Maureen Ekberg
Mr. David Heyworth

St. George's Healthcare NHS Trust
Mrs. Elizabeth Vallance
Ms Fiona Colquhoun
Sir William Asscher

Surrey Ambulance Service NHS Trust
Mr. Colin Pincombe

St. Helier NHS Trust
Mr. Ralph Hill

Royal Surrey County Hospital NHS Trust
Mr. Ian McCutcheon

Homewood NHS Trust
Mr. Paul Klinger
Mr. Paul Dickensen
Dr. Nan Carle

Frimley Park Hospital NHS Trust
Mrs. Pauline Sennett

Worthing and Southlands Hospitals NHS Trust
Professor Michael Whiting
Ms Barbara Myers

Royal West Sussex NHS Trust
Mrs. Susan Snowden
Mrs. Elizabeth Davis
Mr. David Watts

Chichester Priority Care NHS Trust

Sir Patrick Symons
Mrs. Jacqueline Kennett
Mr. Richard Paine

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list for each NHS trust in the former Oxford region those chairmen and non-executive directors who live outside the boundaries of the district health authority in which that trust is situated.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 1 July 1994]:* Some 99 out of the 128—77 per cent.—chairmen and non-executive directors appointed to national health service trusts within the former Oxford region live within the boundaries of the district health authorities in which that trust is situated. The names of the appointees who live outside the relevant district health authority boundaries are listed.

Aylesbury Vale Community Healthcare NHS Trust
Mr. D. Childs

Churchill John Radcliffe NHS Trust
Professor M. Benwell

East Berkshire Community Health NHS Trust
Mr. M. Northeast
Mr. J. Eskdale
Mrs. C. McEwan

East Berkshire Learning Disabilities NHS Trust
Mr. R. Worrall
Mr. W. Probert

Horton General Hospital NHS Trust
Mr. P. Hornby
Ms. A. Grove

Kettering General Hospital NHS Trust
Mr. L. M. Saunders Watson
Mrs. S. Spence

Milton Keynes Community Health NHS Trust
Mr. R. Glover

Northants Community Healthcare NHS Trust
Mr. P. Cardy
Mrs. J. Firrell

Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre NHS Trust
Mrs. M. Heaney

Oxfordshire Ambulance NHS Trust
Mr. S. Kirby

Oxfordshire Learning Disabilities NHS Trust
Mr. J. Burchfield
Mr. P. Smith

Radcliffe Infirmary NHS Trust
Mr. K. Berry

Rockingham Forest NHS Trust
Professor J. Knibbs
Mr. A. P. Connolly

Royal Berkshire Ambulance Service NHS Trust
Mrs. R. V. Monbiot
Mrs. S. Hodson
Dr. W. Taylor

Royal Berkshire and Battle Hospitals NHS Trust
Dr. R. Duthie
Mr. G. Stevenson
Dr. A. Furnham
Mr. J. Brockwell

Two Shires Ambulance Service NHS Trust
Mr. K. Cooper

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 5 July 1994

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Gravesend Bench

Mr. Jacques Arnold: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is the breakdown by party political affiliation of members of the Gravesend bench.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The political balance of magistrates on the Gravesham bench, which covers Gravesend, on the latest information available is as follows:

	Number
Conservative	24
Labour	13
Liberal Democrat	6
Independent/Not Known	10

Pre-trial Issues Working Group

Mr. Clappison: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will make a statement concerning the pilot study of recommendation 92 of the inter-agency working group on pre-trial issues.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The pilot study has now been evaluated and the Lord Chancellor, the Home Secretary and the Attorney-General have received a report setting out its results. The inter-agency pre-trial issues steering group, which set up the pilot study, has recommended that the system under which magistrates' courts, when committing defendants to the Crown court for trial, fix a date upon which the case will be listed for a plea and directions hearing in the Crown court should be introduced on a national basis.

We, together with the Lord Chief Justice, welcome the report as a significant step towards a reduction in the number of cases which are listed for trial, with witnesses attending to give evidence, but which are not contested on the day. The percentage of such cases fell from 31 per cent. before the pilot to 18 per cent. during the pilot. The Lord Chancellor's Department is establishing an inter-agency implementation group to carry forward the implementation of the recommendation. Copies of the report have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Courts Service

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what plans he has to introduce computerisation into the county court service; how many county courts these plans will affect; how many will not be so affected; and what account he will take of whether a court has been computerised in deciding whether it should be closed.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor and I are committed to improving the efficiency of the court system by providing court staff with computer support where appropriate. To achieve this, all county court offices are already provided with some form of computer support in the areas of warrant production and control and of the handling of suitors' cash. Those systems are currently being upgraded. A project is also under way to extend the range of functions to which computer support can be given. The criteria applied in deciding whether it is appropriate to close a county court do not include the existence of computer support.

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what criteria he applies when deciding which of the functions of the courts service are appropriate for contracting out and which are not.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The first and paramount criterion is the preservation of the independence and probity of the judicial process. If that is not at risk, general issues relating to the effective and efficient operation and management of the courts in providing a good-quality service to their users and value for money for the taxpayer would be taken into account.

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what plans he has to identify a core of activities of the courts service that are not appropriate for contracting out.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor is exploring the matter with the senior judiciary. Each activity will be considered on its own merits, bearing in mind the paramount need to maintain the independence and probity of the judicial process.

TREASURY

Political Parties (Funds)

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if funds drawn in the form of either interest or capital from a capital sum held abroad by a political party are subject to United Kingdom taxation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: Political parties are chargeable to corporation tax or income and capital gains tax on their profits or gains depending on their status and organisation. Whether sums drawn in the form of interest or capital from a capital sum held abroad are subject to United Kingdom taxation will depend on whether those sums represent profits or gains, and on the particular circumstances in which the sums are drawn.

Visible Trade

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps are being taken internationally to reduce Japanese and German surpluses on visible trade.

Mr. Nelson: Trade surpluses reflect, in the main, structural factors, such as Japan's high domestic savings ratio and relative cyclical position. At last year's G7 summit in Tokyo, Japan undertook to implement fiscal and monetary measures to ensure sustained non-inflationary growth contributing to the goal of significantly reducing external imbalances.

Fonds Commun de Placement

Mr. French: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his assessment of the benefit to United Kingdom investors and financial institutions if the tax treatment of fonds commun de placement with undertakings for collective investment in transferable securities certificates is changed so it is practical to market them in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Dorrell: We have made no such assessment. I understand, however, that fonds commun de placement are mutual funds set up in other member states of the European Union by financial institutions established in those states. It is not clear to what extent changing the tax treatment of those funds to enhance their marketability in the United Kingdom would beneift financial institutions in the United Kingdom as opposed to those of other member states.

Corporation Tax, Northern Ireland

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the yield from corporation tax in Northern Ireland each year since 1989-90.

Mr. Dorrell: It is not possible to provide a reliable geographical analysis of the yield of corporation tax. The tax is charged on total profits of a company, including income received from abroad. A company may surrender tax losses to another company in the same group anywhere in the United Kingdom and thus reduce the latter's tax charge.

Dividend Payments

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much was repaid by the inspector of foreign dividends or his equivalent to foreign holders of United Kingdom dividends, warrants etc. in relation to tax credits or to tax withheld in regard to their dividend payments in each fiscal year since 1985.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 1 July 1994]:* Payments to foreign residents of tax credits on United Kingdom dividends under double taxation agreements made either at source by the company paying the dividend or by the inspector of foreign dividends are as follows:

Year	*£ million*
1985-86	440
1986-87	490
1987-88	480
1988-89	510
1989-90	550
1990-91	490
1991-92	480
1992-93	550
1993-94	470

Note:
Excludes payments to sovereign immune bodies.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Ernst and Young

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what action he has taken against the auditing firm and partners criticised in the inspectors' report on Rotaprint plc; and what has been the outcome;

(2) what action he has taken against the auditing firm and partners criticised in the inspectors' reports on Sound Diffusion; and what has been the outcome.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 4 July 1994, *Official Report*, column *11*.

Electrical Appliances (Plugs)

Mr. Streeter: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he intends to make regulations requiring electrical applicances to be supplied with a correctly fused plug; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: Regulations under the Consumer Protection Act 1987 will be laid before Parliament shortly, and from 1 February 1995 most domestic electrical appliances manufactured in, or imported into, the United Kingdom must be supplied with a correctly fused plug.

Fatalities and injuries occur each year because of incorrectly fitted electric plugs. These regulations represent an important step forward in consumer safety for the British public.

Slate

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what conveniently available figures he has for the import of slate into the United Kingdom.

Mr. Needham: Information on the topic is regularly published in "Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom", copies of which are available in the Library of the House.

Property Misdescriptions Act 1991

Mr. French: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what is his assessment of the benefits that the Property Misdescriptions Act 1991 has brought to home buyers;

(2) what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the Property Misdescriptions Act 1991; and what plans he has to amend it.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Act was introduced to deter estate agents from making inaccurate statements about property. It has had practical effect only since April 1993, when the Property Misdescriptions (Specified Matters) Order 1992 came into force. It takes time for new legislation to settle and it is too soon to be able to judge how effectively the Act and the order are operating.

Mr. French: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) how many convictions there have been under the Property Misdescriptions Act 1991;

(2) how many prosecutions have been brought under the Property Misdescriptions Act 1991.

Mr. McLoughlin: As of 29 June 1994, the Office of Fair Trading had been notified of six prosecutions under the Property Misdescriptions Act 1991, all of which resulted in convictions.

Regional Selective Assistance

Mr. Henderson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) how many applicants in each region of the United Kingdom have been rejected for regional selective assistance because of a failure to meet new guidelines;

(2) what recent changes have been made in the guidelines relating to the disbursement of regional selective assistance; and from when they took effect.

Mr. Sainsbury: None.

Teampace Holdings Ltd.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he received the report from the receivers to Teampace Holdings Ltd.; what factors led the Department to decide against further investigations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The administrative receivers' report was received by the disqualification unit on 5 April 1993 and identified as meriting further investigation on 11 May 1993. Because of the need to prioritise the unit's resources, the matter was not taken forward, as I explained in my speech in the House on 29 June 1994, *Official Report,* columns 920-22.

Patent Office

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what legal advice he has received on the implications of change in ownership of the Patent Office; and if he will make a statement;

(2) which options in regard to the United Kingdom Patent Office have been ruled out; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what is the option which Price Waterhouse has been requested to provide covering the future of the Patent Office; and if he will make a statement;

(4) how many representations he has received on the future of the Patent Ofice in the last 12 months; how many of them were in favour of the status quo; and if he will make a statement;

(5) if he will consider making an interim announcement in regard to the Patent Office.

Mr. McLoughlin: We are still considering the report by Price Waterhouse which was commissioned as part of the review of the Patent Office's performance as an agency and of its options for the future. The review covers a range of possibilities from abolition to maintenance of the status quo. It is also required to address the scope for contractorisation or privatisation. The review has thrown up a number of complex legal and policy issues, which we are considering. I should emphasise that no decision on the future of the office has yet been taken. An announcement will be made as soon as the review is complete.

Around 80 representations have been received regarding the future of the Patent Office. These reflect a wide range of issues.

Post Office Workers (Dog Attacks)

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many post office employees received injuries caused by dog attacks while delivering letters and parcels in 1993; how many work days were lost as a result; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The handling of Post Office staff matters is the responsibility of Post Office management. However, I understand that in 1993 the total number of incidents involving animal attacks on Post Office employees was 6,040, of which 694 were sufficiently serious to require sick leave, amounting to a total of 4,527 working days.

Inspectorate AG and Omni Group

Mr. Meacher: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he has taken, or proposes to take, to investigate the activities in the United Kingdom of subsidiaries or companies related to the Inspectorate AG and Omni Group between 1987 and 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: It is not my Department's policy to comment on the affairs of individual companies. If the hon. Member has information to suggest that an inquiry would be appropriate, my officials would be pleased to consider any information forwarded in the usual manner.

Company Inspections

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if, for each of the investigations authorised under the Companies Acts, where inspectors have been appointed and the investigation is in progress or the final report remains unpublished, he will publish a table showing the cost of to date, the business connections of the inspectors, the manner in which costs have been disbursed to each of the inspectors, the total number of hours for which his Department has been charged and the basis of fees.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The table below covers all current Companies Acts inspections where the inspection has been announced or, if completed, the report has not yet been published or a decision whether to publish has not been taken. Further information on costs is commercially confidential and I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 20 July 1993, *Official Report,* column *132.*

Company	*Inspectors*	*Accountant inspectors costs (inc support staff and VAT) £ (000's)*	*Legal inspectors costs (inc support staff and VAT) £ (000's)*	*Cost of inspection/ inspection to date £ (000's)*
Guinness Plc	Mr. D. Donaldson QC Mr. I Watt FCA, formerly of KPMG Peat Marwick	1,794	482	2,276
Graylaw Holdings Ltd. Link Service Stations Ltd. British Anzani Plc	Miss E. Appleby QC Mr. P. Foss FCA, Moore Rowland	431	43	474
Bank Street Securities Ltd.	Miss E. Appleby QC	152	20	172
Medway Secondary Metals Ltd.	Mr. P. Foss FCA,	85	15	100
Pennine Commmercial Holdings Plc	Moore Rowland	352	35	387

Company	Inspectors	Accountant inspectors costs (inc support staff and VAT) £ (000's)	Legal inspectors costs (inc support staff and VAT) £ (000's)	Cost of inspection/ inspection to date £ (000's)
James Ferguson Holdings Plc Barlow Clowes Gilt Managers Ltd.	Mr. L. Ziman Nabarro Nathanson Mr. W. Hoffman FCA, Baker Tilly	4,180	1,558	5,738
Consolidated Gold Fields Plc.	Mr. P. Heslop QC Mr. R. Lewis FCA, Kidsons Impey	3,415	384	3,799
Atlantic Computers Plc Atlantic Computer Systems Plc	Mr. E. Hamilton QC Mr. J. Scott FCA, BDO Binder Hamlyn	4,643	1,849	6,492
Wace UK Holdings Ltd. Tinsley Robor Plc European Colour Plc	Mr. A. Robertshaw Mr. C. Mayhew both Departmental officers			282
Mirror Group Newspapers Plc	Mr. J. Thomas QC Mr. R. Turner FCA, Neville Russell	4,331	1,003	5,334
Chancery Plc	Mr. R. Chandler, KPMG Peat Marwick Mr. A. Robertshaw Mr. M. Deveson Mr. A. Fausset all Departmental officers	86		203
Queens Moat Houses Plc	Mr. P. Phillips QC Mr. A. Burn FCA, BDO Binder Hamlyn	724	180	904

Euroscan

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will appoint inspectors to investigate the liquidation of Euroscan.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I cannot comment on the affairs of individual companies. I am prepared to consider any information the hon. Member may provide in the usual way.

Corporate Communications

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will appoint inspectors to investigate the liquidation of Corporate Communications.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: On the basis of the information currently before me, I am not persuaded that this is an appropriate case for the appointment of inspectors.

Inspectors' Reports

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish a table showing the amount paid to each of his Department's inspectors for the reports published between 1979 and 1985.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The information requested by the hon. Member is set out in the table. The figures for costs include expenses incurred by the inspectors.

Company	Date of publication	Accountant inspectors costs (inc support staff) £ (000's)	Legal inspectors costs (inc support staff) £ (000's)	Total £ (000's)
Cornhill Consolidated Group Ltd	31 December 1980	—	—	(i)
Burnholme and Forder Ltd	17 July 1979	—	—	(i)
Dowgate & General Investments Ltd	14 May 1979	—	—	(i)
CST Investments Ltd Words in Action Ltd	22 February 1979	—	—	(ii)
Ashbourne Investments Ltd	31 July 1979	245	82	327
Darjeeling Holdings Ltd The Central Provinces Manganese Ore Co. Ltd Data Investments Ltd Vivella Ltd Bandara Investments Ltd Bandarapola Ceylon Company	30 April 1980	155	28	183

Company	Date of publication	Accountant inspectors costs (inc support staff) £ (000's)	Legal inspectors costs (inc support staff) £ (000's)	Total £ (000's)
Brayhead Ltd	17 July 1979	—	—	(i)
Larkfold Holdings Ltd	7 June 1979	66	18	84
Kina Holdings Ltd	24 March 1981	218	22	240
Scotia Investments Ltd	22 January 1981	270	83	353
North Devon Railway Company Ltd	22 February 1979	—	—	(ii)
AEG-Telefunken (UK) Ltd Credit Collections Ltd	6 September 1979	42	5	47
Norwest Holst Ltd	23 June 1982	69	63	132
Gilgate Holdings Ltd Rayborne Group Ltd Calomefern Ltd Desadean Properties Ltd	8 September 1981	628	28	656
Aveley Laboratories Ltd	19 May 1981	17	6	23
Peachey Property Corp Ltd	30 January 1979	—	—	(i)
Peek Foods Ltd	8 December 1981	—	—	(i)
Orbit Holdings Ltd	23 December 1981	30	6	36
Ozalid Group Holdings Ltd	13 March 1980	84	22	106
The United Industrial Company Ltd	17 March 1981	83	7	90
Fourth City and Commercial Investments Trust Ltd Systematic Tooling Ltd Excelads Ltd Cambramain Ltd	27 January 1982	268	44	312
Ozalid Group Holdings Ltd	13 March 1980	84	22	106
Ramor Investments Ltd Derritron Ltd	22 March 1983 (interim)	651	109	760 (iii)
Saint Piran Ltd	4 December 1980 (interim) 16 April 1981 (final)	—	—	191 (iv)
Consolidated Gold Fields Ltd	5 August 1980	—	—	(ii)
Dunlop Holdings Ltd	17 February 1981 (interim)	—	—	(ii)
House of Fraser Plc	9 August 1984	—	149	149

(i) Cost information no longer available.
(ii) Inspectors were Departmental officers and the cost of their investigation is not available.
(iii) Costs are total costs of the investigation.
(iv) Detailed cost information is no longer available.

Accounting Firms

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if he will launch an independent inquiry into the affairs of Coopers and Lybrand following the DTI report on the company;

(2) if he will initiate an independent inquiry into the regulation of the major accounting firms by the Institute of Chartered Accountants;

(3) if he will launch an independent inquiry into the affairs of Grant Thornton following the DTI report on the company.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: No.

Exports

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish a table showing by standard industrial trade classification two-digit division the

industries whose share of exports by the main manufacturing countries has declined since 1979 as a result of lack of investment in new plant and machinery.

Mr. Sainsbury: The information requested is not available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Multi-level Marketing

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proposal he has for updating legislation in relation to multi-level marketing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Government are preparing proposals for changes to the present legislation, and hope to publish a consultation paper shortly.

Parcels

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 16 June, *Official Report*, column *630*, what is the position in relation to VAT exemption for parcels sent via a privatised company by franked or account postage rather than by the purchase of a stamp.

Mr. McLoughlin: This issue is discussed in the Government's Green Paper "The Future of Postal Services" (Cm. 2614) published on 30 June. If the Government decide to proceed with privatisation or part-privatisation of the Royal Mail and Parcelforce, they will consider, in the light of EC law, the appropriate VAT treatment for non-obligatory parcels services provided by the new company. Such services would include those offered on account to commercial companies and other organisations, in competition with services from other parcels carriers.

Unfair Consumer Contracts

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will now make it his policy to receive a delegation led by the hon. Member for Macclesfield to discuss the provisions of the European directive on unfair consumer contracts and its implications for British industry.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 1 July 1994]:* If my hon. Friend contacts the Minister for Consumer Affairs and Small Firms, I am sure that my noble Friend will be pleased to meet with him.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 23 June, *Official Report*, column *254*, when he expects to complete the compliance cost assessment in relation to the European directive on unfair consumer contracts; which trade associations and individual companies have been consulted specifically in connection with that assessment; and if he will list all those provisions likely to prove onerous to industry which his Department succeeded in having deleted from the European directive on unfair consumer contracts.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 1 July 1994]:* A compliance cost assessment is being prepared on the proposals to implement the EC directive on unfair terms in consumer contracts and will be published shortly. All trade associations and companies that received the Department's consultation document were invited to make an estimate of the compliance costs. Provisions in earlier drafts of the directive which were considered likely to be onerous to industry included extension of the scope of the directive to all contract terms, whether negotiated or not; inclusion of a blacklist of terms which would be unfair in all circumstances; and an attempt to harmonise sale of goods legislation.

Universal Postal Service

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the President of the Board of Trade who will make the definition of the exclusive services which will be offered to the operators of the universal postal service, under the proposed reserved services directive of the European Union.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 4 July 1994]:* The maximum scope of the reserved area is likely to be defined at Community level, and member states will be free to establish smaller reserved areas if they wish.

EMPLOYMENT

Barnsley/Doncaster Training and Enterprise Council

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the current training targets for the Barnsley/Doncaster TEC; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: The training and enterprise council's corporate plan for 1994-1997 sets out local targets which it has agreed with key players in education and training, to contribute towards the achievement of the national education and training targets. The TEC's corporate plan is available in the Library.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what internationally recognised qualifications are obtainable through the Barnsley/Doncaster TEC; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: The qualifications which are obtainable through the Barnsley and Doncaster training and enterprise council are nationally recognised qualifications. A second EC directive on mutual recognition of qualifications has been adopted which will give national vocational qualifications and Scottish vocational qualifications currency throughout the Community.

Training

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what the amount of Government expenditure on training the existing work force has been in each year since 1979 at 1993 prices;

(2) how much Government expenditure has been spent on overall training in each year since 1979 at 1993 prices.

Miss Widdecombe: Expenditure by the Department on training, education, enterprise, employment measures and labour market services in Great Britain is detailed in the table. Information relating to other Government expenditure on training is not available to this Department. The Employment Department group is offering a total of 1·5 million opportunities for unemployed people in 1994-95, the same as 1993-94's record level.

£ million

	Cash	Real terms (1993 prices)
1979-80	878	2,091
1980-81	1,324	2,664
1981-82	1,452	2,663
1982-83	1,645	2,817
1983-84	2,067	3,383
1984-85	2,203	3,433
1985-86	2,420	3,572
1986-87	2,969	4,259
1987-88	3,217	4,381
1988-89	3,137	4,003
1989-90	3,008	3,589
1990-91	2,871	3,170
1991-92	2,779	2,885
1992-93	2,692	—

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his most recent estimate of the amount spent on training by *(a)* private employers, *(b)* public employers, *(c)* Government and *(d)* individuals.

Miss Widdecombe: Estimates from the "Training in Britain" study of 1986-87 of the amount spent on training in Great Britain by private sector firms with 10 or more employees, public sector employers, Government and individuals are shown in the table:

	£'000 million
Private sector firms with 10 or more employees	9
Public sector employers (excludes armed services)	5
Government	7
Individuals	8

It is estimated that British employers currently spend over £20,000 million a year on training and developing their employees.

The estimate of Government expenditure includes expenditure by the then Manpower Services Commission on training programmes and the costs of post-compulsory education outside schools. Expenditure in 1992-93 by the Department on training, education, enterprise, employment measures and labour market services in Great Britain was £2,692 million. The estimate of expenditure by individuals consists mainly of earnings forgone by those in post-compulsory education.

Financial Services Industry

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of relative wage levels in the financial services industry in *(a)* London, *(b)* Dublin and *(c)* Luxembourg; and what implications this has for employment opportunities.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Reliable information is not available at this level.

Market Testing

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will set out the total cost of external consultancy fees in relation to market testing.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 29 June 1994]:* As reflected in information already provided to the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee as part of its inquiry into the civil service, during the period 1 April 1992 to 31 December 1993, the total cost of external consultancy fees incurred by the Department in relation to market testing was £845,319. The Employment Department group's market-testing programme is being developed within existing resources.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Bilateral Aid

Ms Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what amount of the United Kingdom's bilateral aid spending is focused on basic needs provision; and if he will set out separately figures for spending on health, primary education and clean water provision *(a)* in cash prices and *(b)* as a percentage of the United Kingdom's total bilateral aid spending.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: It is estimated that a minimum of £111 million of the United Kingdom's bilateral aid was focused on basic needs provision in 1992-93. Some £13 million of this was provided as block grants to non-governmental organisations and £8 million was provided as a grant to the International Planned Parenthood Federation.

The sectoral figures shown in the table are included within the £111 millon:

	1992-93 (£ million)	Percentage of aid allocable by sector	Percentage of total United Kingdom bilateral aid to developing countries
Health and Population	48·9	8·6	3·8
Basic Education[1]	15·8	2·8	1·2
Water and Sanitation	25·8	4·5	2·0

[1] Basic education, including primary education, some teacher training and adult literacy, is estimated to be 15 per cent. of the total ODA spending in the education sector.

In addition, in 1992-93, £150 million of emergency aid was provided. Most of this goes to meet basic human needs in time of crisis.

Nigeria

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 28 June, *Official Report*, column *525-26*, if he will list those practical initiatives in Nigeria which his Department is funding in support of a democratic transition in that country; if he will indicate the amount of funding

for each project; and if he will make a statement indicating specifically what steps his Department intends to take to assist the work of the National Constitutional Conference in Nigeria.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Since April 1993, we have provided office equipment and literature to organisations concerned with democracy and human rights—£40,000—help towards the running of and participation in human rights conferences—£12,000—and support for monitoring of the June 1993 election—£10,000. Further initiatives totalling up to £75,000 in 1994-95 are being considered. In addition, we have helped the work of the National Constitutional Conference by providing its library with books and journals on legal, political and constitutional issues, including copies of the democratic constitutions of several Commonwealth countries—£5,500.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Forensic Pathology

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will issue guidelines to prevent the use of photographic or other material gained in the course of forensic pathology for public entertainment.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I will write to the hon. Member.

Prisoners, Northern Ireland

Mr. McNa[illegible]: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Northern Ireland prisoners have received transfers from England and Wales to Northern Ireland since 1 January 1993; and how many were *(a)* permanent, *(b)* temporary, *(c)* male, *(d)* female, *(e)* loyalists and *(f)* republican transfers.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Since 1 January 1993, three male prisoners have been permanently transferred from England and Wales to Northern Ireland and eight male prisoners have been temporarily transferred. In addition, four male prisoners previously temporarily transferred have been granted further periods of temporary transfer in Northern Ireland. No female prisoners have been either permanently or temporarily transferred during this period, and one of the prisoners transferred was convicted of a terrorist offence. It is our policy not to comment on the past or present political affiliations of prisoners.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the greatest, the shortest and the average length of time between application for transfer and notification of the decision to accept or reject the application for temporary or permanent transfer from England and Wales to Northern Ireland.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Transfers of prisoners between United Kingdom jurisdictions have been effected since the introduction of the Criminal Justice Act 1961. The information requested could not be obtained without disproportionate cost.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how long a prisoner whose application for transfer from England and Wales to Northern Ireland is rejected must wait before reapplying.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: A prisoner may apply for transfer to another United Kingdom jurisdiction at any time. Each application will be considered individually and on its own merits under the criteria announced to Parliament on 23 November 1992.

Colin Ivor Dunning (Appeal)

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 18 May, *Official Report*, column *456*, if he has now considered the representations submitted in February 1994, on behalf of Colin Ivor Dunning, together with earlier representations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: I regret that our consideration of those representations is not yet complete and it is possible that some outside inquiries may have to be made before a decision is made on whether to refer Mr. Dunning's conviction to the Court of Appeal or to take any other action. I will ensure that the hon. Member is informed as soon as there are any further developments.

Aldington Prison

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in how many cases staff shortages at Aldington prison have been the reason for the non-production of prisoners in court in the past 12 months.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 5 July 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the number of occasions in the past 12 months on which staff shortages at Aldington prison have been responsible for the non-production of prisoners in court.

Aldington is a small prison which receives few requests to produce prisoners for court appearances. Other establishments are advised not to send to Aldington prisoners who will need to be produced at court. Until recently, there has been no system at the prison for recording such requests. It is known that the obligation to produce prisoners for Crown Court appearances has been fulfilled without exception. In the absence of any statistics, however, it is not possible to give any precise figures about productions at Magistrates courts.

A system of recording all requests for production, including the reasons for any cancellations, has now been introduced at Aldington.

Police (Performance-related Pay)

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 28 June, *Official Report*, column *458*, (1) if he will provide the evidence available to him on the extent to which benefits may accrue *(a)* to the organisation and *(b)* to the individual; and what assessment he has made of the benefit to the public of introducing performance-related pay;

(2) if he will list the specific benefits that will accrue to the police service as a result of performance-related pay and the defects resulting from the present system which he aims to correct;

(3) if he will list his targets for the improvement in the performance of police officers *(a)* in terms of specific activities and *(b)* in terms of improvement sought.

Mr. Charles Wardle: We have made it clear on a number of occasions that police pay should be related to

overall performance. This does not mean judging performance against crude indicators such as numbers of arrests or crimes cleared up. The introduction of an element in police pay related to overall performance will enable the police service, in a tangible way, to distinguish the especially good performance from the average performance, which is not possible under the current pay system. Together with the other police management reforms being introduced by the Government, performance-related pay will assist in the process of improving quality and increasing efficiency by providing a sensible incentive to police officers and a better basis for managing police pay, which constitutes some 80 per cent. of all money spent on policing.

Blakenhurst Prison

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 29 June, *Official Report*, column 627, on how many occasions United Kingdom Detention Services Ltd. has received warnings in relation to its management of Blakenhurst prison; what was the nature of the warning on each occasion; and what was the outcome.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 5 July 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the warnings United Kingdom Detention Services have received in relation to their management of Blakenhurst prison.

Excluding the occasions mentioned in the earlier reply where default notices have been issued against the contractor and the one occasion where payment was withheld, the Controller has on six occasions required the Director of United Kingdom Detention Services to improve specific areas of service delivery. These warnings related to a number of matters including contingency arrangements, supervision of visits, visits by the Director to the segregation unit, the timely discharge of prisoners with adequate clothing, provison of regime monitoring information, and cleanliness. All the warnings were acted upon by United Kingdom Detention Services Ltd and no further action proved necessary.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the current reinstatement value of Blakenhurst prison; how it is calculated; and how often it is reassessed.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 4 July 1994]:* Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 5 July 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the reinstatement value of Blakenhurst Prison.

The current reinstatement value of Blakenhurst Prison is estimated at £91 million. This valuation is based on an estimate of the new replacement cost of the buildings, using current construction costs, from which deductions are made to allow for age and condition. The valuation also includes an estimate of the value of the land in its existing use.

This valuation is in line with the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors guidelines on asset valuations and will be reviewed and adjusted annually.

Immigration Act 1971

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the *(a)* prisons, *(b)* detention centres and *(c)* police stations used to detain persons under the powers of the Immigration Act 1971, as amended; and what is the number of persons currently detained at each individual establishment.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 27 June 1994]:* On 29 June 1994, people were detained under Immigration Act powers at the following locations:

Immigration Service	*Number*
Campsfield House	165
Harmondsworth	95
Gatwick Beehive	16
Queens Building	15
Stansted	7
Port Detention	7
Newhaven	6
Prison Service	
Aberdeen	2
Belfast	1
Belmarsh	8
Blakenhurst	10
Brinsford R C	6
Bristol	4
Bullingdon	1
Brixton	4
Canterbury	33
Cardiff	1
Chelmsford	4
Dover	23
Durham	2
Edinburgh	1
Elmley	1
Erlestoke	3
Exeter	6
Feltham	4
Glen Parva	1
Gloucester	1
Greenock	9
Haslar[1]	128
High Down	13
Holloway	11
Hull	4
Leeds	4
Lewes	3
Liverpool	3
Norwich	5
Pentonville	21
Reading	1
Risley	1
Rochester	1
Shrewsbury	2
Strangeways	9
Swaleside	1
Swansea	1
Wandsworth	7
Winchester	8
Winson Green	40
The Wolds	1
Wormwood Scrubs	6
Police Stations[2]	43
Total	749

[1]Haslar Holding Centre is primarily an Immigration Detention Centre, although managed by the Prison Service.

[2]The numbers held in individual police stations are not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Probation Service

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) when it is proposed that probation boards will begin to exercise executive functions and powers;

(2) what appointment procedures will be set in place for constituting the membership of probation boards; and when such procedures will be published.

Mr. Maclean: Primary legislation is required to enact the probation board proposals and the timing of this depends on an appropriate legislative opportunity. Details of the procedures proposed for appointments to boards will be confirmed at that time.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether representatives of voluntary bodies who are either tendering for or involved in partnerships will be eligible to be members of probation boards.

Mr. Maclean: A number of probation committee members have active links with voluntary sector organisations which are, or may be, involved in partnerships with the probation service. Although those links should not be a bar to probation committee membership, it is important that committees have in place procedures to avoid any conflicts of interest which may arise. Similar considerations are likely to apply to probation boards in due course.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which probation services in England and Wales will be reducing staffing levels in the financial year 1994-95; and what will be the consequent effect on probation work loads.

Mr. Maclean: It is for each probation committee to decide how the resources available to it should be used to best effect; and the Home Office does not have information about committees' plans for the remainder of the present financial year with regard to numbers of staff in post.

Third-country Nationals

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on the free movement of legally resident third-country nationals.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Government do not support the extension of European Community rights of free movement to third-country nationals and consider that the admission of third-country nationals should remain a matter for individual member states. We are discussing with our European partners a proposal in the draft external frontiers convention which would exempt third-country nationals who are legally resident in another member state from any visa requirement for a short visit. This proposal would make travel within the Community easier but would give no automatic right of free movement to resident third-country nationals.

Seat Belts

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many drivers and passengers were summoned for travelling without a seat belt in *(a)* 1990, *(b)* 1991, *(c)* 1992 and *(d)* 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: There were 10,145 prosecutions for not wearing a seat belt in England and Wales in 1990, 12,156 in 1991 and 11,258 in 1992. Statistics for 1993 are not yet available.

Firearms

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for a firearms licence have been refused in England and Wales in each of the last five years.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is published in Home Office statistical bulletin "Firearm Certificate Statistics, England and Wales 1992", issue 23/93, a copy of which can be found in the Library. Figures for 1993 are not yet available.

Obscene Publications Branch

Mr. Donald Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what contingency plans he has formulated for co-ordination between police forces in the United Kingdom and Interpol in respect of computer pornography and other obscene material if the obscene publications branch at Scotland Yard is closed down.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No proposals about the future of the obsecne publications branch have yet been made, but the Metropolitan police have given assurances that its work will continue whatever the recommendations of the current headquarters and specialist units' review.

Escort and Custody Services

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many staff are currently on court escort and custody service in the Metropolitan police district; and how many staff will be on this service when Securicor is operating all of this service in July 1995.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 29 June 1994]:* Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mrs. Barbara Roche, dated 5 July 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the number of staff currently employed on the court escort and custody service in the Metropolitan Police area and the number of staff who will be employed on this service when Securicor are operating the whole of it from July 1995.

It is not possible to make a simple comparison of this kind because of the difficulty of comparing like with like. The service has hitherto been provided by the Metropolitan Police and Prison Service but not by staff exclusively dedicated to it. Therefore, calculating the overall resources devoted to the work was difficult. To overcome this problem the number of staff so employed was calculated on the basis of full time equivalent posts. It has been calculated that the Metropolitan Police employed 271 full time equivalent police officers and 47 full time civilian staff on court escort and custody work. This excludes the time deployed on the work by more senior officers. Using a similar methodology it was calculated that the Prison Service employed 335 full time equivalent prison officers. These figures exclude time spent by drivers of private hire vehicles, where these are used for escorting.

These staffing levels reflected the level of activity in the 1992-93 financial year. Since April 1993 there has been a 25 per cent. increase in the remand population and this would have resulted in an increase in staff time utilized had the police and Prison Service continued to provide the service.

Securicor intend to employ 815 uniformed staff, consisting of 738 basic grade prisoner custody officers and 77 supervisors. This figure includes vehicle drivers who are certificated prisoner custody officers and who will be carrying out escort duties at court.

The number of staff to be employed by Securicor reflects the increasing number of remand prisoner movements to and from court for which they will be responsible.

The cost of the contract over five years is £96 million or just under £22 million, exclusive of VAT, for a fully operational year. This compares with an estimated annual cost under the previous arrangements of approximately £28 million.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what decisions his Department has taken in respect of TECs over the last 12 months; and if he will make a statement on his Department's involvement with TECs over the same period.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 30 June 1994]:* Officials from the Home Office and United Kingdom Passport Agency have had a number of meetings with representatives of the Central London TEC and Investors In People (UK) Ltd. Passport agency officials have also met the TECs for the areas in which the agency's regional offices are located. There have also been meetings between officials of the Immigration and Nationality Department and the South London TEC; the Fire Service college and Gloucestershire TEC; and the Forensic Science Service with Birmingham TEC. All those meetings have been in connection with the Home Office commitment to the Investors in People—IIP—initiative; none of them has involved particular decisions. In addition, there have been meetings between representatives of a number of Prison Service establishments and their local TECs concerning the development of both staff and prisoner non-vocational qualifications, and steps towards IIP accreditation. In the context of developing local policies to help offenders and ex-offenders to find employment, the Home Office has advised chief probation officers to seek agreements with TECs.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Market Testing

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) if he will define the role of the private sector forum on market testing, its terms of reference and the criteria used for issuing invitations to attend;

(2) if he will list the names of the individuals and companies of those invited to attend, and those who actually attended, the January meeting of the private sector forum on market testing;

(3) what safeguards exist to prevent those individuals and companies invited to take part as members of the private sector forum from financial gain from contracting out of Government services as a result of their membership of the forum;

(4) if he will list the names of the individuals and companies of those invited to attend the July meeting of the private sector forum on market testing.

Mr. Waldegrave: The role of the private sector forum is to provide a channel of communication on "Competing for Quality" issues between the private sector, central Departments, and other Departments and agencies.

There are no formal terms of reference. The forum will provide an opportunity for the Government and the private sector to exchange experience on the "Competing for Quality" programme and to identify best practice which could be more widely adopted. No specific contracting opportunities will be discussed, and the forum will not provide a means of redress for companies which have failed to win competitions. Those matters must be discussed between bidders and individual Departments in the normal way. Invitations have been issued to a broad and representative range of those industries participating in the "Competing for Quality" programme.

The meeting in January was called to discuss with contractors and consultants the Government's intentions, as announced in the next steps review in December 1993, to publicise prior options reviews of agencies and to invite views from interested parties. Those present were:

John Allen, BET Group
John Barker, Kleinwort Benson
Richard Benton, Capita Group plc
Norman Biddle, Symonds Facilities Management plc
Mark Call, QDM Limited
Charles Cox, Hoskyns Group plc
Peter Farmer, Ernst and Young
Kit Farrow, Merchant Bank Association
Paul Fuller, Touche Ross
Marc Gillespie, 3i Group plc
Peter Holmes, SEMA Group
Richard Nicholls, Serco Group plc
Francis Plowden, Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte
Elizabeth Ransome, KPMG Peat Marwick
Marwan Rifka, EDS-Scicon
Peter Rowley, Grant Thornton
Steven Unsworth, Price Waterhouse and Co.
Vincent Watts, Andersen Consulting
David van den Woude, Mackwood Finance
Mathew Young, Y&S

Of those companies invited, only Owens Associates was unable to attend. There is no prospect of any of those individuals and companies securing financial gain by virtue of their attendance at the forum. Should any of the companies bid for work under the "Competing for Quality" programme, they will do so under the same competitive conditions as other bidders.

The following private sector representatives are expected to attend the private sector forum on 8 July.

Rod Aldridge, Capita Group
Maggi Bell, Manpower plc
Norman Biddle, Symonds Facilities Management plc
Gerry Bunn, Hunting Aircraft Ltd
Tom Butler, EDS United Kingdom
Charles Cox, Hoskyns plc
Ian Downey, Serco Group plc
John Hall, Business Services Association
Peter Holmes, SEMA Group
John Jack, PROCORD Ltd
Brian Neylan, Securicor Group plc
John Owens, Owens Associates

EDUCATION

Parents Charter, Nottinghamshire

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many copies of the parents charter were distributed in Nottinghamshire; and what was the cost of publication and delivery.

Mr. Robin Squire: Every household in England is receiving a copy of the updated parents charter. Figures provided by the Royal Mail show that some 459,200 copies

of the charter are being distributed in Nottinghamshire. The total cost of publication and delivery in that area is approximately £46,000.

EC Councils

Mr. Couchman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what were the outcomes of the Council of EC Youth Ministers and the Council of EC Education Ministers held on 6 and 21 June, respectively.

Mr. Boswell: The main item of business for the Council of Youth Ministers was the Commission proposal to extend the "Youth for Europe" programme for a third phase. The programme will continue to support a wide range of exchange-based activities for young people and youth workers in the Community, with an emphasis in the third phase on activities for the disadvantaged. The Council of 6 June reached a common position which the United Kingdom could accept. A budget of 105 million ecu, approximately £82 million, over five years—1995-99—was agreed.

The Council of Education Ministers considered the Commission proposal for an EC education action programme, SOCRATES. Ministers reached a common position on the proposal. A budget of 760 million ecu, approximately £580 million, over five years—1995-99—for the programme was agreed. The programme will amalgamate and expand the existing ERASMUS—European Community action scheme for the mobility of university students—and Lingua programmes and will introduce Community activity at school level for the first time, through support for joint projects undertaken by schools in at least three member states. In addition, the programme will support the education of migrant workers', gipsies' and travellers' children and the dissemination of information about the education systems of member states, as well as trans-national co-operation on the in-service training of teachers, open and distance learning and adult education.

Ministers also agreed conclusions on the cultural and artistic aspects of education and discussed a presidency note on the education of the children of migrant workers.

PRIME MINISTER

Stephan Adolph Kock

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Prime Minister for what reason Stephan Adolph Kock has special branch protection; and what other names he uses or has been known by.

The Prime Minister: It is not in the public interest to disclose whether any person has received official protection or not. There is no ministerial responsibility for names by which Mr. Kock is known or has been known.

Lockerbie

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what representations Her Majesty's Government have received from relatives of those killed in Pan Am 103 over Lockerbie on the need to make inquiries about the statements attributed to Youssef Chaabane, accused of murdering a Jordanian diplomat in a Beirut court; and what response Her Majesty's Government have made.

The Prime Minister: The Lord Advocate has received one letter from a relative of a Lockerbie victim, inquiring about the Crown Office response to the statement attributed to Chaabane. She has been told that, although it appears that what Chaabane said was very far from being a claim of responsibility for the bombing of Pan Am 103, the Crown Office will pursue any further investigation which may be necessary.

ENVIRONMENT

Landfill Sites

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all the landfill sites licensed by local authorities in the United Kingdom that are situated closer than 200 m to human habitations.

Mr. Atkins: The Department of the Environment does not keep records of individual landfill sites. That information can be obtained from the waste regulation authorities. The Department gives guidance, in waste management paper No. 27, on the safeguards required for developments near landfill sites. In addition, planning law requires a local planning authority to consult the relevant waste disposal authority about certain planning applications within 250 m of a waste disposal site.

Brixton City Challenge

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with the P and O Property Group in relation to its participation in Brixton city challenge projects.

Mr. Baldry: There have been no such discussions with the P and O Property Group. Brixton city challenge has kept the Department informed of developments.

Hazardous Waste

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to produce a definition of hazardous waste for use in the United Kingdom which is consistent with the definitions in the Basle convention; and if he will make a statement on progress towards such a definition.

Mr. Atkins: The hazardous waste directive, 91/689/EEC, defines hazardous waste, inter alia, as waste featuring on a list to be drawn up by reference to the annexes to the directive. The annexes are similar to annexes included in the Basle convention. The Council is likely to consider the list in the autumn. The probable revised implementation date for the directive is July 1995.

Water Byelaws

Mr. Colin Shepherd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish his proposals for taking action on the replacement of water byelaws by regulations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: It is intended to issue a consultation paper which considers the scope, format and enforcement of provisions to replace the water byelaws during the summer.

Lavatory Cisterns

Mr. Colin Shepherd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has had from the British Bathroom Council in respect of the retention of byelaws relating to siphons and overflows in lavatory cisterns.

Mr. Atkins: My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State with responsibility for the construction industry was briefed on that matter on 16 June at one of his regular fortnightly meetings with the construction industry.

Listed Churches

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what criteria he applies in deciding whether to hold a non-statutory public inquiry when notified by the Church Commissioners that they propose to demolish a listed church where reasoned objections to the proposal are given by English Heritage, the Advisory Board for Redundant Churches, the local planning authority or a national amenity society.

Mr. Baldry: Each case is considered on its merits in the light of the information supplied by the Church Commissioners, the views of the Advisory Board for Redundant Churches and English Heritage, and any representations made by local authorities or other interested parties.

Construction Industry

Sir David Madel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the latest information known to his Department as to the likely date for completion of the European standardisation programme as it affects the construction industry; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: Some 2,700 European standards for construction material are currently in preparation by the European Committee for Standardisation. I expect the first harmonised standards to be available early next year and the major part of the current programme to be completed by the end of 1997.

Sir David Madel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information his Department has in relation to likely increased activity in the construction industry in 1994 as it affects slate products; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: Deliveries of slate in the first quarter of 1994 were 11 per cent. higher than in the previous three months and 21 per cent. more than during the same period a year ago. This reflects the recent improvements in the volume of new construction orders. My Department's consultations with the construction industry indicate that a period of modest but sustained growth is expected. The slate industry is well placed to take advantage of that recovery.

Council Tax Banding Appeals

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list, by council tax collection authority area, the number of outstanding banding appeal cases and the proportion that they represent of all liable properties in that area, as at 1 April.

Mr. Curry: I am placing in the Library a list that shows, for each billing authority in England, the number of outstanding council tax banding appeals as at 31 March 1994 and the percentage of dwellings in each area this represents.

Tributyl Tin

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration has been given to extending the ban on the use of tributyl tin on small craft to include all vessels.

Mr. Atkins: Tributyl tin use on large vessels is an international concern which is being addressed by the marine environment protection Committee of the International Maritime Organisation. Members agreed in 1990 to consider appropriate ways of prohibiting totally, in the future, the use of tributyl tin compounds in anti-fouling paints for ships and the need for this was confirmed at the intermediate ministerial meeting of the North Sea Conference in December 1993. At the March 1994 meeting of the MEPC, however, the Committee recognised that at the present time alternative systems were not available whose cost could be justified by the benefits.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what measures are being taken to protect marine wildlife from the effects of tributyl tin;

(2) what plans the Government have to restrict the use of tributyl tin.

Mr. Atkins: Controls introduced in the United Kingdom in 1987 preventing the use of anti-foulants containing tributyl tin compounds on small boats and aquaculture equipment have resulted in significant improvements in water quality. Monitoring suggests that even the most sensitive species, the dogwhelk, is beginning to recover in many areas. Dockyard operations involving removal and application of anti-fouling paints containing tributyl tin compounds will become subject to integrated pollution control and require authorisation by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution from 1995.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what research has been carried out on the effects of tributyl tin on shellfish and marine wildlife.

Mr. Atkins: The Government have undertaken a substantial amount of work since 1982 on the effects of tributyl tin compounds used in anti-foulants, both within their own laboratories and through contracts with the Natural Environment Research Council and other organisations. Initially, the research was aimed mainly at establishing the nature and extent of toxic effects in non-target organisms and the results justified the regulation of anti-foulants containing tributyl tin compounds in 1987. Subsequent research has monitored the effectiveness of the regulations by assessing levels of contamination in, and the recovery of, commercially important shellfish and other components of the marine ecosystem including the dogwhelk, the most sensitive species.

Slate

Sir David Madel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures his Department is planning in 1994 to limit imports of inferior quality slate; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: It is not appropriate to limit imports of slate products directly. However, slate used in the United Kingdom should be suitable for our climatic and atmospheric conditions as well as for their specified purpose. The appropriate requirements are set out in a British standard, BS680, satisfaction of which will ensure compliance with building regulations where applicable. My Department is seeking to ensure that the benefits of the British standard are carried over into harmonised European standards.

Sir David Madel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures of export assistance his Department will undertake in 1994 to help the slate industry; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: In conjunction with the DTI, my Department maintains building materials exports task forces for France, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, the Nordic countries and North America. My Ministerial colleagues and I plan to have taken export missions to eight countries this year. All those activities are open to the United Kingdom slate industry. I would be happy for them to discuss any specific needs with my officials.

Canada Geese

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what considerations underlay the issue of licences for the killing of Canada geese in London parks; which parks these licences are valid for; and what methods are permitted.

Mr. Atkins: Section 16 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 provides that licences to control birds may be issued for reasons which include conserving wild birds, preserving public health or public safety. It was for these reasons that licences have been issued for the control of Canada geese numbers in London parks. Information that would identify the applicant for a licence is normally regarded as confidential. Licences provide that birds may be killed humanely using any method not prohibited by the 1981 Act.

Ecolabelling

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will set out the evidence which led the United Kingdom Ecolabelling Board to arrive at the conclusion that no other EU country considers animal testing should be part of ecolabelling; and if he will list all those EU members who have taken a public position on this issue;

(2) what factors led the United Kingdom Ecolabelling Board to conclude that there is no basis for agreement in the United Kingdom about including animal testing in ecolabelling; what percentage of the organisations consulted by the United Kingdom Ecolabelling Board on this issue were not environmental or animal welfare groups; and what percentage of the organisations consulted were opposed to inclusion of animal welfare in ecolabelling.

Mr. Atkins: The United Kingdom Ecolabelling Board was established under the European Communities Act 1972 to administer and promote the EC ecolabelling scheme in the United Kingdom. These questions are matters for the United Kingdom Ecolabelling Board and I have, therefore, asked the board to reply to the hon. Member direct.

Market Testing

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out the total cost of external consultancy fees incurred by his Department in relation to market testing.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 29 June 1994]:* As at March 1994, the total cost of external consultancy fees paid by the Department and its agencies in relation to market testing amounted to approximately £1,177,000.

Recycled Paper

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of his Department's *(a)* press releases and *(b)* written answers are printed on recycled paper.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 4 July 1994]:* My Department is committed by its green housekeeping policy statement to preserve natural resources and so, where possible, press notices are sent to media outlets by electronic mail. Those hard copies which are required and all written answers are printed on recycled paper with the exception of the press release header page which is printed on paper from managed forests.

Nuclear Tests

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration has been given to the implications of the publication by the United States Department of Energy on 27 June of details of the use of United Kingdom origin reactor grade plutonium in a nuclear test explosion in 1962, on Her Majesty's Government's policy of not commenting on the details of any nuclear weapons tests which may have been carried out.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 4 July 1994]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement, *Official Report*, 4 July, column 82.

Fire Consultants

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last consulted with the Association of Professional Fire Consultants.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 4 July 1994]:* My Department has become aware only recently of the Association of Professional Fire Consultants. The association made representations to the inter-departmental scrutiny on fire legislation and enforcement. The association will be included in any future consultation on building regulation fire matters.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the advisory non-departmental public bodies sponsored by his Department which have a statutory basis.

Sir John Wheeler: A list of the advisory non-departmental public bodies sponsored by the Northern Ireland Office and Northern Ireland Departments which have a statutory basis is as follows:

Advisory Committee of the Therapeutic Professions Allied to Medicine
Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland
Central Dental Advisory Committee
Central Medical Advisory Committee
Central Nursing Advisory Committee
Central Personal Social Services Advisory Committee
Central Pharmaceutical Advisory Committee
Clinical Engineering and Medical Physics Services Advisory Committee
Clinical Imaging Services Advisory Committee
Committees for the Employment of Disabled People
Disability Living Allowance Advisory Board for Northern Ireland
Distinction and Meritorious Service Awards Committee
Drainage Council for Northern Ireland
Industrial Development Board for Northern Ireland
Laboratory Services Advisory Committee
Northern Ireland Water Council (NIWC)
Poisons Board
Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights (SACHR)
Statistics Advisory Committee

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list those of his Department's advisory non-departmental public bodies which the Government are required to consult prior to legislation proposals; and in respect of which bodies the Government must publish their response to advice supplied by them.

Sir John Wheeler: The Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights is consulted when legislative proposals affecting human rights are published; a formal response by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is issued when the Commission's annual report is laid before Parliament.

The Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland is required to consult the Drainage Council for Northern Ireland before its legislation proposals. However, it is not required to publish its response to any advice supplied by the council.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will list his Department's advisory non-departmental public bodies which are required to produce annual reports;

(2) if he will list the advisory non-departmental public bodies sponsored by his Department which are required to lay their annual reports before Parliament.

Sir John Wheeler: The information requested can be obtained from the Cabinet Office publication "Public Bodies 1993", copies of which are available in the Library.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list his Department's advisory non-departmental public bodies which are required to publish their advice to Government.

Sir John Wheeler: The Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland is required to publish its final recommendations, which are laid before Parliament by the Secretary of State. The Northern Ireland Higher Education Council and the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights are each required to produce an annual report, which will ensure that the outcome of the advice to Government is made widely available.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the advisory bodies which he has set up in his Department since the publication of "Public Bodies 1993".

Sir John Wheeler: Only one advisory body has been set up by the Northern Ireland Office and Northern Ireland Departments since the publication of "Public Bodies 1993"—the Geological Survey of Northern Ireland Advisory Panel.

Police Authority

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what arrangements have been made for the appointment of a new Police Authority for Northern Ireland following the expiry of the term of office of the previous authority on 28 June; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I have appointed Mr. David Cook as chairman, Mr. Pat Armstrong CBE as vice-chairman and 18 members of the Police Authority for Northern Ireland, for a term of three years from 29 June 1994. In making the appointments I have, as required by statute, consulted organisations and persons representative of the community in Northern Ireland. I welcome the positive response that was made by almost all those consulted. As a result, the authority's members are drawn from a wide cross-section of the community, including the district councils, voluntary organisations, agriculture, industry and commerce. Continuity is provided by the reappointment of many individuals for a second term.

The police authority has a vital task to perform in securing the maintenance of an adequate and efficient police force. It also has a very important role to play in enhancing the relationship between the police and the public whom it serves. The authority has the additional challenge of helping to develop new structures for policing in Northern Ireland. I believe it will make a significant contribution in all those sectors.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Mr. Wernher Rey

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what approaches have been made to him by the Swiss authorities in relation to Mr. Wernher Rey and the affairs of Omni Corporation, Inspectorate AG and related companies.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I understand that the Swiss authorities contacted our embassy in Berne in 1991, to inquire about Mr. Rey's nationality. I am not aware of any other approaches.

Nigeria

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy in respect of the inauguration by the Nigerian authorities of a National Constitutional Conference; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Following the inauguration of the National Constitutional Conference in Nigeria on 27 June,

proceedings were adjourned until 11 July. We look forward to expressions of intent by the Nigerian authorities being translated into real progress towards civilian rule.

Immigration

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's response to the recommendations of the Commissioner for Social Affairs as contained in his communication on immigration and asylum to the European Parliament and the Council 1994 that the member states ratify the international convention for the protection of rights of all migrant workers and members of their families, adopted by the United Nations on 18 December 1990.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I have been asked to reply.

The Government deposited their explanatory memorandum on the communication on 25 March. We have considered this convention carefully, but are unable to sign it, as it goes beyond our existing international commitments on access to labour markets and measures necessary to secure the interests of migrants working here.

Sudan

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 28 June, *Official Report*, column *523*, which foreign states the Sudanese Government have accused of being behind the plot in which the former President Sadiq al-Mahdi is alleged to have been involved.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The officially controlled Sudanese media have referred to foreign states and intelligence agencies, but have not provided more specific details.

China

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what advice he gives to United Kingdom business men, travellers and tourists who are considering flying internally in China.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: British nationals are advised of those internal Chinese airlines which are believed to meet international standards of maintenance. It is for the traveller to decide which air carrier to use.

Rwanda

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what commitments of *(a)* troops and *(b)* logistical support have been made by countries supporting the French-led United Nations initiative in Rwanda.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: By 30 June, Senegal had contributed 40 troops to the French-led intervention force in Rwanda. A medical team from Mauritania, 20 observers from Egypt, 100 troops from Guinea Bissau and a Belgian military liaison officer are also expected to arrive shortly.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the Western European Union role in supporting Operation Turquoise in Rwanda; and what has been achieved so far.

Mr. Heathcoat Amory: A number of WEU member states, including the United Kingdom, have expressed their readiness to assist and support the French humanitarian operation in Rwanda, primarily through the provision of logistic resources, which might be co-ordinated through the WEU, and humanitarian assistance. The operation is proceeding on the ground, with French troops evacuating civilians from both ethnic communities caught up in the fighting and offering protection to Tutsi refugees near the Zaire border.

Holland

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the United Kingdom's relationship with the Netherlands; what ministerial visits have taken place to Holland in the past 12 months; what bilateral trade initiatives and contracts the United Kingdom has with that country; and how many official Dutch visits have been made to the United Kingdom in the past year.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The United Kingdom enjoys excellent relations with the Netherlands. In the past 12 months, the following ministerial visits have taken place to the Netherlands: the Secretary of State for Defence, the Secretary of State for Employment, the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, the Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the Under-Secretary of State for Education, the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland and the Under-Secretary of State for Health. Trade between the two countries last year totalled over £15·8 billion. The Netherlands is the United Kingdom's fourth largest market. There have been a number of visits by Dutch Ministers over this period.

Colombia

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Colombian authorities with regard to political disappearances and killings in Colombia.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We are in regular touch with the Colombian Government on human rights. I raised our concerns with President Gaviria during the President's visit to London in July last year. They were also discussed when the Prime Minister met the President. I repeated our concerns during my visit to Colombia in January.

Kuwait

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the Government of Iraq is co-operating with the Red Cross over Kuwaiti and other prisoners held in Iraqi prisons; and what representations he has made on this matter.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The International Committee of the Red Cross chaired a meeting of the tripartite commission—coalition countries, Iraq and the ICRC—in Geneva on 1 July during which the Iraqi delegation gave its initial response to 71 out of the 609 inquiry files passed to Iraq by the ICRC over 18 months ago. We are demanding that Iraq offer information on the other files very soon. If substantive progress is not made, this matter may have to be referred to the Security Council for further action. A further meeting will be held in two months' time to review progress. We raise the plight of Kuwaiti and other missing

persons at the United Nations at every possible opportunity, for example when the Security Council last reviewed sanctions against Iraq on 17 May.

Mercenaries

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many British citizens are currently known to be actively involved in foreign conflicts as mercenaries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There are no figures available for the numbers of British citizens involved in foreign conflicts as mercenaries. The Government have no control over private citizens going overseas. The recruitment of mercenaries in this country is in some cases unlawful. If any evidence came to light that British citizens recruited as mercenaries were engaged in illegal activities, that evidence would be referred to the relevant authorities.

British Workers Abroad

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many United Kingdom citizens under the age of 25 years are currently known to be working abroad in part-time jobs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Government do not maintain records of British nationals under the age of 25 who are in part-time employment abroad.

Violent Crime

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many United Kingdom citizens were victims of violent crime while being abroad in 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In 1993 there were 194 cases of violent crime abroad against British nationals notified to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The crimes included homicide, rape, assault and kidnap.

Oeno (Rats)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals he has received from Dr. M. de L. Brooke of the department of zoology at Cambridge university for the removal of rats from Oeno in the Pitcairn Islands group; and what action he is taking.

Mr. Goodlad: Dr. Brooke wrote to me on 17 June with a proposal for the eradication of rats from Oeno island, at an estimated cost of £47,500. We will consider this proposal carefully in the context of the management plan we are drawing up for the neighbouring island of Henderson, and plan to discuss it further with Dr. Brooke.

Mrs. Rekhmat Bibi

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will arrange for the application by Mrs. Rekhmat Bibi—ref. V94/01052—to the British high commission in Islamabad to visit the United Kingdom to be urgently reconsidered on the basis of correspondence from Bradford law centre forwarded to him by the hon. Member for Bradford, West.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The documents referred to have not yet been received in my office. I have however asked the entry clearance officer at the high commission in Islamabad to let me have a report. I shall arrange for the hon. Member to receive a substantive reply from the migration and visa correspondence unit of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office as soon as possible.

Test Ban Treaty

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the draft comprehensive test ban treaty tabled by the Australian Government in Geneva on 31 March.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: On 31 March, the Australian Government put forward a resource paper, in the form of a draft comprehensive test ban treaty, to aid the work of the nuclear test ban ad hoc committee. This resource paper contains interesting and useful ideas.

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his assessment of the likely duration of negotiations for a comprehensive test ban treaty after the first two sessions of talks at the conference on disarmament; and if he will make a statement on the issues remaining to be resolved.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: There has been good progress in the second session of the comprehensive test ban treaty negotiations. We hope that similar progress can be made during the final 1994 session of the conference on disarmament from 25 July to 7 September. It is difficult, however, to assess how much longer the negotiating process is likely to take. The CTB delegations will agree to the treaty as a whole, rather than in sections. Major issues on which negotiations are likely to focus include verification, the organisation, duration, scope, and entry into force.

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on progress being made towards a comprehensive test ban treaty at the conference on disarmament in Geneva.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: There has been good progress in the second session of the comprehensive test ban treaty negotiations. Delegations have shown a strong commitment to moving forward towards agreement on an effective, verifiable CTB. The United Kingdom team has been fully involved in the debate, and has made valuable contributions to the work completed during this session. In particular, the contribution by the United Kingdom friend of the chair in the verification working group has been warmly welcomed.

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment Her Majesty's Government have made of progress towards preparing a draft comprehensive test ban treaty by the two working groups of the conference on disarmament's ad hoc committee on a nuclear test ban.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The two working groups have made excellent progress. The working group on verification has conducted intensive discussions on the various monitoring techniques which might be deployed in an international verification system. The working group on legal and institutional issues has completed the first or

second readings of all main draft articles. Both working groups have produced compilations of draft treaty text to be used as the basis of negotiations in the next session.

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the chair of the ad hoc committee on a nuclear test ban treaty at the conference on disarmament in Geneva had not presented an official draft treaty before the end of the second session; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The chairman of the ad hoc group on a nuclear test ban has decided that the composite texts produced by the two working groups—on verification and on legal and institutional issues—should be put forward for the next session as the basis for negotiations. We welcome Ambassador Marin-Bosch's pragmatic attitude in promoting the committee's efforts to develop these composite texts into a rolling text.

Iran

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response was given to an Iranian Government representative's complaints about items concerning the Mashad bombing, broadcast by Spectrum Radio's Persian programme.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Iranian authorities have told us that they believe that Spectrum Radio's Persian programme is broadcasting subversive material on behalf of the Iranian opposition group, the Mojahedin-e Khalq —MKO. They have not complained about any specific broadcast. We have replied that any organisation enjoys freedom of speech in the United Kingdom as long as it acts within the law. Any breach of the terms and conditions of the broadcasting licence would be a matter for the Radio Authority, which is investigating a separate complaint. We do not support the MKO. We condemn the terrorist attack on the Mashad mosque.

Cyprus

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether it is Her Majesty's Government's policy that the Cyprus problem must be resolved before the admission of Cyprus to full membership of the European Community.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: It would be difficult for Cyprus to accede if the four freedoms—free movement of people, goods, services and capital—were not in force throughout the island, but the Council has confirmed that Cyprus is eligible for European Union membership and the next phase of enlargement will involve Cyprus. The Council will review the situation in January 1995.

Hong Kong

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the election of Mr. John Swaine as President of the Hong Kong Legislative Council on 19 February 1993.

Mr. Goodlad *[holding answer 1 July 1994]:* Mr. John Swaine was elected unopposed as President of the Hong Kong Legislative Council on 19 February 1993. Although Mr. Swaine's election took place before all the residual formalities relating to the Hong Kong Letters Patent 1992 and the Hong Kong Additional Instructions 1992 had been completed, we know of no act performed by Mr. Swaine which was invalid as a result of this error.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the errors in the procedural steps in respect of local laws enacted in Hong Kong in 1992 and 1993 including the two budgets; and if he will introduce legislation to rectify those errors.

Mr. Goodlad *[holding answer 1 July 1994]:* The Hong Kong Letters Patent 1992 and the Hong Kong Additional Instructions 1992 were published in the *Hong Kong Gazette* before residual formalities relating to them were completed. This should have no effect on the validity of anything done in Hong Kong before or after the formalities had been completed, but we are considering whether any further action is necessary to remove doubt in this matter.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what date Her Majesty sealed the amendments to the Hong Kong Additional Instructions 1992 and the Hong Kong Letters Patent 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad *[holding answer 1 July 1994]:* The Hong Kong Letters Patent 1992 were sealed on 15 April 1993 and the Hong Kong Additional Instructions 1992 were signed by Her Majesty on 24 March 1993.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what were the reasons for the legal formalities not being completed prior to the enactment of the Hong Kong Letters Patent 1992 and the Hong Kong Additional Instruction 1992.

Mr. Goodlad *[holding answer 1 July 1994]:* As a result of a clerical error, the Hong Kong Letters Patent 1992 and the Hong Kong Additional Instructions 1992 were gazetted and brought into force in Hong Kong before the residual formalities had been completed.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Animal Welfare

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many prosecutions for cruelty to livestock were brough in each year since 1985; and how many, in each year, were brought by *(a)* the Government and *(b)* the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

Mr. Soames: The number of prosecutions for cruelty to livestock in England and Wales taken by my Department and the Welsh Office between 1985 and 1993 under the Protection of Animals Acts 1911 to 1988 and the Agriculture (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1968 are as follows:

	Number
1985	2
1986	6
1987	8
1988	6
1989	4
1990	5

	Number
1991	0
1992	6
1993	2

Prosecutions may also be taken by other parties such as local authorities and the RSPCA. Comprehensive figures on the numbers of such prosecutions are not available.

Arable Area Payments

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many farmers in England received arable area payments greater than *(a)* £100,000, *(b)* £250,000, *(c)* £500,000 and *(d)* £1,000,000 in the last year for which the information is available.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Under the integrated administration and control system, applicants must make a single application covering all the land which they farm and some applications cover a number of holdings which are farmed quite separately on a day-to-day basis. The information given below relates to IACS applications, rather than to individual farmers.

Arable Area Payments Scheme: 1992-93

Size Band	Number of Payments
from £1,000,000 to £249,999	599
from £250,000 to £499,999	45
from £500,000 upwards[1]	7

[1] It is not possible to identify separately the number of payments between £500,999 and £100,000 and the number over £1,000,000 for reasons of confidentiality.

Staff Surveys

Mr. Radice: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what surveys of the views, opinions and attitudes of the staff of her Department have been carried out in the last two years; and if she will place copies of the findings in the Library.

Mr. Jack: The following surveys of views, opinions and attitudes of staff have been carried out within the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, and its agencies during the last two years. Summaries of findings made available to staff will be placed in the Library.

Central Veterinary Laboratories—Repertory Grid Survey (assessment of the views of staff on management styles), summer 1993[1]
Intervention Board—Staff Attitude Survey, November 1992
Central Science Laboratories—Survey of the Quality of Administrative Services, summer 1992

[1] A summary is being produced for staff, which will be placed in the Library when ready.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to her answer of 24 June, *Official Report*, column *391*, when she expects the 1992 CAP reform agreement to be fully implemented; what benefit of that reform deal has been experienced by consumers in food prices to date; what estimates she has of the costs of the CAP to the consumer in (i) 1992 and (ii) 1993; what foodstuffs she expects will cost consumers less; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 4 July 1994]:* The 1992 CAP reforms will be fully implemented by the end of the 1995-96 marketing years for those commodities affected. The reforms will result in particular in a reduction in the support prices for cereals and beef of around 35 per cent. and 15 per cent. respectively. Overall, the effect of CAP reform will be to reduce support prices by an amount equivalent to 2 per cent. of retail food prices, the effect being spread over a number of years. However, movements in retail food prices are influenced by a wide range of factors and it is not possible to isolate the impact of any single factor over a particular period.

Estimates of the total cost of the CAP to consumers are not possible without making speculative assumptions about current levels of world prices and the changes in these prices if present policies were abandoned.

SCOTLAND

Nursery Schools

Mr. Gallie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which rating authorities in Scotland use their discretionary powers to reduce rates leviable on private sector nursery schools.

Mr. Stewart: Details of the policies of individual rating authorities with regard to their granting of discretionary rating relief are not held centrally. However, if a private sector nursery school has charitable status it will be eligible for mandatory rates relief of 80 per cent. in accordance with section 4 of the Local Government (Financial Provisions Etc.) (Scotland) Act 1962, as amended.

Council Tax

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list, by council tax collection authority area, the number of outstanding banding appeal cases and the proportion they represent of all liable properties in that area, as at 1 April.

Mr. Stewart: The table provides the available information, which relates to all classes of proposal to change the valuation list made to assessors and subsequent appeals.

	Number of properties liable for Council Tax (i)	Proposals/appeals still to be dealt with at 31 March 1994	
		Number	As percentage of liable properties
Borders	46,487	2,372	5·1
Central	109,913	1,751	1·6
Dumfries and Galloway	62,796	1,276	2·0
Fife	142,456	1,936	1·4
Grampian	211,628	5,141	2·4

	Number of properties liable for Council Tax (i)	Proposals/appeals still to be dealt with at 31 March 1994	
		Number	As percentage of liable properties
Highland	87,532	2,537	2·9
Lothian	319,925	6,905	2·2
Strathclyde	937,092	16,894	1·8
Tayside	166,562	8,103	4·9
Orkney	8,381	4	0·0
Shetland	9,120	20	0·2
Western Isles	12,135	352	2·9
Scotland	2,114,027	47,291	2·2

Sources: (i) Estimates supplied by Local Authorities, October 1993.
(ii) Quarterly statistical return, from Assessors, 31 March 1994.

Water Authorities

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 23 June, *Official Report*, column *299*, what obligation the proposed new water authorities will be under to offer a 25 per cent. single person discount when they charge for their services.

Sir Hector Monro: I refer the hon. Member to my second reply to him of 15 June 1994, *Official Report*, column *469*.

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will list the advisory non-departmental public bodies sponsored by his Department which have a statutory basis;

(2) if he will list his Department's advisory non-departmental public bodies which are required to produce annual reports;

(3) if he will list his Department's advisory non-departmental public bodies which are required to publish their advice to the Government;

(4) if he will list the advisory bodies which he has set up in his Department since the publication of "Public Bodies 1993";

(5) if he will list the advisory non-departmental public bodies sponsored by his Department which are required to lay their annual reports before Parliament;

(6) if he will list those of his Department's advisory non-departmental public bodies which the Government are required to consult before legislation proposals; and in respect of which bodies the Government must publish their response to advice supplied by them.

Mr. Lang: The readily available information on advisory bodies sponsored by my Department is contained in the Cabinet Office publication, "Public Bodies 1993", copies of which are available in the Libraries of the House. The next edition of "Public Bodies", with updated information, will be published in December. Other information on the advisory non-departmental public bodies sponsored by my Department is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Enterprise Allowance Scheme

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the take-up of the enterprise allowance scheme in Fife over the last three years; and what was *(a)* the number and *(b)* the total value of awards made in each six-month period.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 27 June 1994]:* Questions relating to the take-up of the enterprise allowance scheme in Fife are a matter for Scottish Enterprise. I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Seabird Monitoring Programme

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what support will be provided to the long-term seabird monitoring programme on the Isle of May.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 4 July 1994]:* The Institute for Terrestrial Ecology will carry out seabird monitoring on the Isle of May this year on behalf of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee. The value of the contract is £9,300. In addition, Scottish Natural Heritage, which owns and manages the island as a national nature reserve, carries out its own monitoring work on the island and has commissioned further monitoring projects to the value of £7,500. Decisions on monitoring projects in future years are matters for Scottish Natural Heritage and the JNCC.

Fox Hunts

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the cost of policing fox hunts in each chief constabulary in Scotland during each financial year since 1990-91; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 1 July 1994]:* Central Scotland police, Grampian, Northern constabulary and Tayside police have not incurred any expense in policing fox hunts since 1990. Details relating to costs incurred by Fife constabulary and Strathclyde police are not readily available. The estimated costs for policing this activity by Dumfries and Galloway constabulary and Lothian and Borders police are as follows:

Financial Year Costs

	1990-91 £	1991-92 £	1992-93 £	1993-94 £
Dumfries and Galloway Constabulary	464·00	476·00	482·00	690·00
Lothian and Borders Police	5,807·00	2,496·00	2,636·00	2,673·00

Scottish Homes

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the identifiable *(a)* capital and *(b)* revenue or current expenditure by Scottish Homes by regional council electoral division, or on any other geographical basis on which the data are collated or accounted, in each year since 1990; how much in both expenditure categories is (i) legally committed and (ii) planned for 1994-95 and 1995-96; what is the pro rata expenditure in each category for each regional council electoral division, expressed as a percentage of the total capital and revenue budgets measured against their respective populations; if he will rank the regional council electoral divisions in descending order by level of expenditure in both categories; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Scottish Homes does not hold records by regional council electoral division. The information which is readily available is shown in the table and groups district council areas together according to Scottish Homes administrative districts. The figures show capital expenditure on development funding; revenue grants amount to only £6·5 million across Scotland in 1994-95. The programme for 1995-96 will not be decided until after my right hon. Friend announces his expenditure plans later this year.

Scottish Homes: Development Funding

	1989-90 Outturn £ million	1990-91 Outturn £ million	1991-92 Outturn £ million	1992-93 Outturn £ million	1993-94 Estimated outturn £ million	1993-94 Spend per capita £	1994-95 Plans
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway							
Annandale	0·9	0·7	0·1	0·2	0·5	13·9	
Cumnock and Doon Valley	0·3	1·2	0·5	0·5	0·5	10·9	
Cunninghame	2·4	4·1	3·8	4·9	6·3	46·0	
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	2·7	1·9	1·8	3·6	1·7	21·6	
Kyle and Carrick	0·0	0·9	1·5	1·7	3·6	32·0	
Nithsdale	1·1	1·4	1·9	3·0	1·7	29·0	
Stewartry	1·2	0·3	0·2	0·4	1·0	44·8	
Wigtown	0·5	1·4	2·2	1·2	0·9	31·0	
TOTAL	9·0	11·9	12·0	15·6	16·3	31·3	16·6
Glasgow City							
City of Glasgow	77·6	68·5	74·8	90·2	92·0	138·4	96·3
Highlands Islands and Grampian							
Aberdeen	7·3	6·8	7·7	8·6	7·9	37·5	
Badenoch	0·3	0·8	0·6	1·1	0·3	25·0	
Banff and Buchan	0·7	0·4	1·6	1·6	2·1	24·5	
Caithness	1·5	0·7	0·3	0·1	0·1	4·8	
Gordon	0·5	0·9	0·5	1·7	2·4	31·6	
Inverness	2·9	2·2	1·7	2·3	2·2	33·8	
Kincardine	1·1	1·5	0·6	1·1	2·7	51·4	
Lochaber	1·6	1·5	0·9	2·1	3·7	189·8	
Moray	2·1	2·6	1·5	1·8	1·2	14·8	
Nairn	0·4	0·5	0·3	0·4	0·4	36·5	
Orkney	0·8	1·5	3·4	1·8	1·9	96·3	
Ross and Cromarty	0·7	1·0	0·5	2·1	1·4	29·3	
Shetlands	0·9	0·6	0·9	0·8	0·6	25·7	
Skye and Lochalsh	0·1	0·4	1·8	1·4	1·7	138·3	
Sutherland	0·0	0·6	0·1	0·1	0·3	20·9	
Western Isles	0·2	0·9	0·7	1·0	2·3	77·6	
TOTAL	21·4	23·0	23·1	28·0	31·1	39·6	30·8
Lanarkshire and Central							
Clackmannan	0·5	1·1	2·7	2·6	3·8	81·0	
Clydesdale	1·8	1·0	1·4	1·9	2·9	50·7	
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	0·8	0·4	0·8	0·3	0·4	5·9	
East Kilbride	0·1	0·3	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·5	
Falkirk	3·5	2·7	2·0	4·5	2·9	20·1	
Hamilton	2·4	2·3	2·5	4·3	3·2	30·5	
Monklands	0·6	1·6	3·2	3·1	1·2	12·0	
Motherwell	1·5	3·9	5·8	7·0	11·5	80·8	
Stirling	1·6	3·1	3·2	3·4	3·2	38·9	
TOTAL	12·9	16·3	21·6	27·0	29·2	35·3	29·9
Lothian and Borders							
Berwickshire	0·4	0·2	0·6	0·2	1·2	59·6	
East Lothian	2·4	2·3	2·9	3·1	3·8	43·7	

	1989-90 Outturn £ million	1990-91 Outturn £ million	1991-92 Outturn £ million	1992-93 Outturn £ million	1993-94 Estimated outturn £ million	1993-94 Spend per capita £	1994-95 Plans
Edinburgh	17·6	17·3	20·4	24·8	28·7	66·4	
Ettrick	1·4	1·0	1·2	1·2	2·0	56·9	
Midlothian	2·7	3·9	2·7	3·0	1·8	22·7	
Roxburgh	1·3	2·1	1·4	1·0	1·4	39·6	
Tweeddale	1·2	0·5	0·4	1·3	0·9	57·6	
West Lothian	3·0	2·0	2·8	5·7	4·6	30·8	
TOTAL	30·0	29·2	32·4	40·3	44·3	52·0	44·5
North and South Clyde							
Argyll and Bute	5·2	4·1	4·3	4·2	3·5	52·0	
Bearsden and Milngavie	0·1	0·0	—	0·0	—	—	
Clydebank	3·5	3·7	8·7	9·4	9·1	200·9	
Dumbarton	1·2	1·3	1·0	4·2	5·6	71·5	
Eastwood	0·3	0·3	0·0	—	0·1	1·7	
Inverclyde	5·7	4·6	8·2	9·5	9·8	107·9	
Renfrew	8·5	13·2	18·0	18·1	18·6	94·3	
Strathkelvin	0·7	1·8	—	0·8	1·3	14·9	
TOTAL	25·3	29·0	40·3	46·2	48·0	71·8	52·6
Tayside and Fife							
Angus	2·8	1·5	3·6	2·8	4·4	46·3	
Dundee	11·3	10·8	10·9	14·0	14·5	86·8	
Dunfermline	2·4	3·1	2·6	3·3	6·0	45·5	
Kirkcaldy	2·7	2·3	3·0	3·1	5·4	36·6	
North and East Fife	1·4	2·6	2·5	3·3	2·7	39·8	
Perth and Kinross	3·9	6·6	8·4	7·9	8·6	67·1	
TOTAL	24·6	27·0	31·1	34·4	41·6	56·4	41·1
SCOTLAND TOTAL	200·9	205·0	235·2	281·6	302·6	59·8	311·9

Note: Figures may not add up to rounding.

TRANSPORT

Departmental Staff

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list for the Bristol travel-to-work area the numbers of *(a)* casuals and *(b)* fixed-term appointments in each Department of Transport office.

Mr. Norris: The Department and its agencies have 81 offices in the south-west region, which includes the Bristol travel-to-work area. At present, a total of 52 casual staff are employed at 18 of those offices, and one person is employed on a fixed-term appointment. Details are as follows:

South West

Building	Fixed term appointment	Casuals
1 Alverton Terrace Penzance Cornwall	—	—
1A Courtney Park Newton Abbot Devon	—	—
2 Concorde Drive Southmead Bristol	—	—
2 Meads Business Centre Bridgemead Swindon SN5 7YR	—	1
2 Scott House Bindon Road Business Park Taunton TA2 6BH	—	—
21-23 Gillam Road Northbourne Bournemouth BH10 6Bw	—	—
226 Kingsway St. George Bristol BS5 8NS	—	—
39 Blenheim Road Minehead Somerset	—	—
73 Molesworth Street Wadebridge Cornwall	—	—
8 St. Peters Road Parkstone Dorset BH14 0RA	—	—
Agaton Fort Budshead Road Ernesettle Plymouth	—	1
Albert Place Daniell Street Truro Cornwall	—	—
Ashton Vale Road Ashton Bristol BS3 2JE	—	—
Ashville Road Gloucester GL2 6ET	—	1
Audley House Goldney Avenue Chippenham SN15 1ND	—	—
Barrie Lane St. Albans HD Worth Matravers Swanage	—	—
Berkeley House Croydon Street Bristol BS5 0DA	—	3
Bishopsgate House 94 All Saints Road Cheltenham	—	—
Brendon House High Street Taunton Somerset TA1 3NT	—	2
Bridge House Sion Place Bristol BS8 4AS	—	—
Brunel Road Chruchfields Industrial Estate Salisbury Wiltshire	—	—
Car Park Cannon Street Taunton TA1 LPT	—	—
Cast Down Hartland Bideford North Devon EX39 6AD	—	—
Castle Drive Falmouth TR11 4WZ	—	—

Building	Fixed term appointment	Casuals
CGS Common Lane Beer Seaton Devon X12 3AG	—	—
Chiseldon Camp Chiseldon Wiltshire	—	—
Chy-An-Dour Barracks Penzance TR18 3LH	—	—
Cooks Way Bindon Row Business Park Taunton TA2 6BG	—	—
County Hall Taunton Somerset TA1 4DT	—	—
Cumberland Block South Raglan Barracks Devonport	—	—
Customs House Clayton Street Bristol BS11 9EX	—	—
Darbys Lane Nuffield Industrial Estate Poole BH1	—	—
DTP WNTR MNTNC Comp Tortworth Road Falfield Gloucester	—	—
Eastern Avenue Barnwood Gloucester	—	—
Eastgate Office Centre Bristol	—	6
Elmbridge Court Cheltenham Road Gloucester GL3 1JY	—	1
Falcon Road Sowton Exeter Devon EX2 7LB	—	3
Flowers Hill Bath Road Brislington Bristol	—	—
Foxhill Bath Avon	—	—
Glen View Truro Road St. Austell Cornwall	—	—
Gorran Haven St. Austell Cornwall PL26 6NX	—	—
Government Buildings Prince of Wales Road Dorchester Dorset	—	—
Grace Road Marsh Barton Trading Estate Exeter Devon	—	2
Grove Point Easton Portland Dorset DT5 1DW	—	—
Hanover House Northgate Bridgwater Somerset	—	—
Highbank 1 Govier Lane Watchet Somerset TA23 0DQ	—	—
Highcliffe Christchurch Dorset	—	—
Hope Cove Kingsbridge Devon TQ7 3HW	—	—
Ilfracombe Devon EX34 9RU	—	—
Imperial Buildings Bar Road Falmouth TR11 4NW	—	1
Kings Quay Brixham Devon TQ4 6DL	—	—
LGV Marlborough Lane Swindon SN3 1RA	—	—
Maltravers House Petters Way Yeovil Somerset	—	—
Melrose House Rydon Lane Pynes Hill Exeter EX2 5AZ	—	—
No. 2 The Barbican Plymouth Devon	—	—
Northleigh House Limekiln Close Bristol BS12 6SR	—	2
Norton Fitzwarren Taunton Somerset	—	—
Parmorr Road Par Cornwall	—	—
Phoenix House Notte Street Plymouth Devon PL1 2HF	—	3
Porte Marsh Road Calne Wiltshire	—	—
Portmarsh Victoria Street Barnstable Devon	—	—
Pydar House Pydar Street Truro TR1 2TG	—	1
Room 306 Regent House High Street Western Super Mare	—	1
Rougement London Road Salisbury Wiltshire	—	—
South Quay The Harbour Paignton Devon TQH 6DT	—	—
St. Ives Cornwall	—	—
St. Johns Western Road Launceston PL15 7AY	—	—
St. Modwen House Parkway Industrial Estate Plymouth PL6 8LH	—	—
St. Paul Street Tiverton Devon	—	—
Station Road South Molton Devon	—	1
Sterling House Dixsfield Exeter EX1 1TP	—	1
Stillmore House Dennison Road Bodmin Cornwall	—	—
The Brotherhood Hall Launceston Cornwall	—	—
The Gaunts House Denmark Street Bristol BS1 5DR	1	12
The Quay Poole Dorset BH15 1HJ	—	—
Tollgate House Annexe (County House Bristol) BS2 8PS	—	1
Tollgate House Houlton Street Bristol BS2 9DJ	—	10
Tregonwell Court Commercial Road Bournemouth BH2 5LN	—	—
Unit 11 Sunnyside Road Weston-Super-Mare Avon	—	—
Westhill Road Wyke Regis Weymouth DT4 9ND	—	—
Wilson Way Redruth Cornwall	—	—
Wiltshire Drive Trowbridge Wiltshire BA14 0RF	—	—

Produced from the Personnel Information System as at 25 May 1994.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list for the London travel-to-work area the numbers of *(a)* casuals and *(b)* fixed-term appointments in each Department of Transport office.

Mr. Norris: The Department and its agencies have 193 offices in the London and south-east regions. At present, a total of 146 casual staff are employed at 51 of those offices, and 72 staff are employed on fixed-term appointments in 14 offices. Details are as follows:

London

Building	Fixed term appointment	Casuals
10 Tudor Drive Morden Surrey	—	—
102/110 Regency Street London SW1P 4BW	—	—
111 Canterbury Road Croydon Surrey CR0 3HH	—	1
112 Ruislip Road Greenford Middlesex UB6 9QH	—	—
112A Portland Road South Norwood London SE25	—	1
12 Guildford Street Chertsey Surrey	—	1
12 Station Road Sidcup Kent	—	10
134 Maple Road Surbiton Surrey	—	1
15-17 Great Marlborough Street London W1V 2VD	—	—
18 Great Marlborough Street London W1V 2DB	—	1

Building	Fixed term appointment	Casuals
2 Charteris Road Woodford Green London	—	—
2 Devon House Hermon Hill Wanstead London E11 2AW	—	—
2 Marsham Street London SW1P 3EB	12	2
23 Balfour Road Ilford IG1 4HP	—	2
239 The Broadway Burnt Oak Edgware Middlesex HA8 5EE	—	1
26-28 Old Queen Street London SW1H 9HP	—	—
28 Brookwood Road Southfields London SW18	—	—
285 Allenby Road Southall Middlesex	—	—
33 Woolwich Road Belvedere Kent DA17 5EE	—	—
38 Avenue Road Bexleyheath Kent DA7 4EG	—	—
4 Burnt Ash Hill Lee London SE12	—	—
473 Barking Road East Ham London E6 2LU	—	—
5 Stanley Road Teddington Middlesex	—	—
5-7 Green Lanes Palmers Green London N13 4TT	—	—
56 Glebe Way West Wickham Kent BR4 0RL	—	1
61 Lowfield Street Dartford Kent DA1 1HP	—	—
73-77 Station Lane Hornchurch Essex RM12 6JX	—	1
84 Tanner Street Barking Essex	—	—
96 Horsenden Lane North Greenford Middlesex	—	—
Aerodrome Road Hendon London NW9 5JJ	—	—
Anthony Wharf Lea Valley Trading Estate Edmonton	—	—
Argyle Road Sevenoaks Kent TN13 1NJ	—	—
Ashley House Monck Street London SW1P 2BQ	—	1
Avenue Lodge Park Avenue Wood Green London N22	—	—
Beddington Farm Road Croydon Surrey CR0 4XB	—	—
Bray Court Windsor Road Bray Maidenhead Berkshire	—	—
Capitol House 794 Green Lanes Winchmore Hill London	—	—
Central Court 1B Knoll Rise Orpington Kent BR6 0JA	2	1
Charles House Kensington High Street London W14 8QH	1	7
Church House Great Smith Street London SW1P 3BL	—	2
Clive House 12-18 Queens Road Weybridge Surrey	—	—
Craybrook House 15 Sidcup Hill Sidcup Kent	—	—
Crown Buildings 284 High Road Loughton Essex	—	—
Doric House Station Road Chingford London E4 6AD	—	1
Employment Exchange High Road Seven Kings Ilford Essex	—	—
Ennersdale Road Hither Green London SE13	—	—
Fir Tree Place Church Road Ashford Middlesex	—	—
Gate House Woodall House Lordship Lane Wood Green N22 5JW	—	—
Government Buildings Lime Grove Eastcote	—	—
Government Building Tolcarne Drive Pinner Middlesex HA5 2DZ	—	—
Government Buildings Honeypot Lane Stanmore HA7 1BD	—	1
Government Buildings London Road Stanmore Middlesex HA7 4PP	—	—
Government Buildings Viveash Close Hayes Middlesex	—	—
Grays Place Stoke Road Slough SL2 5AS	—	1
Hampton House 20 Albert Embankment London SE1	—	—
Hayes Repository Bourne Avenue Hayes Middlesex UB3 1RF	—	—
Helena House 348 High Street Sutton Surrey	—	—
HGVTS Anthony Wharf Lea Valley Trading Estate London	—	—
Hollison Avenue Brimsdown Enfield Middlesex	—	—
Home Address	—	—
Kings House 236-240 Pentonville Road London N1 9JZ	—	—
Lambeth Bridge House Albert Embankment London SE1 7SB	1	3
Leatherhead Road Chessington Surrey KT9 2LX	—	—
Lyndhurst House Bunns Lane Mill Hill London NW7 2AT	—	—
Millbank Tower Millbank London SW1P 2AG	—	—
Milton Road Wealdstone Middlesex	—	—
Mint House 6 Stanley Park Road Wallington SM6 0EU	—	—
North Street Redhill Surrey	—	—
Northside House 69 Tweedy Road Bromley BR1 3T2	—	—
Old Town Hall Woodcote Road Wallington SM6 OND	—	—
Quest House 11 Cross Road Croydon Surrey CR9 6EL	—	2
Raydean House 15-17 Western Parade Barnet Herts	—	—
Redhouse Road Mitcham Surrey CR0 3AQ	—	1
Refer to Relevant Personnel Management Section	—	—
Romney House 43 Marsham Street London SW1 3PY	—	3
Scratchwood M1 Comp Snowplough DP Millhill NW7 3JA	—	—
South Quay Plaza 2 183 Marsh Wall London E3	—	—
St. Christopher House Southwark Street London SE1	2	3
Sunley House 90-93 High Holborn London WC1V 6LP	—	—
Swanley Depot Junction M25/ M20 Swanley Kent	—	—
Tank Hill Road Purfleet Essex RM16 1SX	—	—

Building	Fixed term appointment	Casuals
Tolworth Tower Surbiton Surrey	—	—
US Naval Base Lime Grove Eastcote Middlesex	—	—
Willow Tree Lane Yeading Middlesex	—	1
Worton Hall Worton Road Isleworth Middlesex TW7 6ER	—	—
South East		
1 CG Cottages 84 Wartling Road Eastbourne B22 7PT	—	—
1-4 Queen Street Portsmouth Hants PO1 3JD	—	6
101 Alexandra Road Farnborough Hampshire	—	—
103-105 Carnarvon Road Clacton-on-Sea Essex	—	—
12 Eversfield Road Eastbourne East Sussex	—	1
124 High Street Berkhamsted Hertfordshire	—	—
143 Rock Avenue Gillingham Kent	—	1
19 Desborough Avenue High Wycombe Buckinghamshire	—	—
2 Dunstable Road Luton Bedfordshire LU1 1EB	—	—
20 Marsh Parade Hythe Southampton SO4 6AN	—	—
23 Medina Avenue Newport Isle of Wight PO30 1EL	—	—
24 Bennet Road Reading Berkshire RG2 0RT	—	—
25 New Dover Road Canterbury Kent	—	—
25 New Dover Road Canterbury Kent CT1 3AS	—	—
25 Pelham Road Gravesend Kent	—	—
28-30 High Street Guildford Surrey GU1 3EL	—	2
3 Drapers Way Stevenage Hertfordshire SG1 3DT	—	—
3-7 Cambridge Terrace Oxford Oxfordshire OX1 1RW	—	2
4 Circular Road East Colchester Essex	—	—
45 Argyle Road Sevenoaks TN13 1BR	—	—
5-7 Brunswick Place Southampton SO1 2AN	2	1
6 Bate-Dudley Drive Bradwell on Sea Essex CM0 7QE	—	—
6-10 Adelaide Street Luton LV1 5BT	—	—
62 Whitehall Lane Grays Essex RM17 6SS	—	—
77-81 Basingstoke Road Reading RG2 0ER	—	—
8 Upper Grosvenor Road Tunbridge Wells Kent	—	—
8-10 Howard Street Bedford MK40 3HS	—	1
89 Warley Hill Brentwood CM14 5JN	—	—
8B Sea Street Herne Bay Kent	—	—
9 Burwash Road Hove BN3 8GP	—	—
A.A.I.B. DRA Farnborough Hampshire GU14 6TD	—	—
Albion House Lime Street Bedford	—	—
Ambley Road Gillingham Kent	1	1

Building	Fixed term appointment	Casuals
Artillery House 61 Tilehurst Road Reading Berkshire	—	—
Ashdown House Sedlescombe Road North St. Leonards-on-Sea	2	6
Barden House, 36 Spencers Road, Crawley RH11 7DA	—	—
Beauver House 6 Bricket Road St. Albans AL1 3JS	—	—
Beeches Road Chelmsford Essex CM1 2SG	—	—
Brighton Hill Centre Basingstoke RG22 4LR	—	—
Cambridge Place House Aylesbury Buckinghamshire HP20 2LQ	—	—
Charter Court Midland Road Hemel Hempstead Hertfordshire HP2 5RI	—	1
Churchill Industrial Estate Lancing West Sussex	—	—
Circus House New England Road Brighton BN1 1DH	—	5
Coastguard Road Littlehampton BN17 5LM	—	—
Coronet House 11 Queen Anne Road Maidstone Kent	—	6
Crown Buildings 11 Prittlewell Chase Southend-on-Sea	—	—
Crown Buildings Wellesley Road Ashford Kent	—	—
Crown House, Sittingbourne Road Maidstone Kent	—	—
Culham Storage Depot Abingdon Berkshire	—	—
Dominion House, 5 Gravel Hill, Henley-on-Thames Oxfordshire	—	—
Dover Priory St. Johns Road Dover Kent	—	—
East Terrace Walton on Naze Essex	—	—
Federated House London Road Dorking Surrey RH4 1SZ	—	10
Foresthill Drive, Townhill Southampton S02 2SY	—	—
Fort Haven Shoreham by Sea West Sussex BN4 5HY	—	—
Fort Road Newhaven East Sussex BN9 9EL	—	—
Government Buildings Block 1 Spur D Marston Road Oxford	—	—
Government Buildings Christchurch Road Winchester Hampshire	—	—
Grange Way Colchester CO2 8HF	—	—
Green Lane Maybush Southampton Hampshire SO9 3SW	—	—
Hambridge Lane Newbury Berkshire RG14 5TZ	—	—
Harwich Docks Parkstone Quay Harwich	—	—
Hayling Island Hampshire	—	—
Heron House Goldington Road Bedford	—	2
Heron House, 149 London Road St. Leonards East Sussex	—	—
Hersden Canterbury Kent	—	1
Highland House Henderson Road Eastney Southsea Hants	—	—
Hillsons Road Botley Southampton Hampshire	—	1

Building	Fixed term appointment	Casuals
Ivy House 1-5 Ivy Terrace Eastbourne East Sussex BN4 QP	1	11
Ivy House Lane Ore Hastings East Sussex	—	1
Jackmans Place Letchworth Hertfordshire SG6 1TS	—	1
Lade Dungeness Romney Marsh Kent TN29 9PD	—	—
Lanes End Totland Isle of Wight PO39 0BE	—	—
Langdon Battery Swingate Dover Kent CT15 5NA	—	—
Launton Road Bicester Oxon	1	—
Leighton Road Stanbridge Leighton Buzzard Bedfordshire	—	—
LGV 3 West Bar Street Banbury Oxon OX16 9SD	—	—
LGV South Street Gosport PO12 1EL	—	—
Mercantile Marine Office Canute Road Southampton	—	—
Minster House Minster Street Reading Berkshire RG1 2JD	—	3
Newtown Road Newbury Berkshire	—	—
North Court Armstrong Road Maidstone Kent ME15 6JZ	—	—
North Lane Aldershot Hampshire GU11 2AG	—	1
Orchard Road Royston Hertfordshire	1	—
Oxford House London Road Bishops Stortford Hertfordshire	—	—
Palting House Trinity Road Folkestone CT20 2RH	—	—
Parkway House 49 Baddow Road Chelmsford CM2 0XJ	—	1
Paul Waller Avenue Cardington Bedford MK44 3ST	—	—
Portacabin James Wolfe Road Cowley Oxford OX4 2PT	—	1
Portman House Goldington Road Bedford MK40 3LY	—	—
Prospect Road Cowes Isle of Wight	—	—
Rock-a-Nor Road Hastings TN34 3DW	—	—
Senet House Dorking Business Park Dorking Surrey	—	9
Seymour House Whiteleaf Road Hemel Hempstead Hertfordshire HP3 9DE	—	—
Slyfield Estate Guildford Surrey	—	—
Spring Place 105 Commercial Road Southampton SO1 0ZD	3	15
Stanbridge Road Leighton Buzzard Bedfordshire	1	—
Sutherland Lodge St. Omer Road Guildford GU1 2DB	—	—
The Cottage Pierremont Hall Broadstairs CT10 1JH	—	—
The Hut Link Road Newbury Berkshire	—	—
The Village Square Brighton Marina Brighton BN2 5QL	—	—
TRL Old Wokingham Road Crowthorne Berkshire RG11 6AU	42	5
Turnpike Road Newbury Berkshire	—	—
Unit 5 Newman Industrial Estate Ford Road Clacton-on-Sea	—	—
Vandyke Road Leighton Buzzard Bedfordshire	—	—
Westmoreland House Strand Parade Goring Worthing	—	—
Whytecroft House 44 Marine Parade West Lee O/S PO13 9NR	—	—
Widford Industrial Estate Chelmsford Essex	—	2
Wilton Hostel Wilton Avenue Bletchley Buckinghamshire MK3 6DH	—	—
Wyman House Shopwhyke Road Chichester West Sussex	—	—

Note: PRODUCED FROM THE PERSONNEL INFORMATION SYSTEM AS AT 25/5/94.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list for the Bedford travel-to-work area the numbers of *(a)* casuals and *(b)* fixed-term appointments in each Department of Transport office.

Mr. Norris: The Department and its agencies have 21 offices in the Bedford travel-to-work area. At present, a total of five casual staff are employed at four of those offices, and two persons are employed on fixed-term appointments. Details are as follows:

Bedford

Building	Fixed-term appointment	Casuals
124 High Street Berkhamsted Hertfordshire	—	—
19 Desborough Avenue High Wycombe Buckinghamshire	—	—
2 Dunstable Road Luton Bedfordshire LU1 1EB	—	—
3 Drapers Way Stevenage Hertfordshire SG1 3DT	—	—
6-10 Adelaide Street Luton LV1 5BT	—	—
8-10 Howard Street Bedford MK40 3HS	—	1
Albion House Lime Street Bedford	—	—
Beauver House 6 Bricket Road St. Albans AL1 3JS	—	—
Cambridge Place House Aylesbury Buckinghamshire HP20 2LQ	—	—
Charter Court Midland Road Hemel Hempstead Hertfordshire HP2 5RL	—	1
Heron House Goldington Road Bedford	—	2
Jackmans Place Letchworth Hertfordshire SG6 1TS	—	1
Leighton Road Stanbridge Leighton Buzzard Bedfordshire	—	—
Orchard Road Royston Hertfordshire	1	—
Oxford House London Road Bishops Stortford Hertfordshire	—	—
Paul Waller Avenue Cardington Bedford MK44 3ST	—	—
Portman House Goldington Road Bedford MK40 3LY	—	—
Seymour House Whiteleaf Road Hemel Hempstead Hertfordshire HP3 9DE	—	—
Stanbridge Road Leighton Buzzard Bedfordshire	1	—

Building	Fixed-term appointment	Casuals
Vandyke Road Leighton Buzzard Bedfordshire	—	—
Wilton Hostel Wilton Avenue Bletchley Buckinghamshire MK3 6DH	—	—

Produced from the Personnel Information System as at 25 May 1994.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list for the Coventry travel-to-work area the numbers of *(a)* casuals and *(b)* fixed-term appointments in each Department of Transport office.

Mr. Norris: The Department and its agencies have 27 offices in the Coventry travel-to-work area. At present, a total of 34 casual staff are employed at nine of those offices, and three persons are employed on fixed term appointments. Details are as follows:

Coventry

Building	Fixed term appointments	Casuals
110/116 Boldmere Road Sutton Coldfield B73 5UB	—	—
165 Thornbridge Avenue Perry Bar Birmingham B42 2AF	—	—
205 Birdbrook Road Kindstanding Birmingham	—	—
401 Stratford Road Shirley Solihull Warwickshire	—	1
457 Holyhead Road Coventry West Midlands CV5 8HU	—	—
5 Newbold Road Rugby Warwickshire	—	—
54 Vernons Land Nuneaton Warwickshire	—	1
6 Dormer Place Leamington Spa Warwickshire	—	—
74 Ridgeacre Lane Quinton Birmingham B32 1HH	—	—
866 Washwood Health Road Birmingham B82 NG	—	1
955 Alcester Road South Kings Health Birmingham	—	1
Ashland Street Wolverhampton WV3 0BX	—	—
Broadway House Broad Street Edgbaston Birmingham	—	—
Churchfields Bromsgrove B61 8DX	—	—
Clay Lane Birmingham West Midlands	—	—
Cumberland House 200 Broad St. Birmingham B15 1TD	3	13
Elm Road Redditch B97 6AJ	—	—
Five Ways House Islington Row Birmingham B15 1SL	—	—
Five Ways Tower Frederick Road Birmingham B15 1SJ	—	—
Friars House Manor House Drive Coventry CV1 2TD	—	2
Garretts Green Industrial Estate Birmingham 33	—	3
Granby Avenue Granby Industrial Estate Birmingham 33	—	—
Greyfriars House Greyfriars Lane Coventry CV1 2HB	—	2
Mason Road Coventry West Midlands CV6 7FJ	—	—
St. Martins House 10 The Bull Ring Birmingham B5 5DP	—	10
The Crescent Bilston West Midlands WV1 40DB	—	—
VTAC Watling Street Nuneaton Warwickshire CV10 0UA	—	—

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list for the Edinburgh travel-to-work area the numbers of *(a)* casuals and *(b)* fixed-term appointments in each Department of Transport office.

Mr. Norris: The Department and its agencies have 50 offices in the Edinburgh travel-to-work area. At present, a total of 22 casual staff are employed at 10 of those offices, and six persons are employed on fixed-term appointments. Details are as follows:

Scotland

Building	Fixed term appointment	Casuals
1 Johns Place Edinburgh EH6 7EL	—	—
10 Shore Road Anstruther Fife	—	—
107 Bothwell Street Glasgow Renfrewshire G2 7EE	—	6
11 Maggie Woods Loads Loan Falkirk	—	—
111 Rannoch Road Perth PH1 2DF	—	—
124-125 Princes Street Edinburgh EH2 4BE	—	—
161 Whitletts Road Ayr	—	—
26 Glenburn Road Paisley Renfrewshire	—	—
30 Selkirk Street Hamilton Lanarkshire ML3 6RQ	—	—
31 Old Raise Road Saltcoats Ayrshire	—	—
33 West Saville Terrace Edinburgh 9	—	1
335-337 Calder Road Edinburgh	—	—
335-337 Sighthill Road Edinburgh	—	—
351 Anniesland Road Glasgow	—	—
368 Amulree Street Shettleston Glasgow G32 7SJ	—	—
40 Millhill Street Dunfermline Fife	—	—
41 Shawbridge Arcade Ashtree Road Glasgow G43 1RT	—	—
6 Bridge Street Dumbarton	—	—
6000 Academy Park Gower Street Glasgow G51 1TR	—	2
7 Aitchison Street Airdrie Strathclyde ML6 0DY	—	—
71 Whatriggs Road Kilmarnock Ayshire	—	—
74 Glasgow Road Bathgate EH48 2AG	—	—
83 Princes Street Edinburgh Scotland	2	5
Bankhead Avenue Sighthill Edinburgh EH11 4AA	—	—
Caledonian House 3rd Floor Greenmarket Dundee DD1 1DP	—	2
City Wall House 32 Eastwood Avenue Glasgow G41 3NS	—	1
Crosshill Road Bishopsbriggs Glasgow	—	—
Crown Buildings Princes Pier Greenock Renfrewshire	—	—
East Burnside Cupar Fife	—	1

Building	Fixed term appointment	Casuals
East Fortune Airfield Drem East Lothian	—	—
Fechney Buildings Glasgow Road Perth Perthshire	—	—
Fifeness Crail Fife KY10 3XN	—	—
Fisher Row Musselburgh Midlothian BH21 6SG	—	—
Gob Saughton Broomhouse Drive Edinburgh	—	—
Government Buildings 2 St. Ninians Road Stirling	—	—
HMCG Church Road Leven Fife	—	—
Houstoun Industrial Estate Livingston West Lothian	—	3
John Street Forfar Angus	—	—
Joppa Terrace Joppa Edinburgh	—	—
Navy Building Eldon Street Greenock Renfrew PA16 7QY	—	—
Navy Buildings Eldon Street Greenock Renfrewshire	—	—
North Muirton Industrial Estate Perth Perthshire	1	—
Overgate House 121 Marketgait Dundee DD1 1JL	—	—
Park Road Gallatown Kirkcaldy Fife	—	—
Springburn Park 14A Balornoch Road Glasgow	—	—
Tanterfield SCL Victoria Park Haddington East Lothian	—	—
Town Hall Hall Terrace Cumnock Ayrshire	—	—
TRRSL Livingston West Lothian EH54 5DU	3	—
Wellmeadow Blairgowrie Perthshire	—	—
Western Road Kilmarnock Ayrshire	—	1

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list for the Glasgow travel-to-work area the numbers of *(a)* casuals and *(b)* fixed-term appointments in each Department of Transport office.

Mr. Norris: The Department and its agencies have 50 offices in the Glasgow travel-to-work area. At present, a total of 22 casual staff are employed at 10 of those offices, and six persons are employed on fixed-term appointments. Details are as follows:

Scotland

Building	Fixed term appointment	Casuals
1 Johns Place Edinburgh EH6 7EL	—	—
10 Shore Road Anstruther Fife 7	—	—
107 Bothwell Street Glasgow Renfrewshire G2 7EE	—	6
11 Maggie Woods Loads Loan Falkirk	—	—
111 Rannoch Road Perth PH1 2DF	—	—
124-125 Princes Street Edinburgh EH2 4BE	—	—
161 Whitletts Road Ayr	—	—
26 Glenburn Road Paisley Renfrewshire	—	—
30 Selkirk Street Hamilton Lanarkshire ML3 6RQ	—	—
31 Old Raise Road Saltcoats Ayrshire	—	—
33 West Saville Terrace Edinburgh 9	—	—
335-337 Calder Road Edinburgh	—	—
335-337 Sighthill Road Edinburgh	—	—
351 Anniesland Road Glasgow	—	—
368 Amulree Street Shettleston Glasgow G32 7SJ	—	—
40 Millhill Street Dunfermline Fife	—	—
41 Shawbridge Arcade Ashtree Road Glasgow G43 1RT	—	—
6 Bridge Street Dumbarton	—	—
6000 Academy Park Gower Street Glasgow G51 1TR	—	2
7 Aitchison Street Airdrie Strathclyde ML6 0DY	—	—
71 Whatriggs Road Kilmarnock Ayrshire	—	—
74 Glasgow Road Bathgate EH48 2 AG	—	—
83 Princes Street Edinburgh Scotland	2	5
Bankhead Avenue Sighthill Edinburgh EH11 4AA	—	—
Caledonian House 3rd Floor Greenmarket Dundee DD1 1DP	—	2
City Wall House 32 Eastwood Avenue Glasgow G41 3NS	—	1
Crosshill Road Bishopsbriggs Glasgow	—	—
Crown Buildings Princes Pier Greenock Renfrewshire	—	—
East Burnside Cupar Fife	—	1
East Fortune Airfield Drem East Lothian	—	—
Fechney Buildings Glasgow Road Perth Perthshire	—	—
Fifeness Crail Fife KY10 3XN	—	—
Fisher Row Musselburgh Midlothian BH21 6SG	—	—
Gob Saughton Broomhouse Drive Edinburgh	—	—
Government Buildings 2 St. Ninians Road Stirling	—	—
HMCG Church Road Leven Fife	—	—
Houstoun Industrial Estate Livingston West Lothian	—	3
John Street Forfar Angus	—	—
Joppa Terrace Joppa Edinburgh	—	—
Navy Building Eldon Street Greenock Renfrew PA16 7QY	—	—
Navy Buildings Eldon Street Greenock Renfrewshire	—	—
North Muirton Industrial Estate Perth Perthshire	1	—
Overgate House 121 Marketgait Dundee DD1 1JL	—	—
Park Road Gallatown Kirkcaldy Fife	—	—
Springburn Park 14A Balornoch Road Glasgow	—	—
Tanter Field School Victoria Park Haddington East Lothian	—	—
Town Hall Hall Terrace Cumnock Ayrshire	—	—
TRRSL Livingston West Lothian EH54 5DU	3	—
Wellmeadow Blairgowrie Perthshire	—	—
Western Road Kilmarnock Ayrshire	—	1

Note:
Produced from the Personnel Information System as at 25 May 1994.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will list for the last five financial years the Department of Transport's staff-in-post figures broken down by grade;

(2) if he will place in the Library the latest staff-in-post figures broken down by grade for each Department of Transport office, including executive agencies.

Mr. Norris: I am placing copies of the information requested in the Library.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will institute a recruitment ban in his Department and its agencies immediately.

Mr. Norris: No.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list for the Manchester travel-to-work area the numbers of *(a)* casuals and *(b)* fixed-term appointments in each Department of Transport office.

Mr. Norris: The Department and its agencies have 51 offices in the north-west region, which includes the Manchester travel-to-work area. At present, a total of 35 casual staff are employed at 15 of those offices, and five staff are employed on fixed-term appointments. Details are as follows:

North West

Building	*Fixed term appointment*	*Casuals*
101 Sankey Street Warrington Cheshire WA1 1LB	—	—
14 Milton Grove Whalley Range Manchester	—	—
1A Sugham Lane Heysham Lancashire	—	—
208 Drake Street Rochdale Lancashire	—	—
22 Chester Road Ellesmere Port Cheshire	—	—
22 Woodside Road. Irby Wirral Cheshire L61 4UL	—	—
23 Perrin Street Hyde Cheshire SK14 1JE	—	1
26-28 Broadstone Road Reddish Stockport Cheshire	—	—
3 Mesnes Park Terrace Wigan Lancashire	—	—
36-38 Poplar Grove Sale Cheshire	—	—
4 Felix Road Winnington Northwich Cheshire	—	1
50 Preston New Road Blackburn Lancashire	—	
6 Nile Street Crewe Cheshire	—	—
88 School Lane Didsbury Lancashire M20 0HG	—	—
95 Bond Parade Dicksons Drive Newton Chester	—	—
Aldergien Road Cheetham Manchester	—	1
Apsley House Park Road Crosby Merseyside L22 3XF	—	—
Arrowe Park Road Upton Wirral L49 0UL	—	—
Ashburner House Seymour Grove Manchester M16 0JL	—	—
Ashton House Cottam Lane Preston Lancashire PR2 1HU	—	—
Atherton Street St. H... Merseyside WA10 2JY	—	—
Buckingham House Glover Court Preston Lancashire PR1 3LS	—	6
Chapel House Chapel Street Congleton Cheshire	—	—
Corn Exchange Building Fenwick Street Liverpool L2 7TT	—	3
Cuerden Depot Haverlock Terrace Bamber Bridge Preston	—	—
Dock Road South Bromborough Wirrall Merseyside	—	—
Driving Test Centre Weston Street Bolton BL3 2AW	—	—
DTC Warrington Business Park Long Lane Cheshire WA2 7JR	—	1
Eastbank House 68 Eastbank Street Southport Lancashire	—	—
Eaves Lanes Rossall Road Chorley Lancashire	—	—
Everite Road Widnes Cheshire WA8 8PT	—	—
Forest House Cobden Street Nelson Lancashire	—	—
Freckleton Road Kirkham Lancashire PR4 2RA	—	2
Government Buildings Fielden Road Didsbury Lancashire	—	—
Government Buildings Warbeck Hill Road Blackpool Lancashire	—	—
Graeme House Derby Square Liverpool L2 7SU	1	2
Gressington House St. Marys Road Liverpool L19 0NE	—	—
Government Buildings South Park Road Macclesfield Cheshire	—	—
Hall Road West Liverpool L23 8SY	—	—
King Street Wallasey Merseyside	—	—
Lingard Lane Bredbury Stockport Cheshire	—	3
Middleton Road Heywood Lancashire	—	1
Norroy House Nuns Road Chester Cheshire CH1 2NB	—	—
Old Government Buildings Dee Hills Park Chester	—	—
Parthenon Drive Norris Green Liverpool	—	—
Partington Street Failsworth Lancashire	—	—
Portcullis House Seymour Grove Manchester M16 0NE	4	7
Princes Way Fleetwood Lancashire FY7 8PG	—	—
Sector 43 4 Mesnes Park Terrace Wigan WN1 1SU	—	—
Smith Street Bury BL9 6HH	—	1
Stopgate Lane Kirkby Merseyside	—	1
Sunley Tower Piccadilly Plaza Manchester M1 4AX	—	3
Trafford House Chester Road Stretford Manchester	—	2

Staff Surveys

Mr. Radice: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what surveys of the views, opinions and attitudes of the staff of his Department have been carried out in the last two years; and if he will place copies of the findings in the Library.

Mr. Norris: The Department has completed two such surveys over the past two years. A third is now under way. The findings are confidential to management and staff so as to avoid drawing civil servants into areas of political controversy. In 1991, the National Audit Office commissioned a survey of staff attitudes within the Department's Vehicle Inspectorate, which was published. A copy will be placed in the Library.

M25

Sir Geoffrey Pattie: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give by category the total number of residential dwellings, commercial premises and other categories of buildings purchased by his Department within the vicinity of the M25 between junctions 12 and 8 over the last five years, together with the itemised costs and the powers by which those purchases were made.

Mr. Key: The information requested can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Sir Keith Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the southern section of the M25 from the Dartford crossing to the M4 interchange will be completely free from road works.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 28 June 1994]:* This question relates to operational matters of the Highways Agency. I have asked the chief executive, Mr. Lawrie Haynes, to write to my hon. Friend.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Sir Keith Speed, dated 30 June 1994:

The Minister for Roads and Traffic, Mr. Robert Key, has asked me to write to you in reply to your recent Parliamentary Question asking when the southern section of the M25 would be completely free from road works.

We have a major rolling programme for widening the M25 between Junctions 3 and 11 on the southern section to dual four lanes without the existing highway boundary. This will take several years to complete. Timing will depend on the availability of funds and the competing demands of other parts of the Road Programme, so I cannot forecast at present exactly when this programme will be finished.

We are also considering the provision of capacity beyond dual four lanes for the section of M25 from Junction 10 to the M4 (and beyond). Work on this is dependent on the completion of statutory procedures as well as the availability of funds.

In addition, there will be a need for maintenance works but wherever possible these will be incorporated in the widening schemes to minimise disruption to traffic.

Bridgeworks are also planned between now and the turn of the century. All bridges are being assessed under the assessment and strengthening programme post-tensioned bridges are also being assessed and inspected under the Special Inspection programme which is being conducted nationwide. It is not therefore possible to say at present what strengthening and/or replacement works will be required for these structures.

Every effort is made to keep disruption to a minimum. Experience has shown that limiting the length of individual road works to relatively short sections is less disruptive to traffic than carrying out works over a long distance at one time. This will mean, however, that road works will be taking place on the southern section of the M25 for a longer period than if we had carried out all the works together.

Citizens Charter

Mr. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport under the citizens charter how much compensation will be paid to the passengers stranded at Royston railway station at 12.30 am on Sunday 19 June, on their way from King's Cross to Cambridge; and how many passengers were affected.

Mr. Freeman: Under the passengers charter, BR offers compensation to the value of 20 per cent. or more of the ticket price paid if passengers are delayed for more than an hour. I understand that 30 passengers have so far requested compensation for the delay at Royston on 19 June and over £500 in compensation has been paid. I am not aware of the number of passengers affected by the delay.

Signal Box Operators

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the criteria for allowing people to operate signal boxes; and what previous experience of specific lines is required by operators of signal boxes on those lines.

Mr. Freeman: There are no statutory criteria against which competence to operate signalling equipment is to be judged. However, the Health and Safety Executive's guidance on the Railways (Safety Critical Work) Regulations 1994 recommends that the employer should be satisfied that the employees have appropriate training, personal qualities, fitness and qualifications to do the work in question without undue risk to themselves or others and that they are fully aware of the nature of the work. HM railway inspectorate has sampled the effectiveness of the selection process applied by Railtrack and is satisfied that Railtrack is taking the necessary steps to ensure competence. HMRI is continuing to monitor the situation.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the locations at which British Rail staff who do not hold the required certificate of competence operated signal boxes on 22 June.

Mr. Freeman: The Railways (Safety Critical Work) Regulations 1994 stipulate that those employed on tasks that are regarded as critical to safety must be competent. Certification of competence is not a statutory requirement under the regulations. All staff operating in signal boxes have been assessed and confirmed competent by Railtrack. HM railway inspectorate has sampled the effectiveness of that process and is satisfied that Railtrack is taking the necessary steps to ensure competence. HMRI is continuing to monitor the situation.

Rail Journey Costs

Mr. Keen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the cost of a journey by rail from *(a)* Hounslow to Waterloo and *(b)* Richmond to Waterloo (i) off-peak return, (ii) standard rate return and (iii) standard rate single for each year from 1979, at current and 1993 prices.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is as follows:

From Hounslow to London Waterloo

Date	Standard Single (Current)	Standard Single (1993)	Standard Return (Current)	Standard Return (1993)	Cheap Day (Current)	Cheap Day (1993)
7 January 1979	0·84	2·21	1·68	4·41	0·96	2·52
6 January 1980	0·99	2·20	1·97	4·37	1·15	2·55
30 November 1980	1·22	2·41	2·44	4·82	1·40	2·76
29 November 1981	1·30	2·29	2·60	4·58	1·50	2·64
9 January 1983	1·40	2·33	2·80	4·67	1·60	2·67
8 January 1984	1·50	2·38	3·00	4·76	1·70	2·70
6 January 1985	1·60	2·42	3·20	4·84	1·80	2·72
12 January 1986	1·70	2·43	3·40	4·87	2·00	2·86
11 January 1987	1·80	2·48	3·60	4·96	2·10	2·89
10 January 1988	1·90	2·54	3·80	5·07	2·20	2·94
8 January 1989	2·10	2·61	4·20	5·22	2·30	2·86
4 February 1990	2·30	2·64	4·60	5·28	2·60	2·98
6 January 1991	2·60	2·75	5·20	5·51	2·80	2·97
5 January 1992	2·80	2·85	5·60	5·69	2·80	2·85
3 January 1993	3·00	3·00	6·00	6·00	3·10	3·10
2 January 1994	3·20	3·10	6·40	6·20	3·30	3·20

Driving Standards Agency

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the performance of the Driving Standards Agency since the appointment of the current chief executive.

Mr. Key: The new chief executive has maintained the continuing gradual improvement in DSA's performance.

Buses

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will estimate the number of bus passengers carried and bus-miles worked in each metropolitan area outside London in 1985, 1990 and each subsequent year.

Mr. Freeman: Data collected by the Department cannot be released for individual metropolitan areas for reasons of reliability and confidentiality. Financial year estimates of the total number of local bus journeys made by passengers in the six English metropolitan areas outside London, and the corresponding figures for local bus-km worked, are given below. These have been extracted from tables 1.1 and 2.1 of "Bus and Coach Statistics Great Britain 1992-93", which also present data for Scotland as a whole. A copy of this HMSO publication has been placed in the House of Commons Library.

millions

English metropolitan areas Year	Local passenger journeys	Local vehicle kms
1985-86	2,068	574
1990-91	1,547	650
1991-92	1,478	662
1992-93	1,386	678

Source: Statistical returns from PSV operators

Rail Privatisation

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answers to the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson), of 3 May, *Official Report*, column *466*, and to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), of 26 May, *Official Report*, column *284*, if he will show for each separate invoice supplied to his Department by Dewe Rogerson for advice on his Department's marketing strategy for rail privatisation, *(a)* the date on which the invoice was received by his Department, *(b)* the date on which the invoice was paid by his Department and *(c)* the amount contained in each separate invoice, inclusive of value added tax; whether he has now received the final invoice from Dewe Rogerson; which is the total amount inclusive of value added tax, which his Department will have paid to Dewe Rogerson by the time its contract expires; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested in parts *(a)*, *(b)* and *(c)* is commercially confidential. Dewe Rogerson's final invoice has not yet been received and it is not therefore possible to provide a figure for the total amount. To date, Dewe Rogerson has been paid £566,000, including VAT, for this advice.

Seat Belts

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport by what date he intends to publish the full report and findings of his review of the technical and cost implications of fitting seat belts to all seats in minibuses and coaches; and if he will place a copy in the Library.

Mr. Key: My right hon. Friend intends to publish the conclusions of the review before the summer recess and copies of the relevant papers will be deposited in the Library at that time.

Sir Christopher Foster

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on what date Sir Christopher Foster was appointed as an adviser to his Department; on what date his employment as an adviser was completed; how much he was paid in total for his work as an adviser to his Department; on what date he was invited to apply for the post of board member of Railtrack; on what date he was appointed a board member of Railtrack; who was responsible for *(a)* recruiting, *(b)* interviewing and *(c)* appointing Sir Christopher Foster as a board member of Railtrack; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Sir Christopher Foster was appointed as special adviser to the Secretary of State from 1 June 1992. He was seconded to the Department from Coopers and Lybrand: the Department reimbursed Coopers and Lybrand at the rate of £5,000 per year, amounting to a total

of £7,321·43 plus VAT for the period until his resignation on 16 November 1993. On that date, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced that Sir Christopher would be appointed as a non-executive member of the Railtrack board on its incorporation as a British Rail subsidiary company in February 1994. His appointment from 1 April 1994 as a director of Railtrack Group plc as a Government-owned company, was approved by shareholders' decision given by the Secretary of State.

Consultants

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) of 22 March, *Official Report*, column *146*, if he will show for all consultants and/or other outside organisations or individuals currently or previously employed by the Office of Passenger Rail Franchising, *(a)* the name of the consultancy, organisation or individual, *(b)* the length of contract offered to each consultancy, organisation or individual, *(c)* the total amount inclusive of value added tax paid to date to each consultancy, organisation or individual, *(d)* the total amount inclusive of value added tax expected to be paid to each consultancy, organisation or individual and *(e)* the services required by the Office of Passenger Rail Franchising from each consultancy, organisation or individual; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The principal external consultants retained by the Office of Passenger Rail Franchising, the services which it is supplying, and expenditure on them to date are as follows:

Consultant	*Service supplied*	*Expenditure to 30 June 1994 (£000s exclusive of VAT)*
Linklaters and Paines	Legal services	987
Brodies WS	Advice on Scots law	8
KPMG Peat Marwick	Accountancy services	599
Samuel Montagu & Co.	Merchant Bank	200
S and G Warburg & Co.	Advice on rolling stock leasing	73
PJR Ltd.	Recruitment and organisational advice	50
Total		1,917

Note: VAT at 17·5 per cent. is payable in addition.

Price Waterhouse and Co., accountancy services, Coopers and Lybrand, accountancy services, and Shandwick Consultants Ltd., marketing advice, have also been retained by Opraf, but no payments have yet been made to them. The amount paid in future to those firms will depend on the work done. All those appointments are terminable not later than 31 March 1995.

In addition, Opraf has 20 employees of its own and 15 seconded staff and uses various external firms for such matters as cleaning and maintenance of its premises, the carrying out of minor repairs, staff training, courier services, printing, and the supply of working lunches.

British Rail

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish a table showing *(a)* the total amount spent centrally or in each separate region by British Rail in 1993-94 on legal advice, together with the name of each firm or individual employed and *(b)* the total amount budgeted to be spent on legal advice in 1994-95 centrally by British Rail and individually by each train operating unit, together with the name of each firm or individual employed.

Mr. Freeman: This is a management matter for the British Railways Board.

Road Schemes

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what were the unadjusted traffic forecasts and year 1 traffic counts for road schemes opened in *(a)* 1991-92 and *(b)* 1992-93.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 23 June 1994]:* The information requested can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the average cost-benefit ratio of road schemes for *(a)* currently under construction, *(b)* agreed starts for 1994-95, *(c)* schemes designated priority 1 in the roads review, *(d)* schemes designated priority 2, *(e)* schemes designated longer term in the roads review and *(f)* schemes abandoned in the roads review.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 23 June 1994]:* The information requested can be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, the cost-benefit ratio for the current active road programmes is 2·2:1.

Rail Accident (Greenock)

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the railway inspectorate will begin its investigation into the derailment of the 22.45 hours Wemyss Bay to Glasgow train in Greenock on Saturday, 25 June; if the report of the investigation will contain recommendations concerning *(a)* improvements in the design and construction of electric multiple units and *(b)* improve safety procedures; if the report will be published; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 4 July 1994]:* The Health and Safety Executive's railway inspectorate, HMRI, started a preliminary investigation into the derailment shortly after first light on Sunday 26 June. Strathclyde police, assisted by British Transport police, were conducting a scene-of-crime investigation at that time and subsequently announced that it had become a murder inquiry. I understand that two people have now been charged in connection with the deaths. An inquiry under the Regulation of Railways Act 1871 has not been recommended by the chief inspecting officer of railways, given the cause of the accident. The holding of a fatal accident inquiry is a matter for the Lord Advocate.

The HMRI will continue to assist the police in relation to railway technical matters and is also considering what lessons may be learnt to prevent a recurrence. The crash resistance of new rolling stock has been considerably

improved above the standards of the train involved in the accident. I have asked the HMRI to let me know its conclusions and I will write to the hon. Member when I have received this information.

WALES

Labour Statistics

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many men were in work in 1991 in each of the districts covered by the valleys initiative; and what his latest estimate is of the number of men unemployed in these districts.

Mr. Redwood: The following districts are wholly or partially in the programme for the valleys area:

Blaenau Gwent
Brecknock
Cynon Valley
Dinefwr
Islwyn
Llanelli
Lliw Valley
Merthyr Tydfil
Neath
Ogwr
Port Talbot
Rhondda
Rhymney Valley
Swansea
Taff Ely
Torfaen

The employment and unemployment data requested are available from the NOMIS database, which can be accessed on-line by House of Commons Library staff.

Careers Service

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement concerning his policies for the careers service.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Welsh Office published a prospectus on 8 June 1994 setting out arrangements for the provision of the careers service from April 1995. A copy of the prospectus has been placed in the Library of the House.

Apprenticeships

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will make a statement about his new apprenticeships initiative with respect to *(a)* Alyn and Deeside, *(b)* Clwyd and *(c)* Wales;

(2) what measures he is adopting to encourage the provision of more apprenticeships.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Some £3·6 million has been allocated to training and enterprise councils in Wales for the implementation of modern engineering apprenticeships in the current financial year. That will support a total of 550 apprenticeship places and contribute to the training of some 1,400 people as specialist workplace trainers. Some £2·2 million of the total is being made available to colleges of further education to buy engineering equipment. Allocations have been made on the basis of TEC areas. North East Wales TEC, which includes Alyn and Deeside within its area, has been allocated 50 apprenticeship places, 112 trainer training places and £225,000 for college equipment.

Training

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement concerning his training for work programme with respect to Alyn and Deeside.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The objective of the training for work programme throughout Wales is to help long-term unemployed people to find jobs and to improve their work-related skills through the provision of appropriate training and structured work activity in line with assessed needs. It is delivered in Alyn and Deeside through North East Wales training and enterprise council.

Home Building

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what were the total numbers of homes built by *(a)* local authorities and *(b)* housing associations in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information is given in the table.

New dwellings completed

	Local authorities	*Housing associations*[1]
1989	566	1,663
1990	610	1,685
1991	418	2,463
1992	133	2,459
1993	172	2,849

[1] Excludes acquisitions, rehabilitation and hostel spaces.

Live Animals (Transport)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what measures he has taken since 1990 to ensure that live farm animals being transported to the continent are adequately cared for with respect to *(a)* horses, *(b)* cattle, *(c)* sheep and *(d)* pigs; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what is his policy concerning the transportation of live farm animals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The Government are actuely aware of the great strength of feeling in this country on animal welfare, and are strongly committed to ensuring that the welfare of animals is properly safeguarded. The Government have strict rules to protect animals exported from this country. Where there has been evidence of infringements, prompt action has been taken to rectify the situation and, where appropriate, offenders have been prosecuted.

The EC directive on the protection of animals in transit sets Community standards for the transportation of all animals over 50 km. It requires animals to be fed, watered and rested at appropriate intervals, not exceeding 24 hours. It also required the European Commission to produce a report and, where appropriate, proposals on certain detailed issues, including feeding and watering intervals, rest periods and maximum journey times. Pending adoption of the measures, member states have been able to apply national rules in those areas, and in the United Kingdom the Government are currently applying a maximum feeding and watering interval of 15 hours for all livestock and 12 hours for poultry. For horses, the directive provides

for national rules to remain applicable and our national minimum value arrangements continue; there are no proposals at present which affect this.

At the Agriculture Council meeting on 20 June, proposals representing a significant improvement on those which the Government blocked in December last year were put forward. However, it became clear that further improvements could be made and the Commission has committed itself to bringing forward further proposals on journey limits by 1 July 1995.

Air Quality

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his assessment of air quality on the A548 Queensferry to Connah's Quay; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Monitoring of air quality in the vicinity of the A548 Queensferry to Connah's Quay is the responsibility of the local district council. I understand that Alyn and Deeside district council carries out regular monitoring in the area and that none of its readings to date have exceeded European guidelines.

Water Quality

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his assessment of the measures taken designed to improve water quality on the beaches of Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Dwr Cymru—Welsh Water—is currently engaged in a £230 million investment programme designed to ensure that all bathing waters in Wales identified under the European bathing water directive consistently meet its mandatory bacteriological standards. There has been a major improvement in the quality of the bathing waters on the Welsh coastline and last year 84 per cent. of identified waters met the standards, compared with 48 per cent. in 1986. The majority of the improvement programme is expected to be completed by 1995, with the remainder due to be completed by the end of 1997.

Council Tax

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list, by council tax collection authority area, the number of outstanding banding appeal cases and the proportion they represent of all liable properties in that area, as at 1 April.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The position in Wales on 1 April 1994 was as follows:

Billing authority area	*Outstanding banding appeal cases*	*Percentage of liable properties*
Aberconwy	892	3·6
Alyn and Deeside	896	3·0
Arfon	778	3·2
Blaenau Gwent	406	1·3
Brecknock	1,254	6·8
Cardiff	2,841	2·4
Carmarthen	1,808	7·4
Ceredigion	3,196	10·6
Colwyn	805	3·2
Cynon Valley	608	2·2
Delyn	806	2·9
Dinefwr	1,349	7·9
Dwyfor	632	4·4
Glyndwr	869	4·7
Islwyn	487	1·8
Llanelli	761	2·4
Lliw Valley	671	2·5
Meirionnydd	549	3·1
Merthyr Tydfil	373	1·5
Monmouth	1,797	6·0
Montgomeryshire	956	4·0
Neath	625	2·3
Newport	627	1·1
Ogwr	1,157	2·1
Port Talbot	494	2·3
Preseli Pembrokeshire	1,700	5·5
Radnorshire	824	7·4
Rhondda	226	0·7
Rhuddlan	518	2·1
Rhymney Valley	614	1·5
South Pembrokeshire	933	4·7
Swansea	2,313	3·0
Taff Ely	820	2·1
Torfaen	566	1·5
Vale of Glamorgan	1,427	3·0
Wrexham Maelor	1,191	2·5
Ynys Mon	1,208	3·8

Blood Transfusion Service, Cardiff

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairman of the Welsh Health Common Services Authority about the closure of the Dominion arcade blood transfusion centre for plasma donors in Cardiff; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The decision to close the Dominion arcade blood transfusion centre was taken by the board of the authority following wide consultation with donors. Arrangements have been made for them to use the plasma suite at the blood transfusion service headquarters at Rhydlafar.

DEFENCE

Troop Location

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Castle Point (Dr. Spink), of 23 June 1994, *Official Report*, columns *247-48*, if he is now in a position to announce the location for the second additional infantry battalion; and what other plans he has for Army use of the defence estate.

Mr. Hanley: I have now decided that Oakington barracks, Oakington, which is currently the home of the 1st Battalion the Cheshire Regiment, should be retained as a permanent infantry barracks to cater for the second of the two additional infantry battalions announced on 3 February 1993, *Official Report*, column 320. The Gurkhas will move from Church Crookham to Elizabeth barracks, Pirbright around the end of 1996, not the end of 1994 as indicated in my previous answer of 23 June 1994, *Official Report*, columns *247-48*. Under current plans, the Black Watch will remain in Pirbright until mid-1996. In addition, we have decided that RAF Hullavington, currently being used as temporary accommodation of 9 Supply Regiment Royal Logistic Corps should be retained in the defence estate for

the time being as the home of 9 Supply Regiment RLC which will now not move to Aldershot as previously planned.

Ferranti/ISC

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library those reports he has commissioned or received into the effect on the defence interests of the United Kingdom of the collapse of Ferranti/ISC.

Mr. Aitken: No. It is not my Department's practice to disclose internal papers which contain classified or commercially sensitive information.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list and place in the Library a copy of those memoranda and authorisations from Government Departments which preceded and accompanied the merger of Ferranti and ISC; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: No. Any advice which my Department offers in connection with proposed mergers is confidential.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all those charged with offences relating to the Ferranti/ISC fraud; and if he will list in each case the pleas entered and the sentences imposed.

Mr. Aitken: This is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General.

Merchant Banks

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which merchant bank is the adviser to his Department; and if he will list all the fees and commissions paid to banks by his Department each year since 1988.

Mr. Hanley: My Department does not employ any one merchant bank as a permanent adviser. In fact, since 1988, only one centrally held record exists for the employment of a merchant bank. This was a contract placed with Kleinwort Benson Investment Trust Ltd. for a project in connection with the contractorisation of the royal dockyards in August 1993. To protect commercial confidentiality, the value of this contract cannot be released. It is likely that a number of other, lower-value contracts will have been placed with banks by subordinate budget holders from time to time during the period in question. The details of such contracts are not held centrally, however, and details could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Puma

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what procedure was adopted for the contract for Puma modifications; and whether royal naval aircraft yard Fleetlands was invited to tender for any part of the contract.

Mr. Aitken: There have been many contracts for the modification of the Puma helicopter to maintain its operational effectiveness since it entered service. Royal naval aircraft yard—RNAY—Fleetlands, which is part of the naval aircraft repair organisation defence agency, is regularly tasked by my Department with embodiment of modification kits into service aircraft, and consideration has been given to RNAY Fleetlands carrying out such work on the Puma helicopter. Fleetlands is permitted to respond to MOD invitations to tender.

Falkland Islands

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the measures which have been taken to clear the Falkland Islands of mines and other lethal debris of war and the extent to which these measures have succeeded.

Mr. Hanley: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) on 8 February, *Official Report*, columns *239-40*.

Training Flights (Plymouth Airport)

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the instructions given to MOD personnel involved in training flights from Plymouth airport in the event of engine failure immediately after take-off.

Mr. Hanley: A pilot can take a number of actions in the event of an engine failure immediately after take-off. If there is sufficient space ahead, the pilot will land on the airfield. If, however, there is insufficient space remaining, the pilot will by that time have gained sufficient height or speed or both to enable him to turn towards a suitable clear area to land or to turn back to the airfield to land. The decision as to which procedure is adopted is a matter for the professional judgment of the pilot at the time of the incident. Experienced aircrew, well versed in the engine failure procedure, are on board all training flights from Plymouth airport. The engine failure procedure is also practised regularly as part of routine flying, with the turn-back procedure normally being practised away from the airfield to reduce noisy disturbance. Over its 30 years operating experience at Plymouth airport, the Royal Navy has maintained an excellent safety record.

Defence Bases

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what *(a)* details, *(b)* plans and *(c)* inventories of defence bases have been supplied to Crown Ridge Industries in (i) 1993 and (ii) 1994.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is not held centrally. In addition to being available from other sources, details of surplus defence bases are widely disseminated by officials to many companies and individuals. As far as can be ascertained, however, no details, plans or inventories have been supplied to Crownridge Industries with the exception of details of Royal Navy armaments depot, Trecwn supplied to Mr. R. Philipps in his capacity as a director of Crownridge Industries in 1994.

Bases (Sales)

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 27 June, *Official Report*, column *443-45*, if he will list for each base sold, intended to be sold or currently marketed the date *(a)* on which the decision to close was made, *(b)* on which the decision to sell the base was made and *(c)* on which expressions of interest were first invited.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Royal Navy Armaments Depot, Trecwn

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answers of 27 June, *Official Report*, column *445*, on RNAD Trecwn, on what date the decision was made that no further military use could be found for RNAD Trecwn and that the base should be sold.

Mr. Hanley: As part of my Department's normal procedure concerning redundant land, expressions of interest in RNAD Trecwn from other MOD organisations were sought on 28 February 1992. No firm military requirement for the site was identified however, and details of the site were then circulated to some 25 other Government Departments on 13 July 1992. Again, no interest was shown, and the site was declared surplus to requirements on 1 August 1992.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 27 June, *Official Report*, column *445*, on the supply since July 1991, of information relating to RNAD Trecwn, if he will list individuals or organisations to whom his Department is aware that details at the facilities in RNAD Trecwn were supplied, together with the month in which the material was supplied.

Mr. Hanley: The individuals and organisations to whom my Department is aware that details of the facilities in RNAD Trecwn were supplied are:

Organisation/Individual
Slough Estates plc
O'Rion London Ltd.
Fairfield Properties
Mr. R. A. Halliday
Otto Properties
Pearl & Coutts Ltd.
Mr. K. B. Hobday
The County Echo
Lands Improvements Group Ltd.
Dwr Cymru Welsh Water
Mr. M. Scrace
Dyfed Antiques
Miss E. A. Stokes
Maltsword Ltd.
Mr. Jacques
St. Modwen Properties
Queensway Land & Property Ltd.
Mr. K. Williams
Document Storage Co.
BDC Building & Civil Engineering
South Pembrokeshire District Council
Dave Harris Transport
Park Investments Management Ltd.
Economic Development Section, Preseli Pembrokeshire District Council
Property Services, Preseli Pembrokeshire District Council
The Cleveland Trust
Ms T. J. Simpkins
West Wales Task Force
Mr. Edwards
Welsh Development Agency
Vulcan Firework UK Limited
Dyfed County Planning Department
Acer Wallace Evans
London & County Development
Mr. M. Rowlands
Mr. D. Morris, MEP
Cooke & Arkwright
A. G. Edwards & Sons
Mr. P. Morgan
Mr. T. Twomey
Evans & Roach & Co.
DTZ Debenham Thorpe
Mr. H. N. Griffiths
Mr. S. W. Buckley
Mr. W. D. Berry
Mr. Riaz
Mr. Sinnett
Mr. B. Freid
Mr. P. Hunter
Mr. A. Bilton
Mr. J. Hager
WGSs, Leeds
Hutchings & Thomas
M. J. Barrett Properties
Mr. J. Goodwin
Mr. M. J. Hendy
Broxtead Consulting
Davron Business Park
Cheetham & Mortimer
Mr. J. W. Molay
Clare House Landshipping
Unicorn Estates
Rhos Landscapes
Mr. J. Townsend
The Western Telegraph
Mr. M. Danzey
Mr. Hughes
Pembroke Design Ltd.
Hon. R. Philipps
Gulfstream (Pembrokeshire) Ltd.
Strutt & Parker
Mr. M. Oliver
Dr. C. Smith
ICI Nobel Explosives
TGWU
Mr. D. T. Jones
Hilderbrand & Glicker
Ms S. Morris
Mr. R. F. Grant
Glassclean Services
Richard Ellis
Mr. J. Ambrey
Mr. A. James
T. G. Jones & Associates
Mr. N. Ainger, MP
Mr. P. Jones
Mr. R. Murray
Mr. McHale

The various dates on which this information was released is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Vacant Married Quarters

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will provide a regional breakdown of the numbers of vacant married quarters at the end of March 1992, 1993 and 1994, with an estimate of the proportion of the total that the figures for each region represent.

Mr. Hanley: The regional breakdown of vacant married quarters at 31 March 1992, 1993 and 1994 and the percentage of the total stock which was vacant is as follows:

Region	31 March 1992	Per cent.	31 March 1993	Per cent.	31 March 1994	Per cent.
Yorkshire	596	11·6	532	9·8	427	7·9
Northern	89	13·6	55	8·7	116	16·4
North West	126	13·7	192	19·1	144	15·1
South East	3,684	12·9	3,326	12·6	3,407	13·2
South West	1,594	12·3	1,985	13·5	2,089	14·3
East Anglia	566	10·6	632	12·1	1,145	21·2
East Midlands	707	17·5	638	16·8	670	18·5
West Midlands	322	11·9	342	12·5	389	14·5
Wales	230	9·5	347	14·5	452	18·1
Scotland	954	14·5	765	11·5	736	11·3
Northern Ireland	497	16·4	372	12·5	307	10·2
Total	9,364	12·9	9,166	12·8	9,882	13·9

Many of these vacant married quarters were either undergoing or awaiting major maintenance work, held for unit deployments or already allocated to service families who were due to move in shortly. In addition, the following vacant surplus married quarters were in the process of being sold:

Period	Number
31 March 1992	1,889
31 March 1993	1,861
31 March 1994	1,519

Unfortunately, these figures are not maintained in a form which enables them to be readily broken down by regions.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

National Lottery

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what definition of arts and sports his Department is using to decide resourcing from the national lottery.

Mr. Brooke: In accordance with section 23 of the National Lottery etc. Act 1993, the Arts Council and Sports Council will distribute lottery proceeds for expenditure on or connected with the arts and sport respectively. They are responsible for defining those terms, taking into account their existing charter powers.

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will include the National Playing Fields Association and Play Wales as consultees with regard to the distribution of national lottery funds.

Mr. Brooke: In accordance with section 26(5) of the National Lottery etc. Act 1993, I and my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Wales and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland consulted the bodies responsible for the distribution of lottery proceeds before giving them policy directions under section 26(1) and (2) of the Act. Those bodies will also be consulted before receiving financial directions under section 26(3) and (4). In relation to applications for lottery funds, it will be for the distributing bodies to decide from whom they should seek advice.

Royal Palaces

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage, pursuant to his answer of 16 May, *Official Report*, column *346*, how much of the figure given for utilities, salaries and ancillary costs of the occupied royal palaces in 1994-95 is spent on utilities; how much is spent on salaries, and for how many staff; and what ancillary costs are involved.

Mr. Sproat: The £6·469 million to be spent on utilities, salaries and ancillary costs at the occupied palaces is broken down as follows:

	£
Utilities	1·573 million
Salary costs of 149·2 staff	3·331 million
Ancillary costs:	
Rates	638,000
Other operational costs eg custody guard service, preparation for official functions etc.	225,000
Furniture and equipment	209,000
Fire branch equipment, uniforms etc.	182,000
Training, stationary, computers, recruitment, minor consultancies	153,000
Garden costs, seeds, vehicle and equipment maintenance etc.	144,000
Craftsmen materials	14,000
Total	6·469 million

Television Licence Fees

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will publish his estimate of the cost of BBC revenues of a 25 per cent. reduction of television licence fees for all single pensioners living alone in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* England, *(c)* Scotland, *(d)* Northern Ireland and *(e)* Wales.

Mr. Brooke: The estimated cost in lost television licence revenue of introducing a 25 per cent. reduction in televison licences for all single pensioners living alone in the United Kingdom would be £63 million. Separate estimates by country are not available.

Spectrum Radio Persian Programme

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage whether he will call for a report from the Radio Authority into allegations of attempted interference by the Iranian Government in the Spectrum Radio Persian programme.

Mr. Brooke: No. Under the Broadcasting Act 1990, independent radio stations are responsible for their own programme content and for observing the terms and conditions of the licences issued to them by the Radio

Authority. The authority investigates the written complaints that it receives about programming and advertising on independent radio and publishes a quarterly bulletin.

Regulations

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage, pursuant to his oral answer of 23 May, *Official Report*, columns 12-13, if he will publish a table listing each of the more than 90 regulations grouping them in the seven main sections; with which Department he is considering each regulation; what is the intended modification to each regulation; and what is the estimated target date for each modification.

Mr. Sproat: I shall write to the hon. Member with a list of the 90 regulations which have been drawn to my attention by the tourism industry. The seven areas identified by my inquiries as being of particular concern to the industry, and the Departments with which I have discussed these areas, are:

Food hygiene:
Department of Health
Fire safety:
Home Office and Department of Trade and Industry
EU Package Travel Directive:
Department of Trade and Industry
Electricity at Work Regulations:
Employment Department
Public entertainment licensing:
Home Office
Signposting to tourist attractions and facilities:
Department of Transport
Price indications:
Department of Trade and Industry and Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food

In the case of the electricity at work regulations, fresh guidance has been issued for tourist accommodation businesses and in the case of food hygiene, the Department of Health has proposed an improved set of regulations which have been the subject of a public consultation exercise. Consideration has been given, or is being given, to the other five areas and where appropriate proposals for changes in regulations or for improved guidance will be brought forward in due course.

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list those of his Department's advisory non-departmental public bodies which the Government are required to consult before legislation proposals; and in respect of which bodies the Government must publish their response to advice supplied by them.

Mr. Sproat: There are no advisory non-departmental public bodies sponsored by my Department which the Government are required to consult before legislation proposals, and none to whose advice the Government must publish a response.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list his Department's advisory non-departmental public bodies which are required to publish their advice to Government.

Mr. Sproat: None of the advisory non-departmental public bodies sponsored by my Department is required to publish the advice that it gives to Government.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the advisory non-departmental public bodies sponsored by his Department which are required to lay their annual reports before Parliament.

Mr. Sproat: My Department sponsors only one advisory non-departmental public body, the Royal Fine Art Commission. This produces an annual report, although there is no requirement for it to do so or to lay it before Parliament. The report for the 1993 calendar year has just been published and presented to Parliament.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the advisory bodies which he has set up in his Department since the publication of "Public Bodies 1993".

Mr. Sproat: No advisory non-departmental public bodies have been set up under the sponsorship of my Department since publication of "Public Bodies 1993".

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list his Department's advisory non-departmental public bodies which are required to produce annual reports.

Mr. Sproat: My Department sponsors only one advisory non-departmental public body, the Royal Fine Art Commission. It produces an annual report, although there is no requirement for it to do so. The report for the 1993 calendar year has just been published and presented to Parliament.

Tourism

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many of his Department's officials are engaged in duties relating to tourism; and what is the total salary bill for their employment.

Mr. Sproat: There are currently 18 staff in my Department directly engaged in duties relating to tourism; including one who works part time. The estimated total salary bill for their employment in the current financial year is £476,363.

Staff Surveys

Mr. Radice: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what surveys of the views, opinions and attitudes of the staff of his Department have been carried out in the last two years; and if he will place copies of the findings in the Library.

Mr. Sproat: No surveys of this type have been conducted within the Department of National Heritage.

Stolen Cultural Property

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what steps he has taken to prevent stolen antiquities, illegally removed from their country of origin, free access into the United Kingdom; what taxes and import duties are applied to imported antiquities; what investigations were made regarding the legality of the 12-tonne load of antiquities recently taken from an ancient site in Lebanon and sent to a London dealer via Larnaca and Ipswich; and if he will ratify the 1970 UNESCO convention on the means of prohibiting and preventing illicit import, exportation and transfer of cultural property.

Mr. Brooke: The restriction of imports into the United Kingdom is the responsibility of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Taxes and import duties applied to imported antiquities are also a matter for the Chancellor, although there are no import duties at the moment. Any investigation of stolen antiquities in London would be for the police to take forward. In response to our inquiries, neither the Metropolitan police nor the antiquities trade has any knowledge of the Lebanese objects. The Government have no plans to ratify the 1970 UNESCO convention.

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what steps he took to prevent the sale at Sotheby of the 17 Century Joachim Wtewal painting, stolen from the east German Schloss museum; if he will condemn Switzerland for giving clear title to stolen goods kept in its vaults for five years; and if he supports European Union regulations on the control of the illegal export of cultural property.

Mr. Brooke: I have no powers to intervene in the sale of alleged stolen objects. This is a matter for the police. The laws governing title to stolen goods vary from country to country and I do not think it would be appropriate for me to comment on those in force in any particular state. I fully support the principles of the European Community directive on the return of cultural objects unlawfully removed from the territory of a member state. That has been implemented via a statutory instrument under the European Communities Act 1972, and entered into force on 2 March 1994.

Market Testing

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is his Department's policy towards the publication of external consultants' reports in relation to market testing.

Mr. Sproat *[holding answer 29 June 1994]:* With regard to external consultants' reports on market testing, as in other matters, my Department follows the principles set out in the code of practice on access to Government information.

Information which could prejudice negotiations or the effective conduct of commercial and contractual activities would not be published.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will set out the total cost of external consultancy fees incurred by his Department in relation to market testing.

Mr. Sproat *[holding answer 29 June 1994]:* Since it was established in April 1992, my Department and its two agencies have to date spent approximately £66,000 on consultancy relating to market testing. Most of this sum was in connection with a scoping study on the strategic contracting out of central services.

Recycled Paper

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what percentage of his Department's *(a)* press releases and *(b)* written answers are printed on recycled paper.

Mr. Sproat *[holding answer 4 July 1994]:* My Department uses recycled paper wherever possible and, following unsuccessful tests of samples of recycled paper for computer printing and photocopying, continues to search the market for improved products which would enable items such as press releases and written answers to be produced on such paper.

Amusement Machines

Sir Fergus Montgomery: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he expects to make a decision on allowing amusement-with-prizes machines in betting offices.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have been asked to reply.

This is under review. Other matters concerning deregulation of betting shops are receiving attention at present. We will then turn to the question of amusement-with-prizes machines in betting shops, but that would require primary legislation and it is not expected that there would be any changes to the law in the short term. However, we will review the policy and announce our conclusions in due course.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list his Department's advisory non-departmental public bodies which are required to produce annual reports.

Mr. Hague: The Disability Living Allowance Advisory Board.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security which of the advisory non-departmental public bodies sponsored by his Department have a statutory basis; and if he will list them.

Mr. Hague: The Social Security Advisory Committee, the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council, the Disability Living Allowance Advisory Board, the Central Advisory Committee on War Pensions and the war pensions committees.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security which of the advisory non-departmental public bodies sponsored by his Department are required to lay their annual reports before Parliament; and if he will list them.

Mr. Hague: None.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the advisory bodies set up in his Department since the publication of "Public Bodies 1993".

Mr. Hague: None.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list his Department's advisory non-departmental public bodies which are required to publish their advice to Government.

Mr. Hague: None.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list those of his Department's advisory

non-departmental public bodies which the Government are required to consult before legislation proposals; and in respect of which bodies the Government must publish their response to advice supplied by them.

Mr. Hague: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is required to consult the Social Security Advisory Committee on most proposals to amend social security regulations. If the committee reports on those proposals, my right hon. Friend is required to publish the report and his response to any recommendations if and when the regulations are laid before Parliament.

My right hon. Friend is similarly required to refer most proposals to amend regulations relating to industrial injuries benefit or its administration to the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council for consideration and advice.

Occupational Lung Disease

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what is his policy in respect of reclaiming previously paid sickness benefits from sufferers from asbestos-related diseases who have won compensation through the courts;

(2) what is the basis *(a)* for requiring sufferers from asbestosis and mesothelioma have to repay compensation for industrial injury and *(b)* for not requiring sufferers from pneumoconiosis to do so;

(3) what is his policy in respect of the pursuit of claims for repayment of sickness benefit from asbestosis sufferers after death if they win court cases for damages posthumously.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave him on 21 June at column *147*. The value of all relevant benefits, including sickness benefit, should be deducted from compensation awards exceeding £2,500. The provisions also apply to posthumous settlements.

Payments made under the pneumoconiosis compensation scheme are exempted from recoupment because the scheme has been subject to Government funding and it was structured to supplement, rather than replace, social security benefit payments.

Rights of the Child

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list what information in relation to low-income families is available for the statements in the United Kingdom's first report to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child in respect of *(a)* the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual and social development, and *(b)* the level of real disposable income of all types of families with children in 1979 and currently.

Mr. Burt: Information on the social security benefits available for low incomes families described in the United Kingdom report is available in leaflet FB27 "Bringing Up Children?"

A recent research report, "Support for Children, A Comparison of Arrangements in Fifteen Countries", published by this Department in 1993, provides a comparative analysis of United Kingdom support for children against that of other countries.

The latest estimates of changes in the real disposable income since 1979 for various family types can be found in "Households Below Average Income 1979-1990/91", published in June 1993.

Copies of all of those publications are in the Library.

Vaccine Damage

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what were the reasons for the number of disallowances made by the vaccine damage tribunal for each year since 1987.

Mr. Scott: Vaccine damage tribunals which determine appeals are independent of this Department. I am unable to comment on matters for which those independent authorities are responsible.

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claims were made on behalf of vaccine-damaged children for the vaccine damage payment, who have been accepted as vaccine-damaged but were turned down because their disability was less than 80 per cent., between the passing of the compensation Act and June 1981; and how many parents have applied but have been turned down because of the six-year ruling between these dates.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the vaccine damage payment scheme is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Richard Burden, dated 4 July 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has aked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question asking how many claims were made on behalf of vaccine damaged children for the vaccine damage payment, who have been accepted as vaccine damaged but were turned down because their disability was less than 80 per cent. between the passing of the compensation act and June 1981; and how many parents have applied but have been turned down because of the six year ruling between these dates.

You will be aware from my earlier letter of 24 June 1994 to you about this subject [OR Vol 245 Col 441] that the full range of information requested is not available. This is because statistics relating to claims for Vaccine Damage Payments were not maintained in a form which could identify the specific reason for refusal until June 1981. However, I am able to tell you that in the period up to June 1981 there were 2,742 claims made, the majority being on behalf of Vaccine Damaged children and a small minority being made by self claimants, ie persons over the age of 18 years. Of those claims 2,301 claims were disallowed.

I am sorry that I am unable to be more specific on this occasion but I hope you find this reply helpful.

Child Support Agency

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what considerations led to the requirement that cheques made payable by the CSA as a refund for overpayment should include the individual's name, address and national insurance number.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. John Gunnell, dated 5 July 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the inclusion of clients' names, addresses and National Insurance numbers on girocheques.

National Insurance Numbers are included on girocheques as the Agency uses them as unique reference numbers for clients.

The address is included because girocheques are despatched in window envelopes.

I hope this reply is useful.

Social Fund Loans

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 21 June, *Official Report*, columns *140-41*, when he was first made aware of the problems concerning the checks made to ensure that unemployed claimants do not overpay their loans from the social fund; if he will list the district offices which have been affected; and how many claimants at each office have *(a)* had a refund or *(b)* had the overpayment offset against another loan.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the social fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 4 July 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question asking the Secretary of State, pursuant to his answer of 21 June, OR cols. 140-1, when he was first made aware of the problems concerning the checks made to ensure that unemployed claimants do not overpay their loans from the Social Fund; if he will list the district offices which have been affected; and how many claimants at each office have *(a)* had a refund or *(b)* had the overpayment offset against another loan.

Firstly, I should explain that whilst the Agency is aware that there have been problems with unemployed customers overpaying their loans, statistics have not been maintained to record the number of individuals customers concerned or indeed the Districts involved. To obtain this specific information would require a manual trawl of each Districts records, an exercise which could only be undertaken at a disproportionate cost.

With regard to checks which are carried out, I am pleased to tell you that there is not a problem with the checks I outlined in my previous response of 21 June 1994 [OR Vol 245 Col 140]. The automated and clerical checks are effective and minimise the risk of over-recovery, ensuring that if exceptionally, a customer overpays a loan, a refund is made or that over-recovery offset against another loan.

I am unable to comment about any difficulties that the Employment Services Agency may have experienced where SF deductions are their responsibility. However, I can assure you that there is a regular dialogue between both Agencies where any problems are discussed and resolutions sought. Furthermore, I am confident that the automation of SF recoveries planned for April 1995 will improve matters still further.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

HEALTH

Social Workers (Training)

12. **Lady Olga Maitland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what changes have been made in the system of training for social workers.

Mr. Bowis: The Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work is reviewing the diploma in social work to keep pace with legislation and best social work practice. Training for social workers should be down to earth, practical and based on sound knowledge of the law.

NHS Staff (Guidance)

13. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guarantees the NHS guidance for staff on relations with the press and media provide against dismissal for any nurse, midwife or health visitor who publicises misconduct or mismanagement within the NHS; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guarantees the National Health Service Executive guidance for staff on relations with the public and the media provide against dismissal for any nurse, midwife or health visitor who publicises misconduct or mismanagement within the NHS; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The guidance makes it clear that employees who express their views about health service issues in accordance with the guidance are not to be penalised in any way for doing so.

Responsibility for decisions about disciplinary matters lies with each national health service employer.

Hospitals, Buckinghamshire

14. **Mr. Lidington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many major NHS hospital building projects have been carried out in Buckinghamshire since 1979; and at what cost to public funds.

Mr. Sackville: A total of 17 national health service hospital building projects costing over £1 million have been completed in Buckinghamshire since 1979. The approximate cost to public funds was in excess of £70 million. These costs include construction, fees and equipment but information on total cost of schemes is not available. For example, value added tax and land purchase costs are excluded.

General Practitioner Fundholders

15. **Mr. Burden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of health service purchasing activity in the west midlands is undertaken by general practitioner fundholders.

Dr. Mawhinney: There are now 283 fundholding practices in the west midlands, covering 41 per cent. of the population, and purchasing nearly 10 per cent. of all hospital and community health services.

Embryo Research

16. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her oral answer of 24 May, *Official Report*, column 166, what consultations she has had with the Human Fertilisation and Embryo Authority about the use of ovarian foetal material in research; and what action she proposes to take until such time as the Human Fertilisation and Embryo Authority reports.

Mr. Sackville: Ministers and officials from the Department meet regularly the authority's chairman, members and executive. The authority's consultation exercise has been discussed at some of these meetings.

Purchasing Authorities

17. **Mr. Matthew Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to develop the role of the purchasing authorities in the NHS.

Mr. Sackville: Purchasing authorities have an important role in the national health service and there has been much good work to develop their function. This will be consolidated through the enabling legislation, which will allow district health authorities and family health services authorities to merge and ensure high levels of performance and effectiveness.

Community Care

18. **Mr. O'Hara:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessments she has made of the cost-effectiveness of the recent changes in community care.

Mr. Bowis: It is far too early to draw definitive conclusions about the success of the new arrangements. However, what we have seen so far suggests that the Health Committee was right to conclude last March that "the new funding arrangements provide the potential for a better and more efficient use of public money."

Registered Homes Act 1984

19. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to introduce legislation to amend the Registered Homes Act 1984.

Mr. Bowis: None at present.

Dental Services

20. **Mr. Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made as to the adequacy of the existing situation for NHS dental provision; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: We are committed to an effective and accessible national health service dental service. There were, at the latest dates, more dentists on the lists of family health services authorities and 3·8 per cent. more registered patients than at 1 July 1992.

NHS Funding

21. **Mr. Bayley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when her Department received the report on the review of the resource allocation working party and the capitation funding formula; when the report will be published; and when her Department will publish its proposals on future funding formulae for the national health service.

Mr. Sackville: The weighted capitation review steering group received in March 1994 the results of a study commissioned from York university. I understand that York university intends to publish its findings in due course.

The steering group forwarded the results, together with its comments, to the National Health Service Executive at the end of April. The executive is still evaluating these.

In-patient Treatment, Rugby

22. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many in-patients were treated by the Rugby NHS trust in 1992-93; and what was the figure for the first year of the trust's existence.

Mr. Sackville: In the first two years of its existence, the number of in-patients treated at Rugby Hospital national health service trust has grown from 12,188 in 1991-92 to 12,478 in 1992-93; this represents a 2·4 per cent. increase.

Statistical Source: Ordinary admissions and day cases, general and acute; figures taken from KP70 returns.

Independent NHS Sector

23. **Mr. Jim Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what definition she uses of the independent NHS sector.

Mr. Sackville: There is no independent national health service sector. NHS trusts are free to make accommodation and services available to private patients provided that there is no significant disadvantage in the exercise of their obligations under any NHS contract.

Regulations

24. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the introduction of trust hospitals has resulted in a decrease in the number of regulations issued by her Department.

Mr. Sackville: No regulations have been issued since 1991.

Health Care Costs, Devon and Cornwall

25. **Mr. Jamieson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment her Department has made of the impact of tourists on health care costs in Devon and Cornwall.

Mr. Sackville: It is for regional health authorities to make allocations of funds to district health authorities, adapting the national formula for weighted capitation, to take account of the differing health needs of their resident population and particular local characteristics and circumstances.

Strikes (Cost)

26. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the highest annual total of operations deferred through strikes in the health service since 1964; and when this occurred.

Mr. Sackville: Details of the number of operations deferred through strikes are not available.

NHS Expenditure, Yorkshire

27. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will outline the levels of expenditure paid by the Government to the NHS in the Yorkshire region in 1994-95 and in 1978-79 at 1994 constant prices.

Mr. Sackville: Information on levels of expenditure for Yorkshire region in 1978-79 is no longer held centrally. Figures for the Northern and Yorkshire region in 1994-95 are not yet available.

General Practitioner Fundholders, Redbridge and Waltham Forest

28. **Mr. Duncan Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many general practitioner fundholders there are in Redbridge and Waltham Forest district health authority areas.

Dr. Mawhinney: There are 19 fundholding practices in the Redbridge and Waltham Forest family health services authority, covering 14 per cent. of the population.

Hospital Beds, London

29. **Ms Gordon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the required change in the number of hospital beds in London.

Dr. Mawhinney: The number of hospital beds in London will depend, in large part, on the assessment by local health authorities, general practitioner fundholders and hospitals of the future requirement for in-patient, day case and out-patient services to best meet the needs of their patients. Also, more patients from outside London are being treated locally, further reducing the need for hospital beds in London.

Joint Ventures

30. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to encourage joint ventures between the NHS and the private sector.

Mr. Sackville: The National Health Service Executive has an on-going programme of work to promote the private finance initiative and encourage joint ventures between the NHS and the private sector. This has so far involved:

- Issuing clear guidance about procedures to be followed and how to make a business case using appropriate investment appraisal techniques;
- Providing advice direct to private sector and NHS enquirers, and making direct personal contact with NHS and private sector parties;
- Organising "roadshows" for NHS trust finance directors, and others, explaining the Private Finance Initiative and the opportunities in the NHS;
- Ministerial and senior officials' speeches to encourage both NHS and private sector;
- Publishing publicity material—such as the brochure pack "Public Service, Private Finance" (over 1000 copies issued to NHS and private sector contacts, with requests for over 1000 more since launch);
- Setting up and managing the Newchurch Database project, to increase contacts between the NHS and the private sector and encourage people to explore the possibility of using private finance by spreading knowledge of projects that have already been undertaken by NHS trusts and health authorities.
- Setting up the Private Finance Unit. The remit of the Private Finance Unit is to promote the Private Finance Initiative throughout the NHS and to help trusts and health authorities make greater use of private finance.

Deprived Areas

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average primary care deprivation score for each family health services authority in the London implementation group remit.

Dr. Mawhinney: The average primary care deprivation scores for each family health services authority or part-FHSA are:

	Average
City and East London	43·39
Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham	32·23
Camden and Islington	30·96
Eastern Enfield and Edmonton area of Haringey	27·13
Brent (excluding Harrow)	24·93
Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster	23·90
Waltham Forest (excluding Redbridge)	22·42
Greenwich (excluding Bexley but including Thamesmead)	21·76
Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow	21·00
Wandsworth (excluding Sutton and Merton)	20·98
Barking (excluding Havering)	20·76
Croydon (North only)	15·72

Note: the scores are calculated as an average of all wards within each FHSA or part-FHSA.

Tuberculosis

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many children were notified as having tuberculosis in 1990, 1991 and 1992; and how many in each year were from areas where health authorities stopped the school immunisation programme.

Mr. Sackville: The number of children between the ages of nought and 19 who contracted tuberculosis were:

	Number
1990	569
1991	631
1992	706

District health authorities are responsible for the schools' BCG immunisation programme.

"Making London Better"

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 23 June, *Official Report,* column *301,* how many of the 425 individuals displaced from London's national health service were assisted to find work in *(a)* the national health service in London, *(b)* the national health service outside London, *(c)* the private health care sector and *(d)* non-health care work; and how many did not find work despite assistance.

Dr. Mawhinney: The clearing house has assisted displaced staff as shown in the table.

Category	*Number*
Currently on Clearing House Register being matched to job	218
Matched to National Health Service job in London	134
Matched to National Health Service job outside London	3
Matched to private sector health care job	4
Matched to non-health care job (eg in voluntary sector or social services)	27
Withdrawals	39

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer 23 June, *Official Report,* column *301,* what were the job titles of the 425 individuals who requested help from the clearing house after being displaced as a result of service changes in London.

Dr. Mawhinney: Job titles, by staff group, of those who have requested help from the clearing house are summarised in the table.

Staff group	*Number*
General Management/Administrative grades	201
Nursing and Midwifery grades	102
Ancillary grades	28

Staff group	Number
Laboratory technicians	27
Allied to medicine grades (paramedical)	18
Clinical Scientists	15
"Other" technical staff	14
Maintenance grades	7
Pharmacists	6
Doctors/Dentists	6
Clinical psychologist	1

Dependency

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many registered drug addicts there were in *(a)* York, *(b)* North Yorkshire and *(c)* England in each year since 1979.

Mr. Bowis: Information on the number of registered drug addicts for the years 1987-92 is shown in the table. Data for earlier years are not available for district health authorities

	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
England	9,633	11,533	13,700	16,163	18,761	22,240
York	17	24	37	49	49	72
North Yorkshire	29	75	69	101	117	185

Note:
North Yorkshire District Health Authority was formed on 1 December 1992 by the amalgamation of Northallerton, York, Scarborough, Harrogate and part of Airedale District Health Authority. Data for 1987-92 inclusive have therefore been estimated by adding data for those DHAs. It is not possible to produce data for the exact statutory boundary of North Yorkshire DHA as part of Airedale DHA is now within Bradford DHA.

Staff Surveys

Mr. Radice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what surveys of the views, opinions and attitudes of the staff of her Department have been carried out in the last two years; and if she will place copies of the findings in the Library.

Mr. Sackville: A number of surveys have been carried out in the last two years seeking staff views on specific issues. This information is confidential to management and staff.

Patients Charter

Mr. Wicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what independent audit is undertaken of the data supplied by hospitals for patients charter standards.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Audit Commission appointed auditors to review the systems used to collect data on patients charter standards published in the hospital and ambulance services comparative performance guide for 1993-94, copies of which are available in the Library.

Air Ambulances

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is the average cost of an air ambulance flight; and if she will make a statement;

(2) how many United Kingdom residents were seriously injured abroad in 1993 and returned to the United Kingdom by air ambulance; how many of these had medical insurance which covered the cost of the air ambulance; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

Bicycles

Mr. Robathan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what facilities her Department provides for the parking of the bicycles of visitors to its offices in Westminster.

Mr. Sackville: Richmond house has a bicycle rack in the car park where bicycles of visitors can be parked.

Hospital League Tables

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health who conducted the survey research for the published hospital league tables; and whether this was put out to tender.

Mr. Sackville: The Central Office of Information commissioned the survey research on the Department's behalf. The research company chosen was BMJ Research and Consultancy Ltd. A full competitive tendering exercise did not take place. This was due to urgent decisions being required on the outcomes of the research to ensure that the critical timetable the Department was working to could be met.

Drug Dispensing

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the criteria for transferring prescription-only medicines to over-the-counter purchases.

Mr. Sackville: Patient safety is the criterion which determines whether or not a medicine can be released from prescription control. Prescription control is determined by the provisions in section 58A of the Medicines Act 1968, which implements EC directive 92/26.

Travel Costs

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what financial assistance is available to parents to meet the costs of children needing to travel to hospitals and medical centres outside their home area for treatment.

Mr. Bowis: The hospital travel costs scheme provides help with hospital travelling expenses for children who are in families on income support, family credit or low income and for the expenses of a companion where this is medically necessary. To qualify for help under the scheme, patients must be receiving national health service treatment given under the care of a hospital consultant.

Cosmetic Surgery

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to regulate private cosmetic surgery clinics.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Gloucester (Mr. French) on 17 May, *Official Report*, column *418*.

Immunisations

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many two-year-old children per 100,000 received immunisations against *(a)* diphtheria, *(b)* tetanus, *(c)* polio, *(d)* whooping cough, *(e)* measles, *(f)* mumps and *(g)* rubella; and how many five-year-old children per 100,000 received boosters for these same categories for each year since 1987.

Mr. Sackville: The available information is shown in the tables.

Percentage of two-year old children immunised against diphtheria, tetanus, polio, whooping cough, measles, mumps and rubella.
England 1987-88 to 1992-93

Percentage	[1]1987-88	[2]1988-89	[2]1989-90	[2]1990-91	[2]1991-92	[2]1992-93
Diphtheria	87	87	89	92	93	95
Tetanus	87	87	89	92	93	95
Polio	87	87	89	92	93	95
Whooping Cough	73	75	78	84	88	92
Measles	76	80	84	87	90	92
Mumps/Rubella[3]	—	7	68	86	90	92

[1] Percentage of children born in 1985 and vaccinated by 31 March 1988.
[2] Percentage immunised by 2nd birthday.
[3] The combined MMR vaccine was first used in 1988-89.

Percentage of five-year old children receiving booster doses against diphtheria, tetanus and polio[1]
England 1990-91 to 1992-93

	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93
Diphtheria percentage	83	85	86
Tetanus percentage	82	85	86
Polio percentage	82	85	86

[1] Booster doses are provided only for diphtheria, tetanus and polio.

Clinical Negligence

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the cost of legal fees incurred by national health service bodies as a result of clinical negligence claims in each year since 1990-91.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 27 June 1994]:* The total legal costs for national health service bodies in England for 1991-92 was £6,348,335 and for 1992-93 was £4,364,709. Information on such costs for 1990-91 is not available.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list for each NHS trust in the former North West Thames region, those chairmen and non-executive directors who live outside the boundaries of the district health authority in which that trust is situated.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 1 July 1994]:* Some 207 out of the 278—75 per cent.—chairmen and non-executive directors appointed to national health service trusts within the West Midlands region live within the boundaries of the district health authorities in which that trust is situated. The names of the appointees who live outside the relevant district health authority boundaries are listed.

First Community Health NHS Trust
Miss S. Massey

Rugby NHS Trust
Mr. I. Fell

Walsall Hospitals NHS Trust
Mrs. M. Bladon
Mr. D. S. Frost

Kidderminster Healthcare NHS Trust
Sir Patrick Lawrence
Professor P. Spurgeon

Wolverley NHS Trust
Mr. J. S. C. Quinn
Mr. D. H. Rogers

North Warwickshire NHS Trust
Mr. P. Hartley
Mrs. E. M. Stuart

Burton Hospitals NHS Trust
Mr. R. M. Heelis

North Staffordshire Hospital Centre NHS Trust
Mr. G. Manning

Mid Staffordshire General Hospitals NHS Trust
Mrs. J. Burton

The Princess Royal NHS Trust
Miss M. J. Pursglove

Walsall Community Health Services NHS Trust
Mr. D. G. Chevins

West Midlands Ambulance Service NHS Trust
Mr. H. J. Musgrove
Mrs. J. H. Moyle
Mr. R. J. Clifford
Mr. P. G. Leopold

Walsgrave Hospital NHS Trust
Mr. R. Jordan
Mr. F. T. Bunting
Mr. H. Corker

The Alexandra Healthcare NHS Trust
Mrs. J. A. Mackrael

Worcester Royal Infirmary NHS Trust
Lady Huntington-Whiteley

Hereford & Worcester Ambulance Service
Mrs. R. I. Reynolds

George Eliot Hospital NHS Trust
Mrs. J. M. Jones

Coventry Healthcare NHS Trust
Mr. R. Henry
Miss J. M. Talbot
Mr. P. B. Forde
Mr. M. J. Cotton

Birmingham Women's Health Care NHS Trust
Professor E. Ives

South Birmingham Community Health NHS Trust
Mrs. T. M. Samuels
Mr. J. E. Merrick

South Birmingham Mental Health NHS Trust
Mr. I. A. King
Mr. A. B. Knapp
Mrs. P. Arksey

The City Hospital NHS Trust
Mrs. S. Sharma
Mr. R. Lea

Northern Birmingham Community Health NHS Trust
Mr. H. A. Nicholls
Dr. R. A. Bassett
Mr. E. G. Lynch
Dr. S. Toogood

Northern Birmingham Mental Health NHS Trust
Ms J. Mackay
Professor R. Cochrane
Ms S. Squires
Mr. M. S. Akhtar
Mr. C. C. Jordan
Mr. M. Clifford

Birmingham Heartlands Hospital NHS Trust
Mr. J. Bettinson
Lady Thompson
Mr. P. E. Couse
Mr. M. N. W. Wilcox
Dr. G. Thorpe

North Staffordshire Combined Healthcare NHS Trust
Mr. C. Bullock
Mr. J. Lee
Mr. C. Myatt
Mr. J. Lovatt
Ms E. A. Fisher

Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic and District Hospital NHS Trust
Professor J. Sloboda

Dudley Priority Health NHS Trust
Mr. I. J. Brough

Dudley Group of Hospitals NHS Trust
Mr. P. Suddock
Mrs. V. M. McGhee
Mr. L. P. Turner

Sandwell Healthcare NHS Trust
Mr. B. C. Knight
Ms J. Darbyshire
Mr. S. Lawley
Ms A. Gosain
Mr. P. R. Dearing

Solihull Healthcare NHS Trust
Mr. F. Wedgewood-Oppenheim

Royal Wolverhampton Hospitals NHS Trust
Mr. G. Morris
Mrs. V. A. Tudor

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 6 July 1994

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Compensation (Non-payment)

Mr. Bates: To ask the Attorney-General how many prosecutions have been brought by the Crown Prosecution Service for non-payment of compensation awarded to victims as a result of court orders in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

The Attorney-General: Compensation orders made in criminal proceedings are registered in the relevant magistrates' court which then has the responsibility for enforcement through the various powers vested in it for that purpose. The Crown Prosecution Service does not play any part in the enforcement of such compensation orders.

Crown Prosecution Service

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Attorney-General if he will request the Director of Public Prosecutions to issue a revised map of England and Wales for the annual report of the Crown Prosecution Service so that both Anglesey and the Isle of Wight are depicted.

The Attorney-General: The Director of Public Prosecutions will ensure that Anglesey and the Isle of Wight are included with similar maps in future editions of the annual report.

Racially-motivated Crime

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Attorney-General what training is given to prosecutors regarding the racial motivation of crimes.

The Attorney-General: The Crown Prosecution Service runs a number of courses for legal staff which include sessions on various aspects of racial awareness including the racial motivation of crime. I have placed a more detailed description of such courses in the Library.

The nature and substance of the racial awareness training provided by the CPS is currently being reviewed with a view to introducing further improvements where appropriate.

DEFENCE

Bicycles

Mr. Robathan: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what facilities his Department provides for the parking of the bicycles of visitors to its offices in Westminster.

Mr. Hanley: Although no facilities are provided outside our buildings in the Whitehall area specifically for visitors' bicycles, facilities could usually be provided if they were requested.

Rio Declaration

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the precise provisions of principle 24 of agenda 21 of the Rio declaration of June 1992; what is his policy in respect of implementing those provisions; and what specific guidance is given to the armed forces in respect of those aspects of principle 24 which commit signatories to fighting only environmentally friendly wars.

Mr. Hanley: As with other Governments participating in the Rio summit, the United Kingdom supports the broad principles enshrined in the Rio declaration, including principle 24, which says that states should respect international law providing protection for the environment in time of armed conflict. It is my Department's policy that the armed forces should act at all times in accordance with United Kingdom national and international law. Training in the law of armed conflict is given to all members of the armed forces.

Access to Environmental Information

Mr. Alnger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many requests for environmental information under the Access to Environmental Information Regulations 1992 have been received by his Department; how many were answered within two months; how many were refused; and on what grounds in each case.

Mr. Hanley: My Department has received four requests for environmental information under the Access to Environmental Information Regulations 1992; all received an answer within the specified two months; and none were refused.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Secure Accommodation

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the organisations which have made representations to him opposing the Government's plan to introduce secure accommodation for juveniles.

Mr. Maclean: In March 1993, the Home Office invited views and comments from interested organisations on the details of the proposals which were then being developed following the statement by the then Home Secretary my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke) on 2 March, *Official Report*, columns *139-42*. Subsequently, more than 60 sets of written comments were received; and a range of meetings were held at both ministerial and official level. Although a substantial number of respondents were opposed to the introduction of a new secure training order, there was a very wide measure of agreement on the need for the courts to have a power to order the detention in secure accommodation of those juvenile offenders for whom it is clear that community penalties would be neither effective nor appropriate.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he intends to take to ensure that the quality of education provided in the secure accommodation units run by private contractors is of a sufficiently high standard.

Mr. Maclean: Contractors will be required under the terms of their contracts to provide education and training

for trainees to an agreed standard based on the requirements set out in the operational specification for a secure training centre. The contract terms will be underpinned by minimum standards laid down in secure training centre rules. Copies of the operational specification and an administrative paper setting out proposed rules have been placed in the Library of the House.

In addition, education standards in secure training centres will be subject to inspections arranged by Her Majesty's chief inspector of schools.

Buggery

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cases of non-consensual buggery of men were reported in the United Kingdom in *(a)* 1983 and *(b)* 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Information is readily available centrally only for England and Wales and Northern Ireland. The information for England and Wales given in table 1 is for those prosecuted. The 1993 data are not yet available. Information on cases reported during 1992 in Northern Ireland is given in table 2.

Table 1
Number of male prosecutions in England and Wales for non-consensual buggery of men, by offence 1983 and 1992

England and Wales — *Number of males*

Offence description	*Year*	*Prosecutions*
Buggery by a man with a male person of the age of 16 or over without consent[1]	1982	19
	1992	38
Attempt by a man to commit buggery with a male person of the age of 16 or over without consent[1]	1982	3
	1992	2
Assault with intent to commit buggery[2]	1982	6
	1992	6
Indecent assault on male person, 16 years or over[3]	1982	148
	1992	193

[1] Sexual Offences Act 1956, sec. 12, as amended by the Sexual Offences Act 1967, sec. 3(1).
[2] Sexual Offences Act 1956, sec. 16.
[3] Sexual Offences Act 1956, sec. 15.

Table 2
Number of cases reported in Northern Ireland for non-consensual buggery of men by offence, 1992
Northern Ireland

Offence description	*Number of cases*
Buggery by a man with a male person of the age of 16 or over without consent	1
Attempt by a man to commit buggery with a male person of the age of 16 or over without consent	—
Assault with intent to commit buggery	—
Indecent assault on male person, 16 years or over	—

Refugees

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many foreign nationals, displaced by violent conflicts are currently seeking refuge in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is not separately identifiable from the statistics.

Fire Officers (Injuries)

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many fire officers were injured in the course of their duty in 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Figures are not yet available for the number of fire officers injured in the line of duty in 1993. However, in England and Wales in 1992, three fire officers were killed and 861 were seriously injured in the line of duty. Serious injuries are defined as those which result in absence from duty for at least one month or two weeks or more of hospitalisation.

Channel Islands

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what complaints his Department has received over the past five years relating to defects in the Channel Islands legal system or the failure of the Jersey legal system to deal promptly with crimes of fraud, violence and miscarriages of justice.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Minister of State to the right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris) on 23 June, *Official Report,* column 257.

May Report

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on Sir John May's final report on the Guildford and Woolwich case.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) on 30 June 1994, *Official Report,* column *653.*

Criminal Injuries Compensation

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people are expected to make successful claims under the criminal injuries compensation scheme in each of the next six years.

Mr. Maclean: It is not possible to forecast how many successful claims will be made in any particular year as claims are not necessarily settled in the year in which they are made. However, for the purpose of some recent judicial review proceedings, it was estimated that the number of awards made in the next six years will be of the following order:

	Number
1994-95	46,900
1995-96	57,700
1996-97	60,300
1997-98	68,300
1998-99	74,800
1999-2000	76,400

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what proportion of those eligible to claim under the criminal injuries compensation scheme did so in *(a)* 1991-92, *(b)* 1992-93 and *(c)* 1993-94;

(2) how many crimes were committed in 1991-92, 1992-93 and 1993-94 which involved a victim eligible for compensation under the criminal injuries compensation scheme;

(3) to what extent he expects the proportion of people eligible to claim who actually do claim under the criminal injuries compensation scheme to change over the next six years.

Mr. Maclean: We have no information about numbers of people who might be eligible to claim compensation under the criminal injuries compensation scheme.

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assumptions have been used to estimate the likely future cost of the criminal injuries compensation scheme if his Department's proposals for reform were not implemented.

Mr. Maclean: Based on average trends over the 10 years to 1993-94, it was assumed, for this purpose, that numbers of applications received and cases resolved would continue to increase by 9 per cent. annually, and that the average award would continue to increase annually by 5 per cent. more than gross domestic product inflation. It was also assumed that the number of resolved cases attracting an award would remain between 62 per cent. and 65 per cent.

Market Testing

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* 1992-93 and *(b)* 1993-94 market tests have been discontinued.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Ten market tests in the 1992-93 Home Office market testing programme have been discontinued. No market tests in the 1993-94 programme have been discontinued.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set out the total cost of external consultancy fees incurred by his Department in relation to market testing.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 29 June 1994]:* From 1 April 1992 to 31 May 1994, expenditure by my Department including the Prison Service on external consultancies in respect of market testing is estimated to be approximately £930,000.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what interim proposals Ernst and Young has made as part of the expenditure review concerning *(a)* market testing, *(b)* unit costs and *(c)* the funding of voluntary organisations.

Mr. Charles Wardle: During the course of the review a number of topics were considered for more detailed work. These included exploring a method of achieving equivalent savings to market testing without going out to competition, the development of better use of unit cost information and examination of the effectiveness of Home Office scrutiny of proposals for grants to the voluntary sector.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* Prison Service functions have been contracted out and *(b)* in-house jobs have been lost as a result of the (i) 1992-93 and (ii) 1993-94 Prison Service market testing programmes.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 6 July 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking how many Prison Service functions have been contracted out and in-house jobs lost as a result of our 1992-93 and 1993-94 market testing programmes.

The 1992-93 programme led to contracts being let for court escort and custody services in the East Midlands and Humberside area, for the management of Blakenhurst prison and for prison education. These have resulted in a net reduction of 78 full time equivalent Prison Service posts in relation to the court escort service. Because Blakenhurst was a new prison and education was not previously provided by in-house Prison Service staff, neither of these resulted in a loss of posts. Also, as a result of the in-house team winning the competiton for warehousing and distribution, 82 full time equivalent Prison Service posts were lost.

From the 1993-94 programme the court escort and custody services in the Metropolitan Police District and the management of Doncaster prison have been contracted out. The net reduction in the number of Prison Service posts as a result of contracting out the court escort service is 250. Because Doncaster prison is a new prison, contracting out has not reduced the number of existing posts in the Prison Service.

Management Training Seminars

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many staff have attended management training seminars run by Padgett Thompson in the last 12 months.

Mr. Michael Howard: Three members of staff have attended seminars run by Padgett Thompson.

Research

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) when he will publish research into *(a)* intensive community sentences and *(b)* reconviction rates;

(2) when he will publish comparative European research into ethnicity and crime;

(3) when he will publish his Department's research into the experiences of *(a)* refugees, *(b)* persons granted exceptional leave to remain in the United Kingdom and *(c)* Vietnamese refugees;

(4) when he will publish research involving *(a)* criminal justice agencies' response to the Criminal Justice Act 1991 and *(b)* the Bail Act 1976;

(5) when he will publish the research and planning unit programme for 1993-94 and 1994-95.

Mr. Howard: Neither my ministerial colleagues nor I have had an opportunity to consider reports on four of the studies listed: intensive community sentences; reconviction rates; Vietnamese refugees; and the survey of criminal justice agencies' responses to the Criminal Justice Act 1991.

A report on the settlement of refugees, carried out in collaboration with Salford university, is currently being revised. This study included those granted exceptional leave to remain.

A study of the Bail Act 1976 was published in 1992 —"Offending while on bail", research and planning unit paper No. 65. A follow-up study based on five local

initiatives is nearing completion, and the report will be revised to take into account the comments of the five local steering groups and others.

On comparative European research into ethnicity and crime, the Dutch Ministry of Justice is this month publishing a book on an international comparative study on youth and crime, which includes a chapter by Home Office researchers on results in this country. The research and planning unit is preparing a fuller report on the British results, which will include a detailed assessment of the findings by ethnic group.

I expect reports on all the studies listed to be published later in the year, once they have been finalised and arrangements for their publication has been agreed.

The research and planning unit programme for 1993-94 has been published, and a copy has been placed in the Library. The programme for 1994-95 will be published when this has been finalised.

Prison Service (Drugs Survey)

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what were the results of the Prison Service intelligence evaluation unit's drugs survey.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 6 July 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the results of the Prison Service Intelligence Evaluation Unit's Drugs' survey.

The Intelligence Evaluation Unit recently conducted a survey of nine establishments to gain better information on the extent of the drugs problem in the Prison Service. The results indicated that:

- most of the establishments surveyed regarded themselves as having a significant drugs problem
- most experienced significant problems with drugs other than cannabis
- drug abuse created problems and could lead to bullying and inter group rivalry
- all establishments had found drugs following searches
- most establishments had found visitors trying to smuggle in drugs

All the problems existed despite a range of active measures being taken by the establishments concerned to try and limit the entry of drugs and prevent the problem of drug use.

The Prison Service is developing a central strategy to reduce to an absolute minimum the supply of drugs and the demands for drugs in prisons.

The Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill contains provisions to allow prisoners to be required, in certain circumstances, to undertake drug tests.

Ernst and Young

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the consultants Ernst and Young commenced work on the March 1994 expenditure review.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The review of Home Office expenditure involving Ernst and Young began on 8 April and is due to be completed later this month.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much has been paid by his Department and its agencies in consultancy fees to Ernst and Young during the last three financial years.

Mr. Charles Wardle: During the last three financial years, the Home Office has paid £856,564 to Ernst and Young for consultancy work.

Prisoners (AIDS)

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what regulations govern the notification of a prisoner in the event that he or she is placed in a cell with a prisoner with the AIDS virus; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 26 May 1994]:* Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Mr. Alex Carlile, dated 6 July 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about what regulations govern the notification of a prisoner in the event that he or she is placed in a cell with a prisoner with the AIDS virus.

The Prison Service policy on HIV is given in Circular Instruction 30/1991. It emphasises that strict medical confidentiality shall apply to all prisoners' medical information, including information about HIV status. This policy reflects the policy which is adopted in the general community. Consequentially no prisoner would be notified about the health status of any other prisoner.

HIV testing in prison is carried out at the request of prison inmates, or on the advice of a prison medical officer for diagnostic purposes and only with the inmate's informed consent. This practice also mirrors that applying in the community outside prison. As a result the number of prisoners known to have HIV infection in prison is a proportion of the total number of prisoners who may have HIV infection. To provide information about the health status of known HIV positive inmates would breach medical confidentiality, may provide prisoners with a false sense of security in relation to HIV infection, and be counter productive in that it may discourage those people concerned about HIV infection from coming forward for advice, medical care, counselling and support.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Personal Injury Cases

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list the measures that he is currently taking to ensure that district judges have a full understanding of the complexities of personal injury claims.

Mr. John. M. Taylor: The Judicial Studies Board is responsible for the training of newly appointed deputy district judges and of experienced district judges. Training on personal injury cases is accorded great importance in both induction and refresher seminars. In addition, all judges who deal with such cases are issued with "Guidelines for the Assessment of General Damages in Personal Injury Cases", which was produced by the Judicial Studies Board and published by Blackstone Press.

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list those of his Department's advisory non-departmental public bodies which the Government are required to consult prior to

legislation proposals; and in respect of which bodies the Government must publish their response to advice supplied by them.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Government are required to consult the Council on Tribunals when considering rules affecting tribunals coming within the council's supervision but are not required to publish their response to that advice.

There are two rule committees, the Land Registration rule committee and the Magistrates' Courts rule committee, which the Government are required by statute to consult prior to legislation proposals. The Government do not respond specifically to the advice given and, if they did, the response is not required to be published.

Other rule committees are consulted and the committees consider, propose and advise the Government on legislative proposals. The Government do not respond specifically to the advice given and, if they did, the response is not required to be published.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list the advisory non-departmental public bodies sponsored by his Department which have a statutory basis.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The information requested is as follows:

The Legal Aid Advisory Committee
The Legal Aid Advisory Committee (NI)
The Advisory Committee on Legal Education and Conduct
The Advisory Council on Public Records
The Council on Tribunals
The Crown Court Rules Committee
The County Court Rules Committee
The Supreme Court Rules Committee
The Magistrates Courts Rules Committee
The Land Registration Rules Committee
The Family Proceedings Rules Committee
The Law Commission

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list his Department's advisory non-departmental public bodies which are required to produce annual reports.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The information requested is as follows:

The Legal Aid Advisory Committee
The Legal Aid Advisory Committee (NI)
The Advisory Committee on Legal Education and Conduct
The Advisory Council on Public Records
The Council on Tribunals
The Law Commission
Each of the 94 Advisory Committees on Justices of the Peace in England and Wales produces an annual report.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list his Department's advisory non-departmental public bodies which are required to publish their advice to Government.

Mr. John M. Taylor: None.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list the advisory non-departmental public bodies sponsored by his Department which are required to lay their annual reports before Parliament.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The information requested is as follows:

The Legal Aid Advisory Committee
The Legal Aid Advisory Committee (NI)
The Advisory Committee on Legal Education and Conduct
The Advisory Council on Public Records, as part of the Annual Report of the Public Record Office
The Council on Tribunals
The Law Commission, where the report is made to the Lord Chancellor who then lays it before Parliament

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list the advisory bodies which he has set up in his Department since the publication of "Public Bodies 1993".

Mr. John M. Taylor: None.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Ethiopia

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action is being planned by the United Kingdom, the European Union and other countries to remedy the defects in transport arrangements in efforts to counteract the famine in the Hararghe area of eastern Ethiopia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The rural road network in Hararghe is poor. But British non-governmental organisations operating in the region believe that transport capacity is adequate to distribute available food aid.

Access to Environmental Information

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many requests for environmental information under the Access to Environmental Information Regulations 1992 have been received by his Department; how many were answered within two months; how many were refused; and on what grounds in each case.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The ODA does not keep records of the number of requests received under the environmental information regulations nor when they were answered. The ODA keeps records of refusals to supply information and the grounds for refusal.

In the period up to 30 June 1994, the Department gave 14 refusals: in 11 cases because no formal environmental impact assessments existed and in one case because the content contained internal advice; in another case, the report had been commissioned by, and was the property of, another Government; and in the other case access was refused on the ground of commercial confidentiality.

EMPLOYMENT

Racial Discrimination

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on the proposal of the Commissioner for Social Affairs, in his communication on immigration and asylum to the European Parliament and the Council 1994, to adopt a community code of practice prohibiting racial discrimination in employment.

Miss Widdecombe: I understand that the Commission is currently preparing a draft code of practice on race and

employment. The Government will consider their policy on the proposal when they have had the opportunity to study the draft.

Health Professionals (Review Bodies)

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many staff are involved in servicing the review bodies on doctors and dentists remuneration and on nursing staff, midwives, health visitors and professions allied to medicine; how many national health service staff are covered by those review bodies; and what is the annual cost of running those bodies.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In 1994-95 the Review Body on Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration and the Review Body for Nursing Staff, Midwives, Health Visitors and Professions Allied to Medicine are expected to be serviced directly by up to eight staff, shared equally between the two bodies and assisted as necessary by other clerical and secretarial staff of the Office of Manpower Economics.

As at 30 September 1992, the latest date for which figures are available, there were some 123,000 doctors and dentists and the full-time equivalent of some 512,000 nursing staff, midwives, health visitors and professions allied to medicine in the NHS. This includes staff employed by NHS trusts, which are free to determine the pay of their staff locally.

The annual cost of running the two review bodies, in respect of the salary costs of the eight staff and the travel and subsistence costs for members—who are otherwise unpaid—and staff is expected to be £299,000 in 1994-95.

Hope Street Theatre, Liverpool

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the reasons for the delay in objective funding for the Hope Street theatre training scheme in Liverpool.

Mr. Baldry: I have been asked to reply.

No objective 1 projects have been approved. Although negotiations on this Merseyside single programming document have been completed with the Commission, it —with the other United Kingdom objective 1 SPDs—is still waiting for the Commission to complete its internal procedures. Applications for European social funding supported projects such as Hope Street are, however, being invited this week.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Disabled People

Mr. Berry: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee if he will make a statement on the progress of his Committee's deliberations on improving access to the Palace of Westminster for disabled people;

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee what further progress has been made by his Committee on improving access to the Palace of Westminster for disabled people.

Mr. Ray Powell: In response to a resolution of the former Services Committee a report containing recommendations for the improvement of provision in the Palace of Westminster for people with disabilities has been submitted to this Committee. Its proposals are being considered in the context of evidence from the Director of Works, a number of organisations representing disabled persons, and English Heritage. The Committee expects to receive further evidence this autumn and to make its conclusions known at the end of the year.

Pending the Committee's final recommendations, approval has been given for a large number of minor and uncontentious improvements to go ahead. A number have already been completed and others have been included in the rolling programme of works. A sum of £250,000 has been set aside for this purpose in the current year.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Indonesia

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has received regarding the warrant issued by the Indonesian Government for the arrest of the human rights lawyer Adrian Buyung Nasution; and if he will make representations to his Indonesian counterpart concerning the human rights situation in Indonesia.

Mr. Goodlad: Rumours of Mr. Nasution's impending arrest have proved unfounded. The Indonesian authorities are well aware of the importance that we attach to respect for human rights. We draw it to their attention on a regular basis.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to his Indonesian counterpart with regard to the banning of *Tempo*, *Editor* and *De Tik* on 21 June and the confrontation between Indonesian security forces and a peaceful demonstration in Jakarta on 27 June; and if he will make a statement on the current human rights situation in Indonesia.

Mr. Goodlad: None as yet, but we will seek an early opportunity to make representations on this issue. We welcome the Indonesian Government's efforts over the past year to improve their human rights record. It is, therefore, with surprise and concern that we learned of the banning of the three journals by the Indonesian Government. The decision appears inconsistent with the greater spirit of openness prevailing in Indonesia recently.

British Prisoners Abroad

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) of 16 June, *Official Report*, column *642*, about United Kingdom citizens awaiting trial in overseas prisons; what action he proposes to take to monitor the number of Britains on remand for long periods in Spanish gaols; and if he will make representations on behalf of Colin Salt, currently on remand in Madrid, to press for an early court hearing.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We continually monitor all British nationals on remand in Spanish gaols, especially those remanded for long periods. Our consular officers are doing all that they properly can to help those detained and their

families. However, we have no standing to intervene in the Spanish legal process itself, and it is for Mr. Salt's lawyer to press for a hearing.

Nigeria

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what statements the Nigerian head of state has made recently about the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group forces in Liberia; what action is being proposed by the United Nations to respond to a withdrawal by the Nigerians from the ECOMOG forces; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In a broadcast on Radio Nigeria on 24 June, President Abacha said that Nigeria intended to pull out of Liberia. In his fifth progress report on the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia, the United Nations Secretary-General noted concerns expressed by the President of Nigeria at the financial burden of participation in ECOMOG. The Secretary-General urged that troops should not be withdrawn precipitately and undertook to endeavour to obtain additional financial support from member states. The United States has contributed about US$30 million, while we have provided US$1 million of humanitarian aid.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what commitments were made by the Nigerian Minister of Information and Culture when he met recently with the British high commissioner to Nigeria.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Her Majesty's high commissioner called on the Nigerian Minister of Information and Culture on 17 June. The Minister stated the Nigerian Government's commitment to hand over to a democratically elected Government in the shortest possible time.

TREASURY

Economic Growth

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his policy in respect of maintaining the long-term growth rate of the economy when world interest rates rise.

Mr. Nelson: The Government will continue to follow domestic policies which create the right conditions for sustainable growth by maintaining low inflation and sound public finances and by a continuing programme of reform designed to improve the efficiency of markets and strengthen the long-term supply performance of the economy.

Contracts

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much his Department has spent on management consultancy contracts in each of the last two years.

Mr. Nelson: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) on 14 June, *Official Report*, columns *349-51*.

Management Reorganisation

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of Treasury staff he proposes to redeploy or make redundant under management reorganisation.

Mr. Nelson: The Treasury is currently undergoing a fundamental review of its expenditure. Until the results of this are available, the implications of any management reorganisation will not be clear.

Profit-related Pay

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will place in the Library the rules of guidance for profit-related pay schemes drawn up by the Inland Revenue covering *(a)* the involvement in profit-related pay of schemes not based on companies, *(b)* restrictions on conversion of existing pay into profit-related pay, *(c)* the definition and calculation of profit in profit-related pay and *(d)* other relevant matters.

Mr. Dorrell: The Inland Revenue publishes two booklets to help employers who would like to introduce a profit-related pay scheme which qualifies for tax relief. These are "Tax Relief for Profit-Related Pay: Notes for Guidance", PRP2, and "Tax Relife for Profit-Related Pay. Setting up a Scheme". I understand that a copy of both booklets is available in the Library.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing the growth in numbers of profit-related pay schemes, and participants in profit-related pay with a regional breakdown of schemes; and if he will also estimate the revenue forgone in each year of profit-related pay together with the current year.

Mr. Dorrell: The available information is in the table. The data are not centrally available to produce a regional breakdown of schemes. This could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Live schemes as at	*Number of schemes*	*Number of employee participants*
March 1988	616	90,000
March 1989	869	122,100
March 1990	1,175	232,000
March 1991	1,277	350,100
March 1992	2,597	718,100
March 1993	4,615	1,167,400
March 1994	7,039	1,794,100

	Estimated cost of income tax relief for PRP
1987-88	[1]—
1988-89	10
1989-90	15
1990-91	25
1991-92	40
1992-93	200
1993-94	300
1994-95	n/y/a

[1] Negligible.

Bicycles

Mr. Robathan: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what facilities his Department provides for the parking of the bicycles of visitors to its offices in Westminster.

Mr. Nelson: Bicycle parking facilities are available at the Treasury's offices in Westminster and Victoria for the use of staff and visitors.

Research and Development

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will place in the Library the Inland Revenue guidance on capital allowances for research and development; if he will outline the circumstances under which expenditure on the development of a specific product or technique qualifies for such allowance; if he will outline the legal or administrative source for the definition of research and development; and whether the guidance or definitions are currently under review.

Mr. Dorrell: Section 139(1) of the Capital Allowances Act 1990 defines scientific research as covering "any activities in the fields of natural or applied science for the extension of knowledge".

Whether any particular activities fall within this definition will depend on the facts of the case. However, in general terms, activities constitute scientific research if they involve the application of new scientific principles in an existing area of research or the application of existing principles in a new area of research. The essential test is innovation.

Scientific research is generally regarded as including the development of a piece of fundamental research up to the production stage. Expenditure on construction of prototypes, pilot plant and so on qualifies for scientific research allowances if the prototypes are used to test the results of the basic research or the possibility of applying the results of the basic research to manufacture.

The Inland Revenue's main internal instruction books will be published as soon as practicable in accordance with the code of practice on access to Government information. Details of the publication arrangements should be available within the next few weeks.

Unit Trust Industry

Mr. French: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the regulatory organisations and Government Departments which have a role to play in relation to the unit trust industry, with their respective responsibilities.

Mr. Nelson: The information requested is as follows:

(a) The Securities and Investments Board is responsible for authorising unit trusts and for product regulation of authorised unit trusts—AUTs. It also oversees self-regulating organisations—SROs—recognised under the Financial Services Act 1986. Trustees and managers of AUTs may be authorised either directly from SIB or through membership of an SRO.

(b) The Investment Management Regulatory Organisation is the SRO for regulation of fund management.

(c) Regulation of retail sales at present falls within the scope of the Life Assurance and Unit Trust Regulatory Organisation for marketing of AUT products, and the Financial Intermediaries, Managers and Brokers Regulatory Association for independent financial advisers who offer investment advice to the general public. From 18 July, these functions will fall primarily to the Personal Investment Authority, or in certain instances to IMRO.

(d) Certain professional bodies also recognised by SIB under the FSA (RPBs) regulate the sale and marketing of AUTs through their member firms. The main ones are the various professional accountancy bodies—ICAEW, ICAS, ICAI and CACA—the Insurance Brokers Registration Council and the three law societies.

(e) The Treasury is responsible, under the FSA, for general policy oversight relating to collective investment schemes, including questions of whether responsibility for further functions relating to the investment and borrowing powers of AUTs should be transferred to SIB.

Air Passenger Duty, Basle and Geneva

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what rate of air passenger duty will apply to flights to Basle and Geneva airports.

Sir John Cope: Both Basle and Geneva airports are in the unusual position of straddling Switzerland and France and allowing passengers to choose into which country to exit the airport. It would therefore be impossible to charge the higher £10 duty rate, as there is no distinction on a passenger's ticket to indicate whether he intends to enter Switzerland or France, and in any case, the extra £5 would be relatively easy to avoid by leaving the airport through a different exit and crossing a land frontier into Switzerland.

It has therefore been agreed that flights to Basle and Geneva may exceptionally be treated as subject to the lower £5 duty rate.

Alternative Vehicle Fuel

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what consideration he has given to the use of excise duty and tax rates to encourage the use of natural gas as an alternative fuel for motor vehicles.

Sir John Cope: The rate of excise duty on natural gas used as a road fuel is currently half the rate applied to leaded petrol. When deciding the rates of duty on road fuels, all relevant factors are taken into consideration, including revenue yield, conservation of finite fuel resources and the effects of fuel usage on the environment.

Privatisation Proceeds

Ms Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what working assumptions he is now using in his medium term financial strategy for privatisation proceeds over the period 1994-95 to 1998-99.

Mr. Dorrell: The medium-term financial strategy in the 1994-95 "Financial Settlement and Budget Report" assumed privatisation proceeds of £5·5 billion in 1994-95 and £1 billion a year after. The assumption for 1995-96 was raised to £2·5 billion in the summer economic forecast, to reflect the latest assessment of likely proceeds from later instalments from the sale of the Government's residual stakes in the generating companies and from the sale of its other residual equity and debt holdings.

Summer Economic Forecast

Ms Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide forecasts of public expenditure in 1996-97 on the same basis as table 2.2 of the Treasury's "Summer Economic Forecast 1994".

Mr. Portillo: The summer economic forecast is a short-term forecast which, for public finances, covers the

period up to 1995-96. Medium-term fiscal projections are published only in the medium-term financial strategy at Budget time.

At its meeting on 23 June, Cabinet decided that control total spending should be kept within the cash ceilings announced in the Budget last year. Revised projections of the other components of general Government expenditure will be published in the Budget in November.

Building Societies

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the review of the Building Societies Act 1986.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 27 June 1994]:* In January, I announced a review of the Building Societies Act 1986 to explore the scope for a further liberalisation of the building societies legislation. The review, which was to be in two stages, was to look at the main restrictions of the Act, including the wholesale funding limit and procedures relating to mergers, conversions and takeovers.

The initial stage was to be concluded by the early summer and, if the case for making more extensive changes to the legislation needed to be explored, there would be a wider consultation in the autumn, with the aim of concluding the review by the end of the year.

The first stage is now complete and we have reached a number of conclusions:

Building societies have a valuable part to play in maintaining a competitive market in retail financial services.

They should be enabled to continue and develop that role.

The process of steady, orderly rationalisation within the sector should be allowed to continue.

The extension of societies' powers in specific areas needs to be accompanied by improvements in the accountability of their boards to the members.

Smaller societies have a particular part to play in their local communities.

Societies dominate housing finance and personal savings because they offer a high standard of service to their customers. Their low-cost operations represent keen competition for banks and other providers of financial services, to the benefit of consumers. They are among the few major financial institutions based outside London. They provide diversity and choice.

There is, however, a need to improve the accountability of societies' boards to their members. During the first stage of the review, a number of respondents pointed out that directors are under no obligation to inform members of takeover offers from institutions outside the sector. When a suitable opportunity arises, the Government intend to bring before the House legislation to require boards to inform the members, at the next general meeting, of any such non-confidential offers which they have received, in the same way as they must do now for merger bids from other societies.

In order to give societies the opportunities that they need to develop, the gradual process of extending the range of activities which they are permitted to undertake should continue. So I am announcing today a package of specific measures, which we propose to implement by secondary legislation, either under the Building Societies Act or by making use, after its enactment, of the general power in the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill currently before Parliament.

The most important changes will be: an increase in the wholesale funding limit from 40 to 50 per cent; the granting of powers to establish subsidiaries to make loans to incorporated bodies that are not secured on land; and the power to own a general insurance company offering buildings and contents, and mortgage payment protection insurance policies. All these changes will be subject to prudential control by the Building Societies Commission.

These changes will introduce a further element of competition into markets where societies have previously not operated, or have operated only as agents of others, and give them much of the additional flexibility which many have told us that they need. To allow societies to continue to play their part in this country's financial life, and to discourage destabilising flows of funds, on the basis of takeover rumours, the Government believe that it will continue to be necessary for there to be stringent statutory controls on takeovers by existing commercial companies —as was Parliament's intention in passing the 1986 Act.

Societies will continue to be carefully monitored by the Building Societies Commission and subject to competition law. The implications of the decision to allow societies to own general insurance companies will also be taken into account in the Government's response—promised for later this year—to the recent report by the Director General of Fair Trading which recommended the implementation of the provisions of the Courts and Legal Services Act relating to tying-in.

The Government have now decided that it would be useful to proceed with the second stage of this review, to examine further how best to promote the process of evolutionary change in the building society sector.

This stage will involve considering ideas for further improving the accountability of directors to members—in particular, whether it should be made easier to allow candidates nominated by the members to serve as directors, while continuing to ensure that boards have the necessary mix of skills and experience to do their job.

Meanwhile the Building Societies Commission will be finalising its new prudential guidance on boards and management and on a new requirement for a greater degree of disclosure in societies' annual accounts.

We will consider, too, a number of other specific changes to the legislation which have been put to us by the Building Societies Association. These include a review of the financial and other limits in the 1986 Act which can be altered only by statutory instrument; clarification of section 18 of the Act, dealing with powers to invest in subsidiaries; facilitating larger distributions of funds to members in a merger; a review of societies' basic lending powers, set out in sections 10 to 13; and giving societies the power to acquire mortgage debts directly, rather than through subsidiaries.

The Government also see merit in giving further thought to whether societies' powers could be more systematically streamlined—for example by replacing the current prescriptive provisions with a more permissive structure. At the same time, we would need to consider what constraints had to be retained to ensure that the main business of a building society remained the provision of residential mortgages, savings accounts and other financial services to its members.

Many of the changes to be considered in the second stage of the review will require primary legislation for their implementation and finding time for this will, of course, depend upon a suitable opportunity becoming available.

The Treasury will be issuing, during the summer, a consultation paper on the issues raised in the second, and

final, stage of the review, with the aim of concluding the review, in line with the timetable which I announced in January, by the end of the year.

In pursuit of our policy of more open government, I am placing a copy of the background papers, produced as part of the first stage, in the Libraries of both Houses.

Uniform Business Rate

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the yield from the uniform business rate in Northern Ireland each year since its introduction.

Sir John Wheeler: I have been asked to reply.

The uniform business rate as such does not operate in Northern Ireland due to the different arrangements for financing local government services. There is a non-domestic rate and in 1994-95 this is expected to raise some £212 million.

HEALTH

Tranquillisers

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients in *(a)* York, *(b)* North Yorkshire and *(c)* England were prescribed minor tranquillisers in each year since 1979.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information in the form requested is not available.

Drug Dependency

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health where are the nearest *(a)* regional drug dependency unit, *(b)* drug rehabilitation unit and *(c)* drug detoxification unit to York; and how many York patients attended each of them in the last year.

Mr. Bowis: The nearest drug dependency unit to York providing in-patient detoxification is in the Leeds health authority at High Royds hospital, Menston, although within York health services trust consultant psychiatrists do offer assessment and detoxification on an in-patient basis, followed by rehabilitation and support as an out-patient. The nearest regional drug dependency units to York are located at the northern regional alcohol and drug service in Newcastle and Drugs North West at Prestwich.

In York, services, including community-based rehabilitation, counselling and aftercare are provided by the following non-statutory agencies:

The York Drug Dependency Clinic, 28 High Petergate, York; and York Drugs Resource Scheme, 15 Bridge Street, York.

A small independent sector service offering residential and out-patient services is available at

The Retreat, 107 Heslington Road, York.

Information on the number of York patients who attended the above services may be obtained locally.

Secure Hospitals

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients suffering from mental illness escaped from the care of secure hospitals in *(a)* 1991, *(b)* 1992 and *(c)* 1993; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: The information is not available in the form requested.

Accident and Emergency Departments

Mr. Wicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her definition of arrival used in the patients charter indicator for accident and emergency departments; and if the definition used includes any delays waiting to see a receptionist.

Dr. Mawhinney: Arrival in accident and emergency departments is defined as arrival at the point of entry. It does not include any delays waiting to see a receptionist.

Cancer

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what additional cancer screening programmes are at present under review; when those reviews are expected to be completed; and which agencies or people are carrying out the reviews.

Mr. Sackville: Any introduction of new screening programmes relies on the existence of accurate and evaluated research. Currently, research is being undertaken in a number of cancer screening areas. The Department of Health's standing group on health technology assessment is in the process of commissioning evaluations of screening for colorectal and prostate cancer.

Cycle Helmets

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her Department's policy on the use of helmets by child cyclists.

Mr. Bowis: There is considerable evidence of the benefits of cycle helmets in mitigating the effects of head injuries to cyclists of all ages.

Waiting Lists

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the estimated cost of reducing waiting lists to under two years; and what estimates she has made of the costs of reducing the waiting lists further.

Dr. Mawhinney: Between 1987-88 and 1993-94, the Government provided £252 million to fund the waiting time initiative. One of the many targets of the initiative was to reduce to less than two years the maximum length of time a patient would wait for hospital treatment. New initiatives to reduce hospital waiting times are constantly being considered.

Obstetric Cholestasis

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will institute discussions with deans of medical colleges to ensure that obstetric cholestasis is adequately covered in their curricula.

Mr. Sackville: No. It is for the university medical schools to determine the curricula for medical education. They do so in the light of recommendations from the education committee of the General Medical Council, which has the statutory authority to determine the extent of the knowledge and skill required for the granting of primary medical qualifications in the United Kingdom.

Gender Identity Disorder

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to allow the amendment of birth register entries to recognise gender identity disorder sufferers in their reassigned roles.

Mr. Sackville: None. The birth register is a record of historical fact; it is not, nor does it purport to be, a record of current status or identity. Corrections to entries in the birth register may be made only where an error is shown to have existed when the birth was registered.

Infertility

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the relationship between her answer to the hon. Member for Bristol, East (Ms Corston) of 18 February, *Official Report,* column *1041,* and her answer to the hon. Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Bradley) of 20 June, *Official Report,* column 26.

Mr. Sackville: The national health service provides a wide range of treatment for subfertility but information about the services available in specific places is not generally available centrally. It is for individual health authorities to determine priorities in the light of local needs and circumstances.

Rio Declaration

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the precise provisions of principle 8 of agenda 21 of the Rio declaration of June 1992; what is her policy in respect of implementing those provisions; and what specific policies have been adopted by her Department in respect of those aspects of principle 8 which commit signatories to achieve sustainable development through the adoption of appropriate demographic policies.

Mr. Sackville: In common with other Governments participating in the Rio summit, the United Kingdom accepts the broad principles enshrined in the Rio declaration. The Government's commitments to sustainable developments are set out in "Sustainable Development: the UK Strategy", published in January 1994, copies of which are available in the Library. Policies are formed with regard to the well-being of the population —for example in the fields of social, economic and environmental planning—rather than with regard to population size or growth.

Access to Environmental Information

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many requests for environmental information under the Access to Environmental Information Regulations 1992 have been received by her Department; how many were answered within two months; how many were refused; and on what grounds in each case.

Mr. Sackville: The Department does not keep records of the number of requests received under the environmental information regulations or of when they were answered. The Department does, however, keep records of refusals to supply information and on what grounds.

In the period 1 January 1993 up to 30 June 1994, the Department made no refusals.

Air Pollution

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions her Department has had with the Department of Transport and the Department of the Environment concerning reducing air pollution.

Mr. Sackville: The Department's officials have frequent discussions with their colleagues in the Departments of Transport and of the Environment.

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what studies her Department has undertaken in the last three years to investigate the correlation between levels of air pollution and the number of people being admitted to hospital with breathing problems.

Mr. Sackville: The Department funded a research project which examined the effects of the December 1991 air pollution episode in London when the highest recorded peak of nitrogen dioxide occurred. This study included investigations of the increased admissions to hospital and increased mortality occurring during the week containing the episode. An outline of the results of this study has been presented to the British Thoracic Society. As soon as the full report is available, it will be put for comments to the Department of Health's expert advisory Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants.

There are several other studies of the health effects of air pollution that are being funded by other Departments or establishments. When published, the results of the United Kingdom studies are referred to COMEAP and COMEAP sub-groups.

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for health what is her Department's estimate of the number of people who are admitted to hospital each year as a result of breathing toxic exhaust fumes.

Mr. Sackville: Hospital admissions are not recorded according to cause of illness and it is not possible, on present information, to make any reliable estimate of the numbers admitted as a result of breathing toxic exhaust fumes.

Disabled People

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will give a breakdown by nature and severity of disabilty of the numbers of disabled people who are currently registered in England and Wales;

(2) how many of those individuals registered disabled in England and Wales experience mobility problems; how many are confined to wheelchairs; and what information she has as to the extent of mobility problems experienced by those registered disabled persons with such mobility problems, but who are not confined to wheelchairs.

Mr. Bowis: The number of persons who are registered as having a physical disability in England at 31 March 1993 by category of disability was published in "Registers of Physically Disabled Persons (General Classes) (A/F/93/19), a copy of which is available in the Library. Information on mobility problems and wheelchair use is not available centrally.

Information relating to Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Spongiform Encephalopathies

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what involvement the British Technology Group has had with the Public Health Laboratory Service on the issues of BSE and Creutzfeld-Jakob Disease; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The Public Health Laboratory Service has had no direct involvement with the British Technology Group on these issues.

Dr. Harash Narang

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the suspension of Dr. Harash Narang from the Public Health Laboratory Service.

Mr. Sackville: This is a matter between Dr. Narang and his employer, the Public Health Laboratory Service.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list, for each NHS trust in the former Mersey region, those chairmen and non-executive directors who live outside the boundaries of the district health authority in which that trust is situated.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 29 June 1994]:* Eighty-eight—60 per cent.—of the 146 chairmen and non-executive directors appointed to national health service trusts within the former Mersey region live within the boundaries of the district health authority in which that trust is situated. The names of the appointees who live outside the relevant district health authority boundaries are listed.

Royal Liverpool Children's Hospital (Alder Hey) NHS Trust
Mr. I. F. Hill
Mrs. S. Adams
Mr. J. C. Davies
Mr. F. W. Taylor

Broadgreen Hospital NHS Trust
Mr. F. A. Fenney
Mr. P. E. Ashworth
Mr. J. R. Miller
Mrs. A. Toyne

Royal Liverpool University Hospital NHS Trust
Mr. J. B. Fitzpatrick
Mr. D. K. Anslow
Mr. E. J. Billington
Ms P. J. Newell
Professor Sir Robert Shields

Chester and Halton Community NHS Trust
Professor I. M. Stanley

St. Helens and Knowsley Hospitals NHS Trust
Mr. J. R. Higham
Miss A. Jones

North Mersey Community NHS Trust
Mr. R. Jones
Mr. J. E. Barton
Mr. P. A. Fletcher
Mrs. J. Hall
Mr. K. Hutchinson
Ms M. Kitchen

Aintree Hospitals NHS Trust
Mr. R. Farmer
Mr. J. B. Cooper
Mr. J. F. Jones

Liverpool Obstetrics and Gynaecology Services NHS Trust
Mrs. J. L Greensmith
Mrs. L. A. Dodd
Mr. C. Parkinson
Mrs. C. Parnaby

St. Helens and Knowsley Community NHS Trust
Mr. R. Seneschall

Countess of Chester Hospital NHS Trust
Mr. M. E. Emberton
Mrs. D. M. McConnell

Halton General Hospital NHS Trust
Mr. D. W. Hammond
Mrs. S. Anderson
Dr. K. M MacVicker
Mr. M. C. Stewart

Southport and Formby Community Health Services NHS Trust
Miss L. Brown

Warrington Community Healthcare NHS Trust
Mrs. S. Grundy
Mr. M. J. Davies

Warrington Hospital NHS Trust
Mrs. K. H. Howell

West Cheshire NHS Trust
Mr. H. De Winter

Cardiothoracic Centre NHS Trust
Mr. H. Clarke
Mrs. M. E. Downs
Mr. M. G. Rider
Mr. N. A. Toppin

Mersey Regional Ambulance Service NHS Trust
Mr. S. B. Mayne
Mr. M. S. Potts
Mr. G. Thomas
Ms R. Webster

The Walton Centre for Neurology and Neurosurgery NHS Trust
Mr. P. Wright
Mrs. M. Craddock
Mr. M. Hughes
Mrs. N. Edwards
Mr. D. Snewin
Mr. M. Taylor

Clatterbridge Centre for Oncology NHS Trust
Dr. R. J. Berry
Dr. D. T. Jones
Mr. P. J. Marchant

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list for each NHS trust in the former north western region, those chairmen and non-executive directors who live outside the boundaries of the district health authority in which that trust is situated.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 30 June 1994]:* Some 152—70 per cent.—of the 218 chairmen and non-executive directors appointed to a national health service trust within the former north western region live within the boundaries of the district health authority in which that trust is situated. The names of those who live outside the relevant district health authority boundaries are listed.

Burnley health care NHS trust
Mr. D. G. Nelson

The Calderstones NHS trust
Mrs. A. Knowles

Central Manchester healthcare NHS trust
Mr. J. Dunlop

Mr. D. H. Slade

Chorley and South Ribble NHS trust
Councillor J. E. Breakell
Mrs. G. Ashworth

Christie hospital NHS trust
Mr. J. R. Lee
Mrs. R. Dean
Sir R. Baker-Wilbraham
Mr. E. Kinder
Mrs. J. Roston

Rochdale healthcare NHS trust
Mr. J. M. Holt
Mr. J. P. Conway
Mr. A. R. Teague

West Lancashire NHS trust
Mrs. C. A. Thompson
Mr. M. R. Rigby
Mrs. M. A. Pickney

Wigan and Leigh health services NHS trust
Ms C. S. Jackson
Mrs. M. E. Holdroyde

Wrightington hospital NHS trust
Mr. D. R. Blackburn
Dr. A. Brearley
Mrs. J. L. Eckersley Hope
Mr. S. Brennand

Bury health care NHS trust
Mr. E. S. Schofield

Mancunian community health NHS trust
Mrs. J. A. Hytner
Colonel J. B. Timmins
Mrs. K. M. August

Mental Health Services of Salford NHS Trust
Mr. M. A. Freeman
Mr. W. Smith
Mrs. L. Frank-Riley
Professor P. J. Huxley
Mr. M. H. Jowett

North Manchester Healthcare NHS Trust
Mr. D. G. Wilson
Mrs. M. S. Langton
Mr. H. W. Jungmayr
Mrs. P. H. McCann

Guild Community Healthcare NHS Trust
Mrs. P. Diamond

Salford Community Health Care NHS Trust
Mr. E. Parker
Ms. M. Wilkinson

Salford Hospitals NHS Trust
Mr. P. W. Mount
Professor R. C. Tallis
Mrs. L. Fairfield

South Manchester University Hospitals NHS Trust
Mr. J. P. Hadfield
Mr. P. E. Jones
Lady J. Montgomery
Professor A. M. Heagerty
Miss K. M. Mellor

Stockport Acute Services NHS Trust
Mr. A. M. Linton
Mrs. P. Pownall
Mr. R. J. Kenyon
Mrs. A. Walsh

Stockport Healthcare NHS Trust
Mrs. S. A. Carroll
Mr. K. M. Parker
Miss K. M. Ball
Mrs. D. A. Green

Tameside and Glossop Acute Services NHS Trust
Mr. A. R. Pavell
Mr. A. J. Leah
Mr. G. S. Kalton
Mr. G. Linnell
Mr. A. R. Tighe

Tameside and Glossop Community and Priority Services NHS Trust
Mrs. M. G. Travers
Mr. P. Hague
Dr. B. A. Broadbent

Trafford Healthcare NHS Trust
Mr. J. N. Chatburn
Mr. I. A. Jolly
Mr. P. Layhe

Sight Tests

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 15 June, *Official Report*, columns *589-90*, what estimates of the total number of NHS and private sight tests have been made for each of the last five financial years; and what estimates of the total number of NHS and private sight tests for 1993-94 have been made by the technical sub-committee of the Department of Health and the ophthalmic profession.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 29 June 1994]:* (a) The number of National Health Service sight tests paid for in the last five financial years for which figures are available in Great Britain are shown in the table.

Number of NHS sight tests paid for by financial year

	Great Britain (millions
[1]1989-90	6·0
[1]1990-91	4·8
1991-92	5·8
1992-93	6·4
[2]1993-94	6·9

[1] From 1 April 1989, NHS sight tests were restricted to certain eligible groups in the population. The figures for 1989-90 included 1·82 million sight tests paid for in 1989-90 but conducted in 1988-89 under the previous scheme. The remaining 4·22 million were conducted and paid for in 1989-90, which does not constitute a full twelve months of the new scheme. The figures for 1990-91, which do represent twelve months under the new scheme, are not therefore directly comparable with those for 1989-90.
[2] This figure is provisional.

(b) From the survey carried out on behalf of the technical sub-committee, it was estimated that the total number of sight tests performed in Great Britain in 1993-94 would be 6·594 million NHS and 6·589 million private.

Research and Development

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been *(a)* her Department's and *(b)* the NHS's research and development spend in *(a)* 1990-91, *(b)* 1991-92, *(c)* 1992-93 and *(d)* 1993-94; what is the planned amount for 1994-95; and how much of these totals is used to fund research.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 4 July 1994]:* The information on central research and development

expenditure by the Department of Health, including the national health service executive, is collected annually in the "Forward Look of Government-Funded Science, Engineering and Technology". The information for 1990-91 is available in the "1993 Annual Review of Government Funded Research and Development". Copies of these documents are available in the Library.

Information on NHS research and development commissioned at regional and local level is not collected by the Department.

Police Surgeons

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many police surgeons there were in each of the last five years by local authority and region.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I have been asked to reply.

The information requested is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

ENI Group

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what transactions his Department has had since 1979 with the ENI Group of companies.

Mr. Heseltine: My Department has no record of any transaction with the ENI Group.

Sellafield

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to arrange a meeting with the chairman of British Nuclear Fuels plc to discuss the commercial implications for nuclear reprocessing and the oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield of a delay in the Japanese plutonium fuel re-use policy.

Mr. Eggar: I meet the chairman of British Nuclear Fuels plc from time to time to discuss a range of issues.

Plutonium

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what recent communications he has received from the United States Department of Energy in regard to the historic use or current disposition of the plutonium from United Kingdom civil reactors exported to the United States since 1964 under the provisions of the Anglo-American agreement on the "Co-operation on the Uses of Atomic Energy for Mutual Defence Purposes" of 1958, Cm. 537, as amended.

Mr. Eggar: I have nothing to add to my reply to the hon. Member on 8 February 1994, *Official Report*, columns *227-28*.

Defence Exports

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) of 22 June, *Official Report*, column *230*, if he will exceptionally give details of the three export licences issued to Argentina for defence equipment, to which the reply refers.

Mr. Needham: The export licences referred to covered sporting shotgun cartridges and humane cattle stunning blanks. None of the goods were covered by the arms embargo.

I cannot give more information for reasons of commercial confidentiality.

Oil and Gas, Scotland

Mr. Ian Bruce: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proportion of United Kingdom oil and gas production comes from Scotland at the latest available date; and what was the proportion in 1979.

Mr. Eggar: Nearly all of the United Kingdom's oil and natural gas production comes from the offshore part of the United Kingdom continental shelf. In 1993, this accounted for 97·4 per cent. of production, with the remaining 2·6 per cent. coming from onshore production in England. The corresponding proportions in 1979 were 99·9 per cent. and 0·1 per cent. respectively.

Iran

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what further exceptions there have been concerning the Government's export licensing policy towards Iran following his statement of 18 January, *Official Report*, column *509*.

Mr. Needham: As I said in my earlier statement, a number of representations have been received by my Department concerning export business entered into before the moratorium on export licenses was imposed on 17 December 1992. We have identified a second case concerning the completion of a contract for repair and overhaul in the United Kingdom of non-lethal aircraft components.

Given the circumstances, we have agreed to issue a licence for a small number of components to be returned to their owners in Iran unrepaired.

Deregulation

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will announce the membership and terms of reference of the deregulation task force.

Mr. Heseltine: The terms of reference of the deregulation task force, chaired by the right hon. Francis Maude are:

To help the President of the Board of Trade promote deregulation which will enhance the competitiveness of United Kingdom business and the effectiveness of the voluntary sector.

To advise him on action for Government Departments and associated bodies or agencies to take to remove unnecessary regulation or to reduce the burden of necessary regulation. This will include domestic, European and international regulation enforced in the United Kingdom.

The members are:

Tessa Baring (Barnados), David Campbell (Fine Organics), Maurice Denyer (Fowler Bros.), Michael Fallon (Management Consultant), Mike Fisher (Whale Tankers), Teresa Graham (Baker Tilly), George Goring (Goring Hotel), Janet Morgan (Sainsbury Family Trusts), Archie Norman (Asda), Tim Parker (Kenwood), David Parry (Business Consultant), Tony Rammelt (Regis), Dan Wright (Albion Automotive) and Peter Wyman (Coopers and Lybrand).

Other appointments may be made in due course.

Recycled Paper

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what percentage of his Department's *(a)* press releases and *(b)* written answers are printed on recycled paper.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 4 July 1994]:* All my Department's written answers are printed on recycled paper. Press notices have to be printed in substantial numbers and are printed, on the advice of the printing machine manufacturers, on environmentally friendly paper manufactured from wood from sustainable sources.

Competitiveness White Paper

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the total financial cost of publicising his competitiveness White Paper, including unsolicited letters to companies.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 4 July 1994]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott) on 14 June 1994, *Official Report*, columns *423-24*.

Coal Industry

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much subsidy for extra sales of deep-mined coal, as outlined in "Prospects for Coal" was paid out by 31 March; how many contracts this involves; what was the tonnage of coal involved in that contract; and what is his estimate of the financial support that will be paid in 1994-95.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 5 July 1994]:* To date, the Department has paid £3,237,639 of subsidy covering the sale of 361,523 tonnes of additional coal in 1993-94. Of this, £651,966 was paid by 31 March. The remainder was paid in June following receipt of authorisation from the European Commission for payments in respect of production from 1 January 1994 onwards.

Altogether the Department has made six offers of subsidy in relation to seven contracts covering some 2 million tonnes of coal. The total amount of subsidy paid in 1994-95 will depend on how successful British Coal and the private sector are in securing further sales.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Child Support Agency

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the estimate for the Doncaster and Mexborough areas of *(a)* the number of absent parents who have been assessed by the Child Support Agency and *(b)* the proportion of those who have made payments as a result of such assessment.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 6 July 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the number of people assessed by the Child Support Agency, and the number of people paying child maintenance.

To the end of April 1994, 225,600 absent parents had been assessed by the Agency. I regret that a breakdown of those assessed in the Doncaster and Mexborough areas is not available.

With regard to how many absent parents are paying, the Child Support Computer System records client's details on an individual case by case basis, and it is not configured to produce information on the total number of absent parents paying maintenance.

I am sorry that I cannot be more helpful.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many *(a)* deductions from earnings orders, *(b)* poindings and warrant sales and *(c)* arrestments of bank and building society accounts the Child Support Agency has pursued in Scotland; and what amounts of money have been recovered in each case.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Tony Worthington, dated 6 July 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the deductions from earnings orders issued by the Child Support Agency; the number of poindings and warrant sales pursued; and number of arrestments of bank and building society accounts.

To the end of April 1994, deductions from earnings orders had been carried out in 3,800 cases. I regret that a figure for Scotland is not available separately. It is not possible to provide details of the amount of money collected as this is not identified separately from other receipts.

To the same date, the Agency has pursued no poindings and warrant sales, nor arrestments of bank and building society accounts.

Compensation Recovery Unit

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what have been the total amounts recovered by the compensation recovery unit in each year since its formation;

(2) in how many cases since its formation the compensation recovery unit has reclaimed money from the bereaved;

(3) what have been the amounts recovered by the compensation recovery unit in each year since its formation from sufferers of asbestos-related diseases or their surviving relatives.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the compensation recovery unit is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Tony Worthington, dated 5 July 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Questions asking in each year since its formation (i) the total amounts recovered by the Compensation Recovery Unit, (ii) in how many cases it has reclaimed money from the bereaved, (iii) what amounts have been recovered from sufferers of asbestosis related diseases or their surviving relatives.

The total amounts recovered by the Compensation Recovery Unit (CRU) are as follows:

Period	Amount Recovered £ million
1 April 1990—31 March 1991	3·7
1 April 1991—31 March 1992	25·3
1 April 1992—31 March 1993	51·3
1 April 1993—31 March 1994	81·9

The full range of information for your other questions is not available because this information prior to 1993 is no longer held on the CRU computer system. However, I can tell you that in the period 1 April 1993—31 March 1994 there were 170 recoveries made in cases involving deceased claimants and in the same period £408,665 recovered in relation to asbestosis (the system is not designed to identify asbestosis related diseases).

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Childcare Disregard

Sir David Knox: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish tables similar to those in his Department's 1993 tax benefit model tables, but with rents, council tax, benefits and direct taxes updated to 1994, showing the net weekly spending power of a lone mother with two children aged four and six years, now and after introduction of the childcare disregard for family credit, on the assumptions she is *(a)* not in paid work, *(b)* working part time earning the maximum income support earnings disregard, *(c)* working part time for 16 hours earning £40 per week, *(d)* working part time for 24 hours earning £60 a week and *(e)* working full time and earning weekly sums from £100 to £300 in increments of £10 and assuming childcare costs of £25 when working 16 hours a week, of £40 when working 24 hours a week, and of £70 when working full time.

Mr. Burt: The information is in the tables. The childcare disregard will be introduced in October and will apply to the calculation of housing benefit, council tax benefit and disability working allowance as well as family credit. Up to £40 of childcare costs for children under 11 will be disregarded against earnings, provided that care is arranged with a registered childminder or nursery.

The level of earnings in some of the questions is particularly low and not representative of the average working lone parent. In addition, some of the childcare costs specified are significantly higher than those typically encountered at the level of earning specified. Recent research[1] shows that the average weekly childcare costs of working lone parents are £24·60 per week.

"Families, Work, and Benefit" (Policy Studies Institute, June 1993).

Lone mother with 2 children aged 4 and 6.

Position at April 1994 and October 1994

	£
(a) Not in paid work	
Gross earnings	0·00
Tax	0·00
National insurance	0·00
Take home pay	0·00
Income support	67·55
Family credit	0·00
Child benefit	24·60
Rent	36·42
Rent rebate	36·42
Council tax	8·30
Council tax benefit	8·30
FSM/FWF	6·80
Child care costs	0·00
Total net income	143·67
Net income after Rent, Council tax, child care costs	98·65

Position at April 1994 and October 1994

	£
(b) Working part-time earning the maximum income support disregard	
Gross earnings	15·00
Tax	0·00
National insurance	0·00
Take home pay	15·00
Income support	67·55
Family credit	0·00
Child benefit	24·60
Rent	36·42
Rent rebate	36·42
Council tax	8·30
Council tax benefit	8·30
FSM/FWF	6·80
Child care costs	0·00
Total net income	158·67
Net income after Rent, Council tax, child care costs	113·95

Position at April 1994

	£
(c) Working part-time for 16 hours earning £40·00 per week with child care	
Gross earnings	40·00
Tax	0·00
National insurance	0·00
Take home pay	40·00
Income support	0·00
Family credit	66·70
Child benefit	24·60
Rent	36·42
Rent rebate	31·22
Council tax	8·30
Council tax benefit	6·70
FSM/FWF	0·00
Child care costs	25·00
Total net income	169·22
Net income after Rent, Council tax, child care costs	99·50

Position at October 1994

	£
Child care allowance=£25·00	
Gross earnings	40·00
Tax	0·00
National insurance	0·00
Take home pay	40·00
Income support	0·00
Family credit	66·70
Child benefit	24·60
Rent	36·42
Rent rebate	36·32
Council tax	8·30
Council tax benefit	8·30
FSM/FWF	0·00
Child care costs	25·00
Total net income	176·02
Net income after Rent, Council tax, child care costs	106·30

Position at April 1994

	£
(d) Working part-time for 24 hours earning £60·00 per week with child care	
Gross earnings	60·00
Tax	0·00
NI	1·44
Take home pay	58·56
Income support	0·00
Family credit	66·70
Child benefit	24·60

	£
Rent	36·42
Rent rebate	19·16
Council tax	8·30
Council tax benefit	2·99
FSM/FWF	0·00
Child care costs	40·00
Total net income	172·01
Net income after Rent, Council tax, child care costs	87·29

Position at October 1994

	£
Child care allowance=£40·00	
Gross earnings	60·00
Tax	0·00
NI	1·44
Take home pay	58·56
Income support	0·00
Family credit	66·70
Child benefit	24·60
Rent	36·42
Rent rebate	36·42
Council tax	8·30
Council tax benefit	8·30
FSM/FWF	0·00
Child care costs	40·00
Total net income	194·58
Net income after Rent, Council tax, child care costs	109·86

e: Working full-time with child care costs of £70·00
Position at April 1994

Gross earnings	*Tax*	*NI*	*Take home pay*	*Income support*	*Family credit*	*Child benefit*	*Rent*	*Rent rebate*	*Council tax*	*Council tax benefit*	*FSM/ FWF*	*Child care costs*	*Total net income*	*Net income after rent, council tax child care costs*
	(£)	(£)	(£)	(£)	(£)	(£)	(£)	(£)	(£)	(£)	(£)	(£)	(£)	(£)
100·00	0·14	5·44	94·42	0·00	50·79	24·60	36·42	6·19	8·30	0·00	0·00	70·00	176·00	61·28
110·00	2·14	6·44	101·42	0·00	45·89	24·60	36·42	4·82	8·30	0·00	0·00	70·00	176·73	62·01
120·00	4·14	7·44	108·42	0·00	40·99	24·60	36·42	3·46	8·30	0·00	0·00	70·00	177·47	62·75
130·00	6·44	8·44	115·12	0·00	36·31	24·60	36·42	2·15	8·30	0·00	0·00	70·00	178·18	63·46
140·00	8·94	9·44	121·62	0·00	31·76	24·60	36·42	0·88	8·30	0·00	0·00	70·00	178·86	64·14
150·00	11·44	10·44	128·12	0·00	27·21	24·60	36·42	0·00	8·30	0·00	0·00	70·00	179·93	65·21
160·00	13·94	11·44	134·62	0·00	22·66	24·60	36·42	0·00	8·30	0·00	0·00	70·00	181·88	67·16
170·00	16·44	12·44	141·12	0·00	18·11	24·60	36·42	0·00	8·30	0·00	0·00	70·00	183·83	69·11
180·00	18·94	13·44	147·62	0·00	13·56	24·60	36·42	0·00	8·30	0·00	0·00	70·00	185·78	71·06
190·00	21·44	14·44	154·12	0·00	9·01	24·60	36·42	0·00	8·30	0·00	0·00	70·00	187·73	73·01
200·00	23·94	15·44	160·62	0·00	4·46	24·60	36·42	0·00	8·30	0·00	0·00	70·00	189·68	74·96
210·00	26·44	16·44	167·12	0·00	0·00	24·60	36·42	0·00	8·30	0·00	0·00	70·00	191·72	77·00
220·00	28·94	17·44	173·62	0·00	0·00	24·60	36·42	0·00	8·30	0·00	0·00	70·00	198·22	83·50
230·00	31·44	18·44	180·12	0·00	0·00	24·60	36·42	0·00	8·30	0·00	0·00	70·00	204·72	90·00
240·00	33·94	19·44	186·62	0·00	0·00	24·60	36·42	0·00	8·30	0·00	0·00	70·00	211·22	96·50
250·00	36·44	20·44	193·12	0·00	0·00	24·60	36·42	0·00	8·30	0·00	0·00	70·00	217·22	103·00
260·00	38·94	21·44	199·62	0·00	0·00	24·60	36·42	0·00	8·30	0·00	0·00	70·00	224·22	109·50
270·00	41·44	22·44	206·12	0·00	0·00	24·60	36·42	0·00	8·30	0·00	0·00	70·00	230·72	116·00
280·00	43·94	23·44	212·62	0·00	0·00	24·60	36·42	0·00	8·30	0·00	0·00	70·00	237·22	122·50
290·00	46·44	24·44	219·12	0·00	0·00	24·60	36·42	0·00	8·30	0·00	0·00	70·00	243·72	129·00
300·00	48·94	25·44	225·62	0·00	0·00	24·60	36·42	0·00	8·30	0·00	0·00	70·00	250·22	135·50

Position at October 1994

Child care allowance = £40·00

Gross earnings	*Tax*	*NI*	*Take home pay*	*Income support*	*Family credit*	*Child benefit*	*Rent*	*Rent rebate*	*Council tax*	*Council tax benefit*	*FSM/ FWF*	*Child care costs*	*Total net income*	*Net income after rent, council tax child care costs*
	(£)	(£)	(£)	(£)	(£)	(£)	(£)	(£)	(£)	(£)	(£)	(£)	(£)	(£)
100·00	0·14	5·44	94·42	0·00	66·70	24·60	36·42	21·84	8·30	3·82	0·00	70·00	211·38	96·66
110·00	2·14	6·44	101·42	0·00	66·70	24·60	36·42	17·29	8·30	2·42	0·00	70·00	212·43	97·71
120·00	4·14	7·44	108·42	0·00	66·70	24·60	36·42	12·74	8·30	1·02	0·00	70·00	213·48	98·76
130·00	6·44	8·44	115·12	0·00	64·31	24·60	36·42	9·95	8·30	0·15	0·00	70·00	214·13	99·41
140·00	8·94	9·44	121·62	0·00	59·76	24·60	36·42	8·68	8·30	0·00	0·00	70·00	214·66	99·94
150·00	11·44	10·44	128·12	0·00	55·21	24·60	36·42	7·41	8·30	0·00	0·00	70·00	215·34	100·62
160·00	13·94	11·44	134·62	0·00	50·66	24·60	36·42	6·14	8·30	0·00	0·00	70·00	216·02	101·30
170·00	16·44	12·44	141·12	0·00	46·11	24·60	36·42	4·88	8·30	0·00	0·00	70·00	216·71	101·99
180·00	18·94	13·44	147·62	0·00	41·56	24·60	36·42	3·61	8·30	0·00	0·00	70·00	217·39	102·67
190·00	21·44	14·44	154·12	0·00	37·01	24·60	36·42	2·34	8·30	0·00	0·00	70·00	218·07	103·35
200·00	23·94	15·44	160·62	0·00	32·46	24·60	36·42	1·07	8·30	0·00	0·00	70·00	218·75	104·03
210·00	26·44	16·44	167·12	0·00	27·91	24·60	36·42	0·00	8·30	0·00	0·00	70·00	219·63	104·91
220·00	28·94	17·44	173·62	0·00	23·36	24·60	36·42	0·00	8·30	0·00	0·00	70·00	221·58	106·86
230·00	31·44	18·44	180·12	0·00	18·81	24·60	36·42	0·00	8·30	0·00	0·00	70·00	223·53	108·81
240·00	33·94	19·44	186·62	0·00	14·26	24·60	36·42	0·00	8·30	0·00	0·00	70·00	225·48	110·76
250·00	36·44	20·44	193·12	0·00	9·71	24·60	36·42	0·00	8·30	0·00	0·00	70·00	227·43	112·71
260·00	38·94	21·44	199·62	0·00	5·16	24·60	36·42	0·00	8·30	0·00	0·00	70·00	229·38	114·66
270·00	41·44	22·44	206·12	0·00	0·61	24·60	36·42	0·00	8·30	0·00	0·00	70·00	231·33	116·61
280·00	43·94	23·44	212·62	0·00	0·00	24·60	36·42	0·00	8·30	0·00	0·00	70·00	237·22	122·50

Gross earnings	Tax	NI	Take home pay	Income support	Family credit	Child benefit	Rent	Rent rebate	Council tax	Council tax benefit	FSM/ FWF	Child care costs	Total net income	Net income after rent, council tax child care costs
	(£)	(£)	(£)	(£)	(£)	(£)	(£)	(£)	(£)	(£)	(£)	(£)	(£)	(£)
290·00	46·44	24·44	219·12	0·00	0·00	24·60	36·42	0·00	8·30	0·00	0·00	70·00	243·72	129·00
300·00	48·94	25·44	225·62	0·00	0·00	24·60	36·42	0·00	8·30	0·00	0·00	70·00	250·22	135·50

Notes:

1. The family is assumed to live in council property appropriate to their size and pay estimated average rent and council tax.
2. The family is assumed to have no capital and take up entitlement to One Parent Benefit and all income-related benefits.
3. The cash value of free school meals and welfare foods available to the family receiving Income Support is shown in the column headed FSM/FWF.

Bicycles

Mr. Robathan: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what facilities his Department provides for the parking of the bicycles of visitors to its offices in Westminster.

Mr. Hague: The Department's HQ offices in Westminster are at Richmond house where the facilities are provided by the Department of Health. Richmond house has a cycle rack in the car park where visitors' bicycles can be parked.

Compensation

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what powers the compensation recovery unit has to reclaim money paid through invalidity benefit to people aged over 65 years who win court awards for industrial damage to their health;

(2) what powers the compensation recovery unit has to reclaim money paid through the state pension to asbestosis sufferers who win court awards for industrial damage to their health.

Mr. Scott: Section 82 of the Social Security Administration Act 1992 and its supporting legislation requires the compensator to deduct the value of invalidity benefit and other relevant benefits and to pay this sum to my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State.

Benefits such as retirement pension, which are not paid in respect of an accident, injury or disease, are exempted from recoupment.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the reasons for his policy in respect of the money of court awards for *(a)* pain, *(b)* suffering and *(c)* loss of income by the compensation recovery unit from asbestosis sufferers.

Mr. Scott: The compensation recovery scheme is underpinned by a set of straightforward rules which are designed to be easy to understand and administer.

Because the vast majority of compensation claims are settled informally without an allocation to separate heads of damages, it would be impracticable to introduce a mechanism for disaggregating awards. The scheme therefore has regard to the total payment of damages. The same arrangements apply to out-of-court settlements and to the one per cent. of cases settled in court.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if a person receiving unemployment or sickness benefit before he has contracted asbestosis has to repay a court award for industrial disease under the rules of the compensation recovery unit.

Mr. Scott: The value of unemployment benefit or sickness benefit should be recovered provided it is paid in consequence of the disease for which compensation is awarded. No recovery would be made of prior benefit payments if these were not attributable to the disease.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the reasons for his policy in respect of providing credit to victims of asbestosis for previous national insurance contributions when the compensation recovery unit reclaims court awards.

Mr. Hague: Individuals suffering from asbestosis are awarded national insurance contribution credits in respect of each week of incapacity for which medical evidence is produced, irrespective of any action taken by the compensation recovery unit to recover amounts of contributory benefits paid. Except where they have been paid in error, current provisions do not allow for the refund of contributions, including those on which an award of contributory incapacity benefit was based, since this could have adverse effects on the individual's future benefit entitlement.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) from what date the compensation recovery unit may reclaim benefits in cases where an asbestosis sufferer wins a court award for industrial disease or damages;

(2) what is the policy of the compensation recovery unit in respect of the length a court claim for damages from an asbestosis sufferer takes to settle and the length of claim back by the unit.

Mr. Scott: The period of recovery commences with the date on which a relevant benefit is first claimed in consequence of the disease and ends on the date of settlement or five years from the date of this claim, whichever is earlier. The period is not affected by the time it takes to settle a case in court.

Social Fund

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, when he intends to publish his annual report on the social fund and the social fund commissioner's annual report; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State's annual report for 1993-94 (CM 2598) has been published and laid before Parliament today. The report records that gross expenditure in 1993-94 was £442 million, the highest level of expenditure since the fund was established in 1988. This includes 1·8 million non-repayable grants and interest free loans worth £344 million; and funeral, maternity and cold weather payments worth £98 million. The gross budget allocated to the

discretionary part of the fund was £346 million, representing an increase of £29 million—nearly 10 per cent —on 1992-93.

In 1994-95 we have built on the substantial increases of earlier years and the gross discretionary budget now stands at £353 million. Since the social fund's inception nearly 9 million discretionary grants and interest-free loans worth almost £1·6 billion have been made to people on low incomes. Cold weather payments will increase from £6 to £7 from 1 November 1994 and further increase to £7·50 a year later. These increases will enhance safeguards for the most vulnerable in the community such as elderly and disabled people and those with very young children.

The social fund commissioner's annual report has also been published today and copies have been placed in the Library.

WALES

Location Grants

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will publish the number of companies for each of the last 10 years which have received grants or loans in respect of locating in Wales and which have been subsequently moved from Wales, indicating the year of removal; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will publish for each of the last 10 years and the total for the last 10 years (i) the total cost to the Exchequer of grants or loans made in respect of companies locating in Wales, (ii) the total cost to the Exchequer of grants or loans made in respect of companies locating in Wales but which subsequently moved from Wales and (iii) the figures in (ii) as a percentage of (i);

(3) if he will publish a list of all companies for each of the last 10 years which have received grants or loans in respect of locating in Wales and which have subsequently moved from Wales.

Mr. Redwood: This information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the advisory bodies which he has set up in his Department since the publication of "Public Bodies 1993".

Mr. Redwood: The only advisory body set up in Wales since the publication of "Public Bodies 1993" last December is the Welsh Economic Council.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list his Department's advisory non-departmental public bodies which are required to publish their advice to Government.

Mr. Redwood: None of the advisory NDPBs sponsored by the Welsh Office is required by statute to publish its advice to Government; however, they may choose to do so and some do. The objective, for example, of the housing management advisory panel is to produce good practice guidance in housing management aimed primarily at local authorities; this guidance is published.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales which of the advisory non-departmental public bodies sponsored by his Department are required to lay their annual reports before Parliament; and if he will list them.

Mr. Redwood: The list is as follows:

Ancient Monuments Board for Wales
Historic Buildings Council for Wales
Library and Information Services Council (Wales)

In addition, the National Rivers Authority advisory committee for Wales, although not required to do so by statute, does publish an annual report, copies of which are placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list his Department's advisory non-departmental public bodies which are required to produce annual reports.

Mr. Redwood: The following advisory NDPBs sponsored by the Welsh Office are required to produce annual reports:

Ancient Monuments Board for Wales
Historic Buildings Council for Wales
Library and Information Services Council (Wales)
Welsh Committee for Postgraduate Pharmaceutical Education
Welsh Committee for Postgraduate Medical and Dental Education
Welsh Medical Committee
Welsh Dental Committee
Welsh Nursing and Midwifery Committee
Welsh Optical Committee
Welsh Pharmaceutical Committee
Welsh Scientific Advisory Committee

In addition, the National Rivers Authority Advisory Committee for Wales, although not required to do so by statute, does publish an annual report.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales which of the advisory non-departmental public bodies sponsored by his Department have a statutory basis; and if he will list them.

Mr. Redwood: The following advisory NDPBs sponsored by the Welsh Office have a statutory basis, as indicated:

National Rivers Authority Advisory Committee for Wales
(Section 6 of the Water Resources Act 1991.)

Agricultural Dwelling House Advisory Committees
(Of which there are 6 in Wales, established under the Rent (Agriculture) Act 1976.)

Ancient Monuments Board for Wales
(First constituted under the Ancient Monuments Consolidation and Amendment Act 1913, now constituted under Section 22 of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979.)

Hill Farming Advisory Sub-Committee for Wales
(Section 32 of the Hill Farming Act 1946.)

Historic Buildings Council for Wales
(Section 3 of Part 1 of the Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act 1953.)

Library and Information Services Council (Wales)
(Section 2 of the Public Libraries and Museum Act 1964); Local Government Boundary Commission for Wales (Section 53) of the Local Government Act 1972.)

Welsh Committee for Postgraduate Pharmaceutical Education and Welsh Committee for Postgraduate Medical and Dental Education
(Recognised under Section 2(b) of the National Health Service Act 1977.)

Welsh Medical Committee

Welsh Dental Committee

Welsh Nursing and Midwifery Committee

Welsh Optical Committee

Welsh Pharmaceutical Committee and Welsh Scientific Advisory Committee
(All recognised under the NHS Reorganisation Act 1973, Sections 5 and 6 Appropriation Act.)

In addition, the Mental Handicap Advisory Panel has no statutory basis, however I have powers under section 2 of the National Health Services Act 1977 to provide such services as are appropriate to assist me in discharging my duties.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list those of his Department's advisory non-departmental public bodies which the Government are required to consult before legislation proposals; and in respect of which bodies the Government must publish their response to advice supplied to them.

Mr. Redwood: There is no statutory requirement to consult any of the advisory NDPBs prior to legislation proposals, however I may choose to do so.

Unemployment, Alyn and Deeside

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many long-term unemployed people there are in the constituency of Alyn and Deeside; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: In April 1994, the number of claimants who had been unemployed for more than 52 weeks in the Alyn and Deeside constituency was 920. This is less than half the number in April 1986.

Staff Surveys

Mr. Radice: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what surveys of the views, opinions and attitudes of the staff of his Department have been carried out in the last two years; and if he will place in the Library copies of the findings.

Mr. Redwood: None.

Training

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the percentage in each county of people who find work after "training for work"; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information is in relation to the seven training and enterprise council areas in Wales which do not coincide with the eight counties. The information is provided in the following table on those who have found work and remain in employment six months after completing training for work.

Training for work job outcomes

	Percentage in a job
Gwent	43
Mid Glamorgan	44
North East Wales	29
North West Wales	32
Powys	43
South Glamorgan	38
West Wales	44
Wales Total	42
England and Wales	36

Source: TFW Follow-up September 1992 to August 1993.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many young people in each of the constituencies in Wales have taken up training credits; and what plans he has to extend the scheme.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Figures on the take-up of training credits are not collected on a constituency basis. The table shows the numbers who have taken up the offer of a credit, by training and enterprise council area, for the period since the scheme was launched until 27 March 1994:

	Scheme started	*Number of starts*
North East Wales TEC	1 April 1991	3,972
Mid Glamorgan TEC	29 March 1993	2,445

Two further training and enterprise councils, South Glamorgan and West Wales, will start offering credits in 1994-95, with North West Wales coming into operation in 1995-96 and Gwent and Powys in 1996-97.

Land and Property

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his policy on the acquisition of land and property for road construction.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The general policy is that all land that is needed for trunk road construction is acquired under compulsory purchase. When a scheme is at the public consultation stage or a preferred route is protected for planning purposes landowners can ask that the Department acquire their property under statutory or discretionary powers. They would need to demonstrate that they were unable to sell their property at normal market value because of the impending road scheme. Each case is considered on its merits and decisions are taken on the basis of the level of impact that the road proposals will have.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the management of land and property acquired as a consequence of road construction plans.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Land and property which is acquired in advance of trunk road schemes is managed until it is needed for the works. It is maintained and let where appropriate. Residential property capable of being used for social purposes is offered for short tenancies of a fixed-term nature to housing associations and local housing authorities. Any land or property which is eventually surplus is sold on the open market.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his policy concerning the disposal of surplus land and property.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Department disposes of surplus land and property on the open market at the best price to the public purse, in line with Treasury guidance. Local housing authorities and housing associations are given the opportunity to bid on residential property.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the estimated value of land and property

held by his Department as a consequence of actual and proposed road programmes; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The estimated disposable value of land and property acquired in advance of proposed trunk road schemes which is or will eventually be surplus to requirements is £4·5 million. Land and property which is required for operational use is not revalued subsequent to acquisition.

Consultation Documents (Bilingual Form)

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 16 June, *Official Report,* column *651,* what considerations led him to issue "Implications of Local Government Reorganisation in Wales for Health Boundaries and Proposals for Restructuring Health Authorities" in the English language only; if he will make it his policy to issue all consultation documents in bilingual form; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Timing constraints made it impractical to issue a Welsh version. Each case is considered on its merits but whenever possible consultation documents will be made available in English and Welsh.

Access to Environmental Information

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many requests his Department has received for information under the Access to Environmental Information Regulations 1992; how many were responded to within two months; how many were refused; and on what grounds in each case.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Welsh Office does not keep records of the number of requests received under the 1992 environmental information regulations; only refusals are specifically logged. Internal procedures, however, seek to ensure that all correspondence is responded to reasonably promptly, and normally well within the two months specified in the regulations.

Up to 30 June 1994, the Welsh Office refused one request for information under the regulations, on the ground that it was commercially confidential.

Development Board for Rural Wales

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what guidelines he has given to the members of the board of the Development Board for Rural Wales concerning the chairmanship of its meetings.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer Monday 4 July 1994]:* None. The DBRW board decided that its meetings should be chaired by the senior board member present.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the board of the Development Board for Rural Wales with respect to the reporting instructions and the chain of command pending the appointment of a replacement chairman.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer Monday 4 July 1994]:* The normal consultative arrangements between the Department and the DBRW continue to operate. As regards the conduct of its own business, meetings of the DBRW board are chaired by the senior board member present.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Select Committees

Mr. Radice: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he expects to place in the Library the revised memorandum of guidance for officials appearing before Select Committees.

Mr. Waldegrave: A copy of the revised memorandum of guidance will be placed in the Library shortly at the same time as it is circulated to Government Departments.

Occupational Health Service

Mr. Jacques Arnold: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what key performance targets he has set for the Occupational Health Service executive agency for the current year.

Mr. David Davis: The key performance targets for the Occupational Health Service executive agency for 1994-95 are:

to break even in accrual accounting terms;

to turn round 15 days, 80 per cent. of case referrals where no additonal information is required and 58 per cent. within 40 days when additional information is required;

to earn customer post-service satisfaction evaluations of 90 per cent. in the two highest categories;

to issue at least 90 per cent. of invoices error free.

In addition the Occupational Health Service has cost containment targets the details of which are commercially sensitive.

Contracting Out

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) if he will list those central Government information technology outsourcing contracts that have been awarded to private companies since April 1992 and their value, where that company winning the tender has not undertaken previous work for central Government;

(2) if he will list those central Government information technology contracts that have been awarded to private companies as a result of market testing since April 1992, together with their values, the names of the companies to which they were awarded and the names of the companies or organisations that previously provided these services.

Mr. Waldegrave: In the period from April 1992-December 1993, Departments have reported to the efficiency unit that IT support functions worth £291 million were examined under the competing for quality programme.

From Department's reports to the efficiency unit, and contract awards reported in the market testing bulletin in 1994, work in the following areas has been awarded to external contractors.

Department	
Ministry of Defence:	Operations West IT processing.
Department of the Environment:	Planning Inspectorate IT Project management.

Department	
Export Credits Guarantee Department:	IT operational support.
Department of Health:	Operation and redevelopment of the Hospital Episodes Statistics System (HES).
Inland Revenue:	IT Services.
Department of National Heritage:	IT provision.
Northern Ireland Civil Service:	Data Preparation. Operations of Mainframe computer services. Computer network management.
Ordnance Survey:	Digital Conversion of 1/10,000 mapping. Hardware maintenance. Mainframe services.
Office of Public Service and Science: Recruitment Assessment Services	Computer hardware maintenance. Office automation software support.
Department of Trade and Industry:	Database Maintenance.

Some information on companies winning tenders is in the market testing bulletin, which is in the Library.

For other details of contract values, the companies winning tenders and the organisations previously carrying out the work, I refer the hon. Member to individual Departments.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Animal Exports

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what consideration has been given to maintaining statistics of the number of live animals exported from the United Kingdom and then returned to Britain for sale; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: The maintenance of a wide range of statistics has been considered, but the data in question are not collected.

Rabbits

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is her estimate of changes in the rabbit population in the last 10 years, both nationally and regionally; what action she intends to take or has recommended; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: Detailed regional surveys of rabbit populations between 1980 asnd 1986 showed a steady increase in the distribution and abundance of rabbits, particularly in eastern and south-eastern England. Nationally, numbers are now estimated to be about 30 per cent. of pre-myxomatosis levels, that is at about 30 million, and are rising at a rate of 2 per cent. per year. In some areas the populations are back to pre-myxomatosis levels.

Section 1 of the Pests Act 1954 places a continuing obligation on occupiers of land designated as rabbit clearance areas to control rabbits harboured on their land. The current Rabbit Clearance Order, issued in 1972, covers the whole of England and Wales excluding the City of London, the Isles of Scilly and Skokholm island.

Where occupiers are failing to meet their obligations under the 1954 Act, Agriculture Ministers have the power, under section 98 of the Agriculture Act 1947, to require action to be taken. These discretionary powers will be invoked where the situation has not been resolved satisfactorily within a reasonable period of time.

The Ministry is aware of the damage that rabbits can cause and keeps its policy on rabbit control under continual review. The Ministry is funding R and D to establish improved methods for cost-effective and humane rabbit control.

Comfrey

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information is held by her Department concerning the findings of recent surveys on the safety of comfrey and comfrey products; and whether the findings of those surveys support or contradict the retention of a ban on comfrey products.

Mr. Soames: I have received from the Society for the Promotion of Nutritional Therapy a paper entitled "The safety-in-use of comfrey and comfrey products: Research survey". I shall take this opportunity to review the situation. I assure my hon. Friend that whatever further action I take to protect public health will be based on the best scientific advice available.

Access to Environmental Information

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many requests her Department has received for information under the Access to Environmental Information Regulations 1992; how many were answered within two months; how many were refused; and on what grounds in each case.

Mr. Jack: The Department does not keep records of the number of requests received under the Environmental Information Regulations 1992, nor when they were answered. The Department does, however, keep records of refusals to supply information and the grounds for doing so. In the period up to 30 June 1994, the Department refused one request for information on the ground that it was commercially confidential to the informant.

Spongiform Encephalopathies

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what funding her Department has offered to the Public Health Laboratory Service for research into bovine spongiform encephalopathy and Creutzfeldt Jakob disease; and which member of the staff is to carry out the research.

Mr. Soames: None.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the result of the work of the Public Health Laboratory Service about a possible test for transmissible spongiform encephalopathies in animals; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: Joint work between this Ministry's central veterinary laboratory and Dr. Narang at the

Newcastle public health laboratory in which specimens were examined blind by him using an electron microscope technique he had developed, and by the CVL using conventional established techniques, did not indicate that Dr. Narang's technique was any improvement.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what reports she has received concerning Dr. Harash Narang's work on transmissible spongiform encephalopathies; and if she will place these reports in the Library.

Mr. Soames: MAFF is co-funding research with the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council designed to repeat independently the procedures used by Dr. Narang and to assess his reported observations. These studies are being undertaken with the co-operation and involvement of Dr. Narang.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress has been made by Government-funded institutions towards a test for bovine spongiform encephalopathy and other transmissible spongiform encephalopathies in animals and humans.

Mr. Soames: Government-funded research aimed at developing a diagnostic test for BSE in live cattle is in progress. The results of this research will be published when the work has been completed.

ENVIRONMENT

Water Quality

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) which high-profile sites in need of water quality improvements in addition to EU directive requirements will be included in the Director General of Water Services' review of price limits for water companies;

(2) what provision is being made for protecting river sites of special scientific interest from deterioration due to sewage effluent during the 1995-2000 investment programme for Water Services plc.

Mr. Gummer: We have informed the Director General of Water Services that, in addition to spending required to meet existing obligations including those imposed by European Community directives, we consider that in the period 1995 to 2000 a further £522·3 million of spending specifically to improve the quality of rivers should be enabled to proceed, including in Wales. He has told me that he will take this spending into account in determining the new price limits which he is to announce on 28 July. The distribution of the additional spending between sewerage company areas is as in the table. It represents guidance on the extent to which the National Rivers Authority will, in the period 1995 to 2000, require additional expenditure by water and sewerage plcs by tightening sewage works discharge consents so as to bring about further improvements in river quality, over and above improvements which will result from the existing obligations arising from European Community and domestic legislation. It will be for the NRA in consultation with the companies to determine the most cost-effective use of this expenditure. I expect, however, that it will include, inter alia, priority schemes to continue the improvement of water quality in the Mersey basin, the Aire and Calder catchment, the Norfolk Broads, and the Worcestershire Stour; and schemes to improve other rivers such as the Tame to the north-east of Birmingham, the Surrey Blackwater, the lower Nene, and the Hampshire Avon.

Company	*£ million*
Thames	41
Wessex	18
South West	—
Anglian	42
Southern	10
North West	130
Northumbrian	—
Yorkshire	60
Severn Trent	194
Welsh	27·3

Staff Surveys

Mr. Radice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what surveys of the views, opinions and attitudes of the staff of his Department have been carried out in the last two years; and if he will place copies of the findings in the Library.

Mr. Baldry: No such surveys have been conducted across my Department. Small-scale surveys have been conducted in two operational units comprising in total about 500 staff, the results of which are confidential to management and the staff concerned.

"Using Water Wisely"

Mr. Colin Shepherd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration he gave to the usage of valve flushes in his consultations in respect of his paper "Using Water Wisely".

Mr. Atkins: The consultation paper suggested that new research is necessary. Tenders have recently been invited for a research project on water economy which includes an evaluation of various flushing devices including flushing valves.

Bridleways

Ms Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will make a statement about progress on the Pennine bridleway.

Mr. Atkins: The Countryside Commission submitted to the Secretary of State its supplementary report outlining revised proposals for the bridleway on 1 July last year. Following further necessary consultation, I am presently considering the matter and I expect to anounce my decision shortly.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to ensure that droveways fall within the right of way in common law known as bridleways; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: I am not convinced that legislation is either necessary or appropriate. At common law, not every droveway is also a bridleway, and not every bridleway is also subject to the right to drive beasts. Where there is a public right of way for vehicles, bridleway and droveway rights would normally be included. However where, for

example, old maps show a route as a "droveway", or "driftway", it is not to be assumed from that alone that a public right of way for vehicles also exists. In all cases where the correct classification of a public right of way is in issue, all available and relevant evidence must be considered to establish the exact nature of the rights the public have acquired.

Bathing Water

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what research has been commissioned by his Department on the possible link between dirty beaches, seawater and children's health.

Mr. Atkins: The four-year study into the health effects of sea bathing, commissioned by the Department and others, and published in January this year included children's health. In the main part of the investigation, 52 per cent. of swimmers and 31 per cent. of paddlers studied in the beach surveys were children of 5 to 14 years.

Access to Environmental Information

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many requests for information his Department has received under the Access to Environmental Information Regulations 1992; how many were answered within two months; how many were refused; and on what grounds in each case.

Mr. Atkins: My Department does not keep central records of the number of individual requests it receives for information. We do, however, look very carefully at every case of refusal.

In the period up to 30 June 1994, the Department refused 13 requests. One refusal arose from the Department's inability to respond within the two-month time limit. The remaining refusals related to the following grounds—some refusals covered more than one ground: commercial confidentiality (3), international relations (1), national security (1), legal or other proceedings (4), requested information not held (1), request considered manifestly unreasonable (1), incomplete documents (2), confidential deliberations (2) and internal communications (2).

Pollution (Structural Damage)

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what studies his Department has undertaken in the last three years to assess the damage to buildings by vehicle exhaust fumes.

Mr. Atkins: My Department is currently reviewing and assessing what future research on the effects of air pollution on materials is required. Following the recommendations of a consultancy undertaken by the University of East Anglia for the Department, a workshop is being held later this month in London with leading United Kingdom researchers in the field. It is envisaged that priority areas for future research on materials will be identified in this workshop.

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to undertake further studies to assess the damage to buildings by vehicle exhaust fumes.

Mr. Atkins: My Department has funded research at the Building Research Establishment, Middlesex university, Queens university Belfast and University of Manchester institute of science and technology. Such research has, for example, examined the soiling of materials and the erosion effects from NOx, nitrates and SO_2 on materials. A consultancy was also undertaken by the University of East Anglia which reviewed current United Kingdom research into the effects of air pollution on materials.

Urban Development Corporation

Mr. Luff To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what changes were made to the external finance limits for the urban development corporations in 1993-94.

Mr. Baldry: Changes were announced in my answers of 8 June 1993, *Official Report,* column *196* and 1 November 1993, *Official Report,* column *5.* In addition amendments were made during 1993-94 to the external finance limits for the Plymouth, Black Country and Birmingham Heartlands development corporations.

These comprised a £1,000,000 reduction for Plymouth development corporation arising from unavoidable project delays and corresponding increases of £400,000 for a relocation project at Birmingham Heartlands development corporation and £600,000 towards the Moxley-Lunt link road project at Black Country development corporation.

Overall there has been no change in the funding of the urban development corporation programme.

Conservation

Mr. Clappison: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how the draft Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations would amend planning legislation.

Mr. Curry: The planning aspects of the draft regulations which were laid before Parliament on 4 July 1994 implement the assessment and decision-making requirements of the habitats directive in respect of the land use planning system in England and Wales and in Scotland.

The main amendments made to planning legislation by the regulations are to:

(a) restrict the granting of planning permission for development which is likely significantly to affect a Special Protection Area (SPA) designated under the Birds Directive or a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) to be classified under the Habitats Directive;

(b) require the review of existing planning permissions which have not been fully implemented and which are likely significantly to affect a designated SPA or an SAC when it is classified, and if necessary the taking of appropriate action;

(c) prevent the General Development Order (and the General Permitted Development Order in Scotland) granting permitted development rights which will adversely affect the integrity of an SPA or SAC;

(d) prevent other existing and future development orders, simplified planning zone schemes and enterprise zone schemes from granting permission for development which is likely significantly to affect an SPA or SAC.

The regulations are not a new departure for planning so much as a reinforcement of our existing approach. We have a firm and well-established framework for safeguarding the natural heritage, which has been strengthened significantly in recent years. This framework enables us to protect nationally and internationally important sites in terms that

are broadly consistent with the habitats directive. The regulations will ensure that we comply fully with its requirements.

We will provide advice on the regulations in the planning policy guidance note on nature conservation for local planning authorities in England. The PPG will be published after Parliament has approved the regulations. My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Wales will be providing separate advice for local planning authorities in Scotland and in Wales.

Under the provision referred to at (b), it is possible that a local authority might exceptionally need to make an order to modify or revoke a planning permission or discontinue a use of land. We expect any such orders to be rare, because of the protection already afforded to important nature conservation sites, and because an order would be needed only if a development would adversely affect the integrity of the site and a satisfactory planning obligation could not be reached. An order would take effect when served, but would be subject to confirmation by the appropriate Secretary of State. The existing entitlement under planning law to compensation in connection with modification, revocation and discontinuance orders would apply, as would the liability on the local authority to pay it. The Government would, however, consider reimbursing a local authority if the compensation costs were high and the action taken was no more than was necessary to overcome the adverse effects of the planning permission. It would not meet the costs of an authority which unreasonably served an order which was not subsequently confirmed by the Secretary of State.

We are grateful to those who responded to the consultation paper on amending the General Development Order—see (c)—which we issued last year for England and Wales. Copies of their responses have been placed in the Department of the Environment library, and a summary and list of them have been deposited in the Libraries of the House of Commons and House of Lords. The amendments in the draft regulations would mean that permitted development rights would not be available for any development which was likely significantly to affect an SPA or SAC, unless the local authority had decided that it would not adversely affect the integrity of the site. A developer who was uncertain about whether a proposal would be likely to have a significant effect on an SPA or SAC would be able to obtain an opinion from English Nature or the Countryside Council for Wales. The consultation paper also covered our proposal to remove permitted development rights for development requiring environmental assessment under the 1988 EA regulations; we will be announcing our decision on this separately.

As well as amending planning legislation, the draft regulations amend highways legislation to achieve similar results to (a) and (b) above for road construction or improvement projects proposed by the Secretary of State. They also amend the Pipe-lines Act 1962, the Electricity Act 1989 and the Transport and Works Act 1992 to make similar provisions in relation to the construction of generating stations and the installation of electric lines above ground; the construction and diversion of pipelines; and the construction of transport systems, inland waterways and works interfering with rights of navigation.

Local Government Reorganisation

Mr. Carrington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a further announcement about the implementation of the Local Government Commission's recommendations for the establishment of four unitary authorities in Cleveland following the High Court judgment on 28 June.

Mr. Curry: The High Court judgment has now been given on the legal challenges by Avon, Somerset and Cleveland county councils against the Local Government Commission and the Government in respect of the Commission's recommendations for new local government structures in Avon, Somerset and Cleveland. I hope all authorities will study it closely before embarking on any further litigation.

The delay caused by this case has led me to reconsider the timing of the establishment of unitary authorities in Cleveland. In an answer on 11 May, column *170*, I said that our intention to transfer county functions to unitary districts in Cleveland on 1 April 1995 was subject to the outcome of the judicial review case. At that stage we did not know when the judgment was likely to be made. I am mindful of the need to ensure a smooth transition, with an adequate time for the planning of change. It is of paramount importance that there should be no risk to the delivery of essential services in the areas concerned. In view of the relatively short time that would be available between the making of an order and a start date for unitary authorities of 1 April 1995, I have decided that it would be in the best interests of the inhabitants of Cleveland to establish the four unitary authorities as from 1 April 1996, with elections to be held in May 1995, for councillors who will plan for change and then become councillors of the unitary authorities once they are established. I will very shortly send the local authorities in Cleveland a draft order, incorporating these revised dates, for comment.

SCOTLAND

Disabled People

13. **Mr. Michael J. Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement regarding the future financing of blind and disabled workshops.

Mr. Stewart: As indicated when I met the hon. Gentleman and delegates from Blindcraft, the National League for the Blind and Disabled and Strathclyde social work department recently, the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill includes provision for the transfer of property, assets, liabilities and obligations to the relevant successor authority. We propose that any obligations which a local authority has in respect of workshops for blind and disabled people will be transferred to the appropriate new authority from 1 April 1996.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met representatives of ENABLE to discuss issues affecting disabled people; when he next plans to meet them; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 1 July 1994]:* Scottish Office officials met representatives of ENABLE to discuss a range of issues in September 1993. My noble and learned Friend the Minister of State expects to meet an all-party group on disability and disablement in the next few weeks.

Regional Councils

15. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the present regional council administrations in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: New regional councils were elected in Scotland in May to serve for two years until the two-tier system of local government is replaced in 1996 by a single tier of all-purpose authorities.

Forestry

16. **Mrs. Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to make public the findings of the review group appointed in March 1993 and established to look at the ownership and management of woodlands; and if he will make a statement on the development of forestry policy.

Sir Hector Monro: An announcement about our conclusions on the forestry review group proposals will be made shortly.

22. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the amount of tree clearance currently taking place in the United Kingdom; and what is the annual rate of replanting.

Sir Hector Monro: The Forestry Commission fells and replants about 8,000 hectares of woodland each year. Last year the Commission gave approval for 13,000 hectares of privately-owned woodland to be felled over the next five years. Practically all the woodlands which are felled will be replanted.

Investment

17. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he has had this year with the Scottish Trades Union Congress relating to the level of investment in the Scottish economy.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend has arranged to meet the STUC general council on 22 July. It is expected that the level of investment in the Scottish economy will be discussed at that meeting.

Employment

18. **Mr. Watson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next intends to meet the Scottish Trades Union Congress to discuss employment and the Scottish economy.

Mr. Stewart: At the meeting on 22 July to which I referred earlier, employment and other matters related to the Scottish economy will be discussed by my right hon. Friend and the STUC.

Speed Limits

19. **Mr. Chisholm:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many applications for 20 mph zones have been received by his Department; and how many have been granted approval.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Office industry department has received six applications from local roads authorities requesting my right hon. Friend's consent to allow them to make 20 mph speed limit orders. My right hon. Friend has authorised four of them to date.

Ambulance Service

20. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the future of the Scottish ambulance service.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The Scottish ambulance service has applied to become an NHS trust in order to improve further the services that it provides to patients. Its application is at present subject to public consultation which will be completed by 18 August. A decision on the application will be taken thereafter by my right hon. Friend on whether to approve NHS trust status in light of all the comments received in response to the consultation process.

Drug Education

21. **Lady Olga Maitland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to monitor drug education in schools.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Her Majesty's inspectors of schools include drugs education within their normal programmes of school inspection. They also hold regular discussions with education authorities about health education, including drugs education, policies. Responsibility for the content of the school curriculum rests with education authorities and individual head teachers.

Local Government Reorganisation

23. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent representations he has received concerning the reform of local government in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend continues to receive a range of representations about the Government's proposals for local government reform in Scotland. Since January, I have met 27 hon. Members who accompanied delegations.

36. **Mr. Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met representatives of the Confederation of Scottish Local Authorities to discuss changes in Scottish local government.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend last met the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities on 28 January 1994. The convention did not raise any issues relating to local government reform at that meeting.

Education (Funding)

24. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent representations he has had about the funding of education in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I receive comments from time to time about the funding of education in Scotland from a number of sources. I am satisfied that Scottish education is appropriately funded.

Local Services

25. **Mr. McMaster:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next plans to meet representatives of the Confederation of Scottish Local Authorities to discuss the provision of local services.

Mr. Stewart: As I told the hon. Member for Glasgow, Pollok (Mr. Dunnachie) on 25 May, *Official Report*, column 205, my right hon. Friend and I will be meeting COSLA representatives on 22 July as part of the normal consultation on local government finance matters.

Housing

26. **Sir David Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many council houses have been sold to sitting tenants in Scotland since May 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: As at end December 1993, over 284,000 houses had been sold to sitting tenants of local authorities and other public sector landlords in Scotland.

Contaminated Land

27. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what priority he gives to clearing up contaminated land when considering financial allocations to Scottish Enterprise and Glasgow development agency.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend has made it clear, in his strategic and policy guidance to Scottish Enterprise, that its main priority in environmental matters is the eradication of environmental dereliction; and that there remains the need to tackle systematically and rationally the problems of dereliction and contamination. He expects that schemes which combine environmental improvements with economic gains should generally merit priority; and that schemes which remove health or other hazards should be given priority over comparable projects with no such impact.

My right hon. Friend takes these factors into account, along with others, in making resources available to Scottish Enterprise each year. Day-to-day decisions on the relative priority and resources to be afforded to particular schemes or projects are, however, a matter for Scottish Enterprise and the local enterprise companies, in the light of my right hon. Friend's strategic guidance.

The allocation of resources to Glasgow development agency is a matter for Scottish Enterprise.

Training

28. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the chairman of Scottish Enterprise to discuss training.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend met the chairman of Scottish Enterprise on 20 June 1994, when a range of issues, including training, was discussed.

A7

29. **Sir David Steel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about upgrading the A7 trunk road.

Mr. Lang: Following the routes south of Edinburgh consultation in 1989-90, work on the A7 in Scotland is being taken forward in three sections. From the border to Hawick, a route action plan has been published and two significant road improvement schemes are currently being constructed to provide safe overtaking stretches on the section. From Hawick to Galashiels a report has been prepared by consultants to examine the opportunity to improve safe overtaking provision. North of Galashiels, following views expressed by environmental bodies during the routes south of Edinburgh consultation, consultants have examined whether a new road could be constructed without unacceptable environmental consequences. The consultants work on these latter two sections is now being assessed by my officials.

Grampian Enterprise

30. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the chairman of Grampian Enterprise to discuss its role in the local economy.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend met the chairman of Grampian Enterprise at a Scottish Enterprise conference on 25 March 1994.

Defence Spending (Employment Implications)

31. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has had any representations on the effect of defence spending on Scottish employment.

Mr. Stewart: Since the announcement of the "Front Line First" study on 1 December 1993 by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence, I have received 145 representations about military establishments in Scotland.

Seat Belts

32. **Mr. Hood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he intends introducing Scottish legislation to make safety seat belts compulsory on school buses; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Responsibility for vehicle safety matters throughout the United Kingdom rests with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. His Department has recently completed a review of the technical and cost implications of fitting seat belts to all minibuses and coaches, and related safety matters. Decisions on the outcome of that review will be announced shortly.

Local Government (Alleged Corruption)

33. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent representations he has received about corruption in local government in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend receives, from time-to-time, representations about alleged corrupt practices by Scottish local authorities. All such representations are carefully considered in the context of the statutory powers available to my right hon. Friend, and complainants are informed of forms of redress available —for example, the courts, the Commission for Local Authority Accounts in Scotland, and the local government ombudsman.

Day-care Facilities, North Tayside

34. **Mr. Bill Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals his Department has received from Tayside health board in respect of day care facilities in north Tayside.

Mr. Stewart: It is for Tayside health board and Tayside regional council to determine the level of day-care

facilities required in north Tayside. I understand that the board is considering using Meigle hospital as a base for enhanced community health services which will include:

Extended District Nursing and Health Visiting.

New developments in Specialist Dementia Care and Palliative Care Nurses.

New Direct Access (by GP referral) to Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy, Increased Dietetic and Foot Care Services.

Possible development of community day services.

It is for Tayside regional council to consider the level and location of social work day-care services.

Unemployment

35. **Mr. Gallie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the trend in unemployment in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: Unemployment is on a downward trend. Since December 1992, the level of seasonally adjusted unemployment has fallen by 17,100 to stand at 232,500 and 9·3 per cent. of the work force in May 1994.

Local Councillors (Payments)

37. **Mr. Davidson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he proposes to take to address the level of payments to local authority councillors.

Mr. Stewart: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave him on 22 June 1994, *Official Report,* column *239.*

Higher Education (Access)

38. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment his Department has made of the system of Scottish highers as a means of gaining entry to higher education in relation to systems in other EU countries.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave him on 23 February 1994, *Official Report,* column *292.* The report to which I referred then has now been published.

Environmental Information

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many requests for environmental information under the Access to Environmental Information Regulations 1992 have been received by his Department; how many were answered within two months; how many were refused; and on what grounds in each case.

Sir Hector Monro: The Scottish Office does not keep records of the number of requests received under the environmental information regulations, nor when they were answered. However, we do keep records of any refusals to supply information and of the grounds on which they have been made.

In the period up to 30 June 1994, there have been no refusals. However, we have had one case where information was given in a manner which did not divulge specific information for reasons of commercial confidentiality.

EC Funds

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish an estimate, on the basis of the criteria operated by the EC, on whether Scotland would be a net contributor or a net recipient of funds in the event of an independent Scotland being a member of the European Community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 27 June 1994]:* Estimating whether an independent Scotland would be a net contributor to, or a net recipient from, the EC budget would be a complex exercise which could not be undertaken except at disproportionate cost. In view of the hypothetical nature of the question, such costs would not be justified. In the unlikely event of Scottish independence, Scotland's net position would depend on its terms of membership of the European Union.

Prisoners (Northern Ireland)

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many Northern Ireland prisoners have received transfers from Scotland to Northern Ireland since 1 January 1993; and how many were *(a)* permanent, *(b)* temporary, *(c)* male, *(d)* female, *(e)* loyalists and *(f)* republican transfers.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 5 July 1994]:* Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Scottish Prison Service under its chief executive, Mr. E. W. Frizzell. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from E. W. Frizzell to Mr. Kevin McNamara, dated 6 July 1994:

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton has asked me to reply to your question about the number of Northern Ireland prisoners who have received transfers from Scotland to Northern Ireland since 1 January 1993; and how many were *(a)* permanent, *(b)* temporary, *(c)* male, *(d)* female, *(e)* loyalists and *(f)* republican transfers.

Since 1 January 1993 a total of 5 male prisoners have received transfers from Scotland to Northern Ireland. Of those who were transferred 3 were permanently transferred and 2 were transferred on a temporary basis. No female prisoners have been transferred since 1 January 1993 to date.

I am unable to inform you whether the prisoners transferred were loyalist or republican as prisoners in Scotland are not classified by reference to the political or other motivation of their offences.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the greatest, the shortest and the average length of time between application by prisoners for temporary or permanent transfer from Scotland to Northern Ireland and notification of the decision to accept or reject the application.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 5 July 1994]:* Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Scottish Prison Service under its chief executive, Mr. E. W. Frizzell. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from E. W. Frizzell to Mr. Kevin McNamara, dated 6 July 1994:

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton has asked me to reply to your question as to what was the greatest, the shortest and the average length of time between application by prisoners for temporary or permanent transfer from Scotland to Northern Ireland and notification of the decision to accept or reject the application.

Transfers of prisoners between Scotland and Northern Ireland have been effected since the introduction of the Criminal Justice

Act 1961. Unfortunately, I am unable to provide you with the information you require as the information could not be obtained without disproportionate cost.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland for how long a prisoner whose application for transfer from Scotland to Northern Ireland is refused must wait before reapplying.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 5 July 1994]:* Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Scottish Prison Service under its chief executive, Mr. E. W. Frizzel. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from E. W. Frizzel to Mr. Kevin McNamara, dated 6 July 1994:

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton has asked me to reply to your question as to the length of time a prisoner whose application for transfer from Scotland to Northern Ireland is refused must wait before reapplying.

There is no stipulated time which must lapse before a prisoner can reapply for transfer. Each application is considered on its own merits against the set criteria governing United Kingdom interjurisdiction transfers which was announced to Parliament on 23 November 1992.

NORTHERN IRELAND

31 Killinakin Road, Killinchy

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if 31 Killinakin road, Killinchy, County Down is currently classified as a dwelling house; if it is currently occupied; if he has issued any enforcement order to lease the use of this building as a dwelling; and if he will make a statement about the future uses of this building.

Mr. Tim Smith: The property is not classified as a dwelling house and when inspected on 30 June 1994 was unoccupied. No enforcement notice has been issued regarding the use of this building. If the building is used for residential purposes the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland, as planning authority, would have to consider whether it would be expedient to initiate enforcement action requiring a discontinuance of that use.

Bicycles

Mr. Robathan: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what facilities his Department provides for the parking of the bicycles of visitors to its offices in Westminster.

Sir John Wheeler: There are 40 spaces in the bicycle shed which visitors may use.

Environmental Information

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many requests for environmental information under the Access to Environmental Information Regulations 1992 have been received by his Department; how many were answered within two months; how many were refused; and on what grounds in each case.

Mr. Tim Smith: The Environmental Information Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1993 came into effect on 31 March 1993. Between April and December 1993 a total of 1,221 requests were received by central Government Departments. All were replied to within two months. Six were refused, five on the ground that the information was unavailable and one because it was not defined as within the regulations. Figures for the first half of 1994 are not yet available.

TRANSPORT

Nationality Agreements

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the relationship of European Community regulations or directives to the action proposed by Her Majesty's Government to abolish the current nationality agreements for senior officers on vessels registered in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Norris: EC directives 89/48/EEC and 92/51/EEC govern the mutual recognition of certain regulated qualifications within the EC. Both permit the competent authority of a member state to satisfy itself that there is an equivalence of standards between its own qualifications and those awarded by the competent authorities of member states. Where there is a substantial difference, a competent authority is entitled to ask the applicant to make up that difference in a number of ways, including an aptitude test or an adaption period.

The proposed EC directive on the minimum level of training for seafarers will ensure that all member states comply with the international convention on standards of training certification and watchkeeping—STCW—and provides that mutual recognition of certificates held by nationals of member states will be subject to the provisions of directives 89/48 and 92/51.

The proposal to relax the current nationality restrictions on senior merchant navy officers, announced on 15 December last by my right hon. Friend will take full account of these developments.

Nudge Bars

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to amend the use and construction regulations for motor vehicles to deal with the construction and safety of nudge bars.

Mr. Key: We have taken steps to identify accidents where a pedestrian has been struck by a vehicle fitted with a bull bar with a view to determining whether bull bars are causing increased injuries. We do not expect to see results from this exercise before the end of 1994. It would not be sensible to legislate before considering those results.

Driving Test Centres (Closures)

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to ensure that there are no closures of driving test centres in the current and the next financial year beyond the 22 announced already.

Mr. Key: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Driving Standards Agency under its chief executive, Dr. John Ford. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from John Ford to Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody, dated 4 July 1994:

The Secretary of State for Transport has asked me to reply to your question about test centre closures in the current and next financial year.

As I explained in my reply of 20 June to PQ 2552/93/94 there are no driving test centres, in addition to the 22 announced recently, that are currently being considered for closure. The Agency will, however, continue to keep its estate under review and I am unable to give any assurance that no further closures will be considered during the period you refer to.

Bicycles

Mr. Robathan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what facilities his Department provides for the parking of bicycles of visitors to its offices in Westminster.

Mr. Norris: Visitors may use cycle racks in 2 Marsham street and Romney house.

Marine Transport Policy

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the implications of the European habitat and species directive on marine transport policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: The implications of the directive of the United Kingdom including those for marine transport policy, have been taken into account in the framing of draft regulations which have been laid before the House by my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Environment, for Wales and for Scotland.

Railway Lines (Vandalism)

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many railway employees have *(a)* died, *(b)* suffered injury or *(c)* been placed on sick leave as a result of having experienced acts of vandalism or other such criminal activities on railway lines in each of the past 15 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The available statistics show that, from 1 January 1990 to 31 March 1994 no railway employee died as a result of vandals obstructing the line or throwing objects at trains but the following injuries have been suffered as a consequence of these causes:

1990 1 serious and 6 minor injuries
1991 none serious but 2 minor injuries
1992 1 serious and 8 minor injuries
1993 2 serious and 18 minor injuries
1994 none serious but 4 minor injuries (to 31 March)

The other information requested is not available.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many railway passengers have *(a)* died or *(b)* suffered injury as a result of acts of vandalism or other such criminal activities on railway lines in each of the past 15 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The available statistics show that, from 1 January 1990 to 31 March 1994 no railway passenger died as a result of vandals obstructing the line or throwing objects at trains, but the following injuries have been suffered as a consequence of such behaviour:

1990 2 minor injuries
1991 Nil
1992 1 minor injury
1993 Nil
1994 Nil (to 31 March)

Information for earlier years is not available.

British Airways

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has had from the chief executive of Manchester airport in regard to the decision made by British Airways to terminate its Los Angeles route from Manchester; what reply he is sending; what action he is taking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 5 July 1994]:* My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport has received a letter from the chief executive of Manchester airport concerning British Airway's decision to withdraw from the Manchester to Los Angeles route and will be replying to him shortly.

Railtrack

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all board members of Railtrack, together with their previous occupations and current lengths of contract and remuneration, including all bonuses, fringe benefits, allowances and additional payments over and above basic salary.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 5 July 1994]:* Information available on these appointments, which date from 1 April 1994—other than Mr. Broadhurst's which dates from 1 July 1994—is as follows:

Name	*Previous or current occupation*	*Expiry of appointment*	*Salary £*
Chairman			
R. B. Horton	BR vice chairman	31 March 1997	[1]121,800
Chief Executive			
J. C. P. Edmonds, CBE	BR employee/former member of BR Board	31 March 1997	131,950
Finance Director			
N. N. Broadhurst	Finance Director VSEL plc	Rolling contract with 2 year minimum	150,000
Commercial Director			
D. C. Moss	Seconded from DOT to BR staff	31 March 1999	100,000
Director, Safety and Standards			
D. E. Rayner, CBE	BR Board member	31 March 1997	90,000

Name	Previous or current occupation	Expiry of appointment	Salary £
Non-executive members			
Mrs. B. Anderson	Former Chief Executive, Book Trust	31 March 1997	[2]10,000
Sir Christopher D. Foster	Partner, Coopers and Lybrand	31 March 1997	[2]10,000
C. W. Jonas, CBE	Senior Partner, Drivers Jonas	31 March 1997	[2]10,000
A. J. Norman	Chief Executive, ASDA Group	31 March 1997	[2]10,000
Miss J. A. Page, CBE	Chief Executive, English Heritage	31 March 1997	[2]10,000
Dr. D. H. Roberts, CBE	Provost of University College London	31 March 1997	[2]10,000

[1] Three days per week.
[2] Plus £500 for each Board committee meeting attended.

A bonus scheme for executive members is in preparation. The award of any fringe benefits or allowances is a matter for Railtrack.

Rail Privatisation

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) of 3 May, *Official Report*, column *446*, and to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras of 26 May, *Official Report*, column *284*, if he will show for each separate invoice supplied to his Department by Dewe Rogerson for advice on his Department's marketing strategy for rail privatisation, *(a)* the date on which the invoice was received by his Department, *(b)* the date on which the invoice was paid by his Department and *(c)* the amount contained in each separate invoice, inclusive of value added tax; whether he has now received the final invoice from Dewe Rogerson; what is the total amount inclusive of the value added tax, which his Department will have paid to Dewe Rogerson by the time its contract expires; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman *[pursuant to his reply 5 July 1994]:* The information requested in parts *(a)*, *(b)* and *(c)* is commercially confidential.

Dewe Rogerson's final invoice has not yet been received and it is not therefore possible to provide a figure for the total amount.

To date Dewe Rogerson has been paid £658,000, including VAT, for this advice.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 7 July 1994

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Child Care

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what provision his Department makes for child care facilities for staff; what is the extent of subsidy to nursery places and holiday play schemes; if his Department *(a)* subscribes to "Childcare Solutions" and *(b)* makes child care vouchers available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Provision has been made for spending of £75,000 in the current financial year on subsidised child care for staff at various locations. This will provide 40 nursery day care places for children under five; and approximately 60 play scheme places for children five to 12 years old which are used during the main school holidays. These arrangements generally involve a subsidy of about 50 per cent. of the running costs involved. Subsidised child care provision is provided only if it can be justified on value for money grounds.

The Department does not subscribe to "Childcare Solutions" nor make child care vouchers available to staff.

Immigration Appeals

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what was the cost of running immigration appeals in 1991, 1992 and 1993, measured on a common base.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The cost to the Lord Chancellor's Department of running the immigration appellate authorities for the financial years requested, measured on a common base, is as follows:

	1991-92	*1992-93*	*1993-94*
Salaries	1,236,645	1,283,528	1,617,629
General accommodation expenditure	920,585	964,646	1,307,911
Non-running costs[1]	2,539,677	3,134,360	3,472,296
Total	4,696,907	5,382,534	6,397,836

[1] Non-running costs include the full time and part-time judicial officers.

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what was the average length of time for an appeal against the granting of a visa to be heard in 1991, 1992 and 1993.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The current average time between the immigration appellate authorities receiving a certificate of readiness from a party to the date of a hearing is as follows:

1991—Not available
1992—13¼ weeks
1993—10½ weeks

Staff Surveys

Mr. Radice: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what surveys of the views, opinions and attitudes of the staff of his Department have been carried out in the last two years; and if he will place copies of the findings in the Library.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The only survey of staff undertaken in the last two years has been a review of equal opportunity policy. I am not, at present, able to place a copy of the findings in the Library as the material gathered from the review has not yet been made available to the staff.

Exodus Collective

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list the charges recently brought against members of the Exodus Collective near Luton, the outcome in each case and the cost to public funds of the prosecutions.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The following list comprises charges against persons believed to be members of the Exodus Collective, who have appeared before the Crown court at Luton either for trial or on appeal from the magistrates court.

Charges	*Result*
(1) Violent disorder	Discharged
(2) Violent disorder	Discharged
(3) Possession of controlled drug class A with intent Possessing a controlled drug class A and handling stolen goods × 2	Discharged
(4) Using threatening, abusive or insulting words likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress	Bound over in £250 for 12 months
(5) Using threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour with intent to provoke use of violence	Bound over in £250 for 12 months Appeal allowed. Bound over and fine removed
(6) Using threatening, abusive or insulting words likely to cause harassment alarm or distress	Bound over in £250 for 12 months Appeal allowed. Bound over and fine removed

The actual total cost to public funds of the cases listed is not readily available. However, it is estimated to be in the region of £92,000.

In addition, five other persons appeared before Luton magistrates court charged with similar public order offences. The cost of the prosecutions of these further matters is not readily available.

DEFENCE

Target Setting

Mr. Bates: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the key targets for 1994-95 that have been set for the Hydrographic Office Defence Agency.

Mr. Hanley: The chief executive of the Hydrographic Office Defence Agency has been set the following key targets for 1994-95:

(a) To continue to ensure that all urgent dangers to navigation are promulgated by radio navigational warnings within 20 hours of receipt of the information.
(b) To improve the state of revision of Admiralty navigational charts and publications in waters of UK national responsibility so that at 1 April 1995 82 per cent. will have been revised or reviewed within the previous 10 years and found to need no revision.
(c) To achieve the endorsed and funded Defence programme. In pursuing all of his primary objectives, the chief executive will be expected to strive to deliver optimum value for money.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on key targets for 1994-95 which have been set for the Service Children's Schools (North West Europe) Defence Agency.

Mr. Hanley: The chief executive of SCS (NWE) has been set the following key targets for 1994-95, the agency's fourth year of operation:

(1) For the 42 schools in SCS (NWE), to extend the scope of the local management of schools paralleling, as far as possible, the initiative in the United Kingdom, to include staff costs for locally entered civilians, certain staff costs for United Kingdom-based civilians, building maintenance and utilities.
(2) By 31 December 1994 to launch, and complete, an initial programme of training for head teachers, parents and others serving on school advisory committees so as to develop their advisory role in local school management.
(3) To improve efficiency so as to reduce net expenditure for 1994-95 by 2·5 per cent.
(4) To maintain the overall pass rates in GCSE and A-level grades A to E and achieve a 2 per cent. increase in the percentage of pupils gaining grades A to C in five subjects and achieve an 80 per cent. pass rate in BTEC —first diploma—courses.
(5) During the period of the plan to ensure that 95 per cent. of all teachers meet all the qualifications criteria for their post.
(6) By 31 March 1995, to develop and implement methods for the regular gauging of customer satisfaction with SCS (NWE) schools.
(7) Complete the planned school closure and reorganisation programme in line with the drawdown of British forces in Germany.
(8) Continue to implement the Education Reform Act in accordance with the timetable laid down in the Act and subsequent regulations.

Mr. Bates: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what key targets have been set for the chief executives of *(a)* the Duke of York's Royal Military School and *(b)* the Queen Victoria School in 1994-95.

Mr. Hanley: The following key targets have been set for the chief executives of the schools in 1994-95:

Duke of York's Royal Military School: Key Targets Curriculum

In August 1994: To achieve at least 97 per cent. of GCSE passes at grades A to G. To achieve at least five GCSE passes at grades A to C for 80 per cent. of pupils. To achieve 85 per cent. of A-level passes at grades A to E. To achieve three A-level passes at grades A to E for 80 per cent. of pupils. To achieve 30 per cent. of A-level passes at grades A and B. To achieve 100 per cent. award rate for BTEC national diploma courses. To implement new timetable in September 1994.

Pastoral

By September 1994: To complete detailed pastoral preparations for co-education. To implement school policy on extra-curricular activities. To update policy on assessing, monitoring and reporting in context of Dearing review.

Finance and Administration

To implement financial measures from pay and conditions review by September 1994. To implement efficiency decisions on management of works services in April 1994. To implement new school clothing system by August 1994. To introduce new software package for administration and finance in September 1994 and to introduce new school billing system. To reduce pupil per capita costs to £11,246 by April 1995.

Development

To review agency framework document by April 1995. To start RAF section of the combined cadet force in September 1994. To achieve 200 applicants for entry in September 1995 by April 1995.

Queen Victoria School: key targets

To achieve at least three standard grade passes at credit and general levels (1-4) for 90 per cent. of S4 pupils. To achieve at least 5 standard grade passes (1-3) for 60 per cent. of S4 pupils. To achieve three higher passes at A-C grades or Scottish Vocational Education Council (SCOTVEC) equivalents for 60 per cent. of S5/S6 pupils. To complete the phased implementation of the national five to 14 programme in line with Scottish Office Education Department (SOED) recommendations. To complete the audit of the school's academic programme in line with the SOED guidelines for school development plans: Scotland: 19 January 1994. To review and where appropriate update curricular guidance (S2/S3) as detailed by the Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum: January 1990.

Pastoral

To continue to monitor the effectiveness of the school pastoral policy and organisation document, and specifically to report on parental response on its quality, with reference to "Ethos Indicators in Secondary Schools Scotland: May 1992".

Extra-curricular Provision

To maintain and enrich at least 50 extra-curricular activities, both physical and cultural, involving pupils aged 10-15 in at least three per week and those aged 16-18 in at least two.

Management and development

To complete the audit of all staff functions to maximise educational, administrative and financial efficiency. To commence teacher appraisal and development. To implement the marketing policy so as to reach all eligible families. To implement an effective marketing policy to generate non-public income to the school. To complete planning and begin works services appropriate to the admission of girls for 1996-97 at the latest. To review the school management and committee structure to ensure all major policy decisions are co-ordinated at board level. To complete the implementation of all financial control systems. To identify and implement efficiency measures equal to 2·5 per cent. of the school's budget.

Gibraltar Garrison

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what decisions have been reached on the Gibraltar garrison; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: As a consequence of the political and strategic changes that have taken place in Europe the size and functions of the garrison in Gibraltar have been under review. That review has now been completed.

The conclusion of the review is that the work of the garrison should concentrate on five core areas which are central to our defence responsibilities in Gibraltar. These are the nuclear warship berthing facilities, access to the airfield, the Windmill Hill signal station and the maritime data centre, the Gibraltar Regiment in its present form, and the maintenance of a headquarters with supporting infrastructure for both NATO and national roles. It will in addition be necessary to maintain ammunition and fuel storage facilities, and the Gibraltar Squadron will remain in being.

All these functions will be supported by a single logistic unit. The Gibraltar Regiment, together with elements of the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force, will assume the responsibility for the day-to-day administration of all service men.

Under a rationalisation scheme already in progress service and civilian manpower levels in Gibraltar were due to reduce to 700 and 950 respectively by 1997. The effect of the review will be to bring these figures to some 500

service men and between 350 and 700 civilians. Precise civilian numbers will depend on how many supporting functions are put out to contract, increasing local employment opportunities. Any reductions in civilian manpower will be phased to avoid putting undue pressure on the job market. Where employees have to be made redundant every effort will be made to retrain and re-settle them.

The Government of Gibraltar have been fully informed of the outcome of the review, which will now be the subject of a process of consultation with the trade unions. The British Government are conscious of the economic implications and are examining wider initiatives to support the Gibraltar economy through the recently formed Joint Economic Forum.

A copy of the consultation document is being placed in the Libraries of the House.

Army Training

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to seek further improvements in the provision of training for the regular Army.

Mr. Hanley: Significant improvements have already been made to the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the Army's training organisation. The structure and content of Army training are constantly re-evaluated to ensure that they meet the present and future operational requirements of the Army. As part of this process, as foreshadowed in my answer to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Llwyd) on 21 June 1994, *Official Report*, column *108*, my Department will now be undertaking a wide review of how and where Army-sponsored training is conducted. This review, which is separate from but consistent with the defence costs study, will be looking at the nature and content of training courses generally as well as at individual areas such as adventurous training, training support, market-testing, catering training, recruit training and training with the adjutant-general's corps.

Individual studies will now be set in hand and the trade unions involved in the normal way. Any proposals for change arising from the studies will be subject to full consultation as appropriate.

Staff Surveys

Mr. Radice: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what surveys of the views, opinions and attitudes of the civilian staff of his Department have been carried out in the last two years; and if he will place copies of the findings in the Library.

Mr. Aitken: My Department has not conducted any general surveys of the views, opinions and attitudes of staff during the last two years, although surveys have been carried out within parts of my Department.

Braemar Weather Station

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what estimate he has made of the cost of upgrading the Meteorological Office weather station at Braemar in Aberdeenshire to enable it to transmit data to the Meteorological Office at Bracknell daily.

Mr. Hanley: This is a matter for the chief executive of the Meteorological Office under the terms of his framework document. I have therefore arranged for him to reply to the hon. Member.

Letter from J. C. R. Hunt to Mr. George Kynoch, dated 7 July 1994:

I am responding to your Parliamentary Question concerning the cost of upgrading the weather station at Braemar.

Braemar is a private observing station which provides data on a voluntary basis to the Meteorological Office at Edinburgh at the end of each month. At present the Meteorological Office has no requirement for the daily receipt of the data. If the need arises the cost of upgrading the station to provide automated transfer of the data to Bracknell will be £2,500; additionally there will be other direct running and replacement costs of about £1,000 per annum. These costs do not include the Meteorological Office overheads necessary to process the data or supply services based upon them. Alternatively the observations could be passed by telephone to our Office at Aviemore for the cost of the telephone calls, from where they would be sent to Bracknell through our communication system; whilst this would avoid upgrade costs, the Office staff time involved in collecting and sending the data to Bracknell would be around £1,500 per annum.

Low Flying

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps his Department is taking to follow up the recommendation of the Air Accident Investigation Branch in its aircraft accident report 2/94, that his Department should commission an operational analysis of fast jet low flying training in the United Kingdom to determine whether the use of see and avoid as a primary means of collision avoidance is satisfactory from the point of view of flight safety; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: As a result of this accident, the pipeline inspection notification system was introduced in October 1993. Further safety measures already in hand include the following:

(i) Hawk training aircraft are being painted black to improve conspicuity. Similar paint schemes are also being considered for other aircraft types.

(ii) Action is in hand to fit all RAF aircraft, not already so equipped, with high intensity stroboscopic lights.

(iii) The feasibility of installing forward facing headlights in tactical aircraft is being examined.

(iv) A technology demonstrator for a collision warning system is currently undergoing trials.

My Department is considering how best to take forward the particular recommendation of the air accident investigation branch in the light of results of the safety measures already implemented.

Child Care

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what provision his Department makes for child care facilities for staff; what is the extent of subsidy to nursery places and holiday playschemes; if his Department *(a)* subscribes to "Childcare Solutions" and *(b)* makes child care vouchers available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: At present, my Department has seven workplace nurseries and seven holiday play schemes, although a further three nurseries are planned.

Responsibility for the provision of child care facilities is delegated to individual budget holders and subsidy arrangements may vary. In some cases this is restricted to a contribution to capital and indirect running costs such as maintenance, heating and lighting, while in others a

contribution is also made to the direct running costs—mainly staff and consumables. The contribution to direct costs varies according to local market rates for nursery places and those using the facility.

My Department does not subscribe to "Childcare Solutions", or make child care vouchers available.

It is our policy to increase the provision of child care facilities wherever possible. Budget holders are encouraged to set up new child care facilities for staff where there is sufficient demand and where they can be justified on value for money grounds.

Sea King Helicopters

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the order for the new RAF search and rescue Sea Kings was placed; and when he expects them to be delivered.

Mr. Aitken: The contract for the six RAF Sea King HAR Mk3A search and rescue helicopters was placed in October 1992. They will be delivered between July 1995 and February 1996.

Proof and Experimental Establishments

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what compensation has been paid to residents living in the vicinity of the proof and experimental establishment at Shoeburyness for reasons connected with noise pollution.

Mr. Aitken: Between 1 January 1992 and 5 July 1994, a total of £13,393·94 has been paid in compensation as a result of damage caused by noise pollution.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what work has been transferred from the proof and experimental establishment at Shoeburyness to the proof and experimental establishment at Pendine for reasons connected with noise pollution.

Mr. Aitken: None.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the trade associations and individual customers with whom his Department has had discussions on the implications at the current review of proof and experimental establishments in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Aitken: The review covers all test and evaluation establishments, not just the proof and experimental establishments. Discussions were held with the following organisations:

Society of British Aerospace Companies
Vickers plc
VSEL
GKN
Royal Ordnance plc
Rolls-Royce plc

Discussions were also held with a large number of internal customers such as MOD project managers and the Defence Research Agency.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many complaints about noise pollution have been received over the last three years from residents in the vicinity of *(a)* the proof and experimental establishment at Shoeburyness and *(b)* the proof and experimental establishment at Pendine.

Mr. Aitken: The figures are as follows:

	1991	1992	1993	1994 to date
Shoeburyness	47	218	420	533
Pendine	4	6	5	

Shoeburyness's figures are for the calendar year, Pendine's for the period 1 July to 30 June.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what responses he has received from trade associations and individual customers following consultation on the Director General Test and Evaluation review at test and evaluation facilities.

Mr. Aitken: This consultation took the form of discussions. Written responses were neither received nor appropriate.

Ferranti/ISC

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total estimated cost to *(a)* his Department and *(b)* the Exchequer generally, of the fraud at Ferranti/ISC; and what assessment he has made of the total number of jobs lost (i) directly and (ii) indirectly in the United Kingdom as a result of this fraud in the subsequent collapse of the company.

Mr. Aitken: My Department has no means of assessing what, if any, additional costs it bore as a result of the fraud; the question of any loss to the Exchequer generally is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Nor has my Department any way of isolating the net changes in employment in the company and in other United Kingdom companies as a result of the fraud from the changes brought about by more general trends in the defence and civil markets for the company's products.

RAF Machrihanish

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how much money from his Department's vote has been spent since the beginning of 1990 on upgrading RAF Machrihanish;

(2) how much money from his Department's vote has been spent since the beginning of 1990 at RAF Machrihanish on the following: *(a)* the construction of a new control tower, *(b)* the construction of underground fuel pipes and pumps, *(c)* strengthening runway aprons and *(d)* the construction of new living quarters for service personnel and their families.

Mr. Hanley: The amount of money from my Department's vote spent since the beginning of 1990 on upgrading RAF Machrihanish is £10,060,000. The figure includes:

(a) £407,000 on the construction of a new control tower, representing 20 per cent. of a NATO-funded project;
(b) £2,090,000 VAT payment on NATO-funded construction of underground fuel pipes and pumps;
(c) £2,000,000 VAT payment on NATO-funded airfield pavement improvements, including the strengthening of runway aprons;
(d) £1,807,000 on the construction of new single living quarters.

In the same period NATO has contributed £28,306,000 on upgrading at RAF Machrihanish.

Clothing Organisation

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current regional distribution of jobs in the MOD clothing organisation; and if he will make a statement on the future location of that organisation.

Mr. Hanley: The recently formed Defence Clothing and Textiles Authority is headed by the director of clothing and textiles, whose headquarters is based in Andover and his staff are currently located as follows:

Location	*Total staff employed*
Andover	53·5
Bath	23·0
Bicester	101·0
Colchester	135·0
Didcot	134·5
Glasgow	56·0
Harrogate	13·0
Manchester	8·0
Sheffield	8·0

Proposals for the future location of the DCTA are currently being considered by my Department.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Staff Surveys

Mr. Radice: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what surveys of the views, opinions and attitudes of the staff of his Department have been carried out in the last two years; and if he will place copies of the findings in the Library.

Mr. Waldegrave: Two employee surveys have been carried out in the Departments and agencies for which I am responsible. I will place in the Library copies of the findings of a survey of staff in Her Majesty's Stationery Office carried out in 1993. The results of a recent survey of staff in the Occupational Health Service have yet to be published.

Women in Science, Engineering and Technology

Mrs. Angela Knight: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when a response will be made to the report of the Committee on Women in Science, Engineering and Technology entitled "The Rising Tide."

Mr. Waldegrave: I have today published the Government's response to this report. We have accepted many of the committee's recommendations, including the central one that a development unit should be established within the Office of Science and Technology. This will work with other Departments and outside bodies to enable women to make the fullest possible contribution to the nation's science, engineering and technology.

Copies of the response have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Bicycles

Mr. Robathan: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what facilities his Department provides for the parking of the bicycles of visitors to its offices in Westminster.

Mr. Waldegrave: Visitors to my Department's offices in Westminster may use the same facilities for parking their bicycles as those provided for staff. Five sites have been designated bicycle parks; the remaining four have space available to park bicycles upon request.

TREASURY

Child Care

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what provision his Department makes for child care facilities for staff; what is the extent of subsidy to nursery places and holiday play schemes; if his Department *(a)* subscribes to "Childcare Solutions" and *(b)* makes child care vouchers available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: The Government's policy is that child care assistance must be justified on value for money grounds, and that any child care arrangements must offer the best value for money choice.

On this basis the Treasury participates in the Westminster holiday play scheme which provides child care for children between the ages of five and 12 during school holidays. A 60 per cent. subsidy is provided to staff.

Until the end of July 1994, the Treasury and the Central Statistical Office are offering two places in a Westminster-based nursery for use by staff in emergencies. A 50 per cent. subsidy is given to staff earning less than £25,000 per annum. However, the contract has been terminated because of low usage. The Treasury does not subscribe to "Childcare Solutions" or make child care vouchers available.

The Treasury is about to undertake a survey of staff to establish what child care provision might provide best value for money in future.

Local Authority Capital Receipts

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of the public sector borrowing requirement is accounted for from the capital receipts held by local authorities.

Mr. Portillo: When a capital asset is sold by a local authority it generates a capital receipt which reduces net capital expenditure and hence general government expenditure. This, in turn, reduces the public sector borrowing requirement. When the proceeds from the sale of a capital asset are spent, net capital expenditure increases which increases general Government expenditure and hence the public sector borrowing requirement.

The table sets out the latest data for local authority capital receipts and the public sector borrowing requirement.

	1991-92 £ billion	*1992-93 £ billion*	*1993-94 £ billion*
Local authority capital receipts	2·8	2·6	3·9
Public sector borrowing requirement	13·9	36·6	46·0

Tax Yield

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of Exchequer revenue was raised through *(a)* direct taxes, and *(b)* indirect taxes in (i) 1978-79, (ii) 1991-92 and (iii) 1993-94; and what is his estimate of the equivalent figures for 1994-95 and 1995-96.

Mr. Portillo: The information requested, set out in the terms of the national accounts classification of taxes, is shown in the table.

Total taxes and social security contributions

	1978-79	1991-92	1993-94	1994-95[1]	1995-96[1]
	(as per cent. of total taxes and social security contributions)				
Taxes on income, capital and social security contributions[2]	59	55	53	54	54
Taxes on expenditure including rates/ community charge/and council tax[3]	41	45	47	46	46

[1]From Treasury summer economic forecast 1994.
[2]includes the independent broadcasting authorities levy before 1993-94.
[3]includes ITC franchise payments from 1993-94.

School Examination Costs

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received from his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education concerning extra funding needed to pay the cost of using external examiners in the assessment of key stage 2 and key stage 3.

Mr. Portillo: As a matter of practice, I do not reveal what representations on spending are made to me by colleagues.

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will list his Department's advisory non-departmental public bodies which are required to publish their advice to Government;

(2) if he will list the advisory non-departmental public bodies sponsored by his Department that are required to lay their annual reports before Parliament;

(3) if he will list the advisory non-departmental public bodies sponsored by his Department which have a statutory basis;

(4) if he will list the advisory bodies which he has set up in his Department since the publication of "Public Bodies 1993";

(5) if he will list those of his Department's advisory non-departmental public bodies which the Government are required to consult before legislation proposals; and in respect of which bodies the Government must publish their response to advice supplied by them;

(6) if he will list his Department's advisory non-departmental public bodies which are required to produce annual reports.

Mr. Nelson: The Chancellor of the Exchequer has responsibility for only one advisory non-departmental public body, the Royal Mint Advisory Committee, although this is not sponsored by the Treasury and is advisory only to the Royal Mint. This body, which was established before 1993, is not required to publish its advice to Government or to produce an annual report. It does not have a statutory basis. The Government are not required to consult this body prior to legislation proposals or to publish their response to advice supplied by this body.

Bank of England

Mr. Hain: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what action the Bank of England is taking concerning the book entry-only accounts opened by Banque Indosuez Aval and American Express for the Central Bank of Kenya in June last year.

Mr. Nelson: The special investigations unit of the Bank of England has conducted inquiries and is in close touch with the governor of the Central Bank of Kenya and the relevant supervisory authorities in France and the United States. It would not be appropriate to comment further while investigations are in the progress.

Financial Instruments

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he, or the Bank of England, has received from the Swiss authorities in relation to United Kingdom financial instruments sold to Swiss and international investors in Polly Peck, Mountleigh, Maxwell Communications and Ferranti/ISC.

Mr. Nelson: Neither the Chancellor, nor the Bank, has received any such representations.

Weapons, Iraq

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the documents received by HM Customs from their Customs counterparts in each European Economic Area country between 1984 and 1992 in relation to the sale of Bofors weapons to Iraq; what meetings were held with each of them and when; and what action was taken as a result on each occasion.

Sir John Cope: I understand that HM Customs and Excise has received no information from its Customs counterparts in any of the EEA countries in relation to the sale of Bofors weapons to Iraq and that no meetings were held with its counterparts on this subject.

EC Finance

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the payments of £1 million or over received from European Community funds, by expenditure programme, in each year since the United Kingdom's accession.

Sir John Cope: The Government receive several hundred individual payments from European Community

funds each year. A list of all payments of £1 million or more since 1973 could be produced only at disproportionate cost. Information about the United Kingdom's aggregated receipts is published each year in the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Departments' annual report —prior to 1992-93 in "The Government Expenditure Plans"—and in the annual White Paper "Statement on the Community Budget".

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the United Kingdom's *(a)* gross contributions to, *(b)* payments received from and *(c)* net contributions to the European Community for each year since United Kingdom accession in 1973.

Sir John Cope: Details of the United Kingdom's gross contribution, public sector receipts and net contribution by financial year are published in the "Chancellor of the Exchequer's Departmental Report". Prior to 1992-93 similar information was published in "The Government Expenditure Plans"; these documents contain information on a calendar year basis for earlier years. Information on the United Kingdom's contributions and receipts since 1980, by calendar year, is contained in the annual White Paper, "Statement on the Community Budget".

Economic and Monetary Union

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he favours economic and monetary union as the appropriate aim of the European Union; and what are the reasons for his policy on this matter.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *[holding answer 4 July 1994]:* My views on economic and monetary union were set out in my speech to the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in Bonn on 29 June. A copy of the speech has been placed in the House of Commons Library.

SCOTLAND

Birds (Protection)

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 28 April, *Official Report,* columns *316-20,* if he will withdraw approval for the use of alphachloralose; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: No. The Advisory Committee on Pesticides has recently reviewed those pesticide products containing 100 per cent. alphachloralose. It concluded that the approvals for these products should continue because they fulfil an important role in rodent control and are used by local authorities and professional pest control agencies. The situation will be kept under review.

Wildlife (Illegal Killing)

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what plans he has to amend legislation or procedure in order to improve the detection and conviction rate for offences involving the illegal killing of protected wildlife in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: None. I do not consider that there is any need to amend legislation or procedures in Scotland at present. All necessary powers are available.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what central record is available to the Government of the illegal killing of protected birds in Scotland, other than those killed by poisons.

Sir Hector Monro: This information is not held centrally.

Milk Marketing Schemes

Mr. Gallie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will announce his decision on the re-organisation schemes submitted by the milk marketing boards in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: The Agriculture Act 1993 provided for the ending of the statutory milk marketing schemes. It enabled the milk marketing boards in Scotland to submit proposals to me for their replacement by voluntary arrangements, for the transfer of their assets to specified successor bodies, and for the distribution of the value of those assets to milk producers.

The Scottish Milk Marketing Board, the Aberdeen and District Milk Marketing Board, and the North of Scotland Milk Marketing Board all submitted proposals to me last October following which I conducted a wide-ranging consultation of the various parties with an interest. Subsequently, and in the light of the responses to that consultation, the boards submitted amendments to their reorganisation schemes and I conducted a further round of consultation. I have now concluded that the requirements of the Act have been met and that, having regard to all the circumstances, including in particular the considerations specified in the Act, the schemes submitted by the boards should be approved.

The Act requires that the principles of the approved reorganisation schemes be made public. The principles of the schemes as submitted, and subsequently amended, by the milk marketing boards were set out in the two consultation documents issued by my Department in October 1993 and May 1994. Although some further detailed amendments have been made by the boards to their schemes, the principles as set out in those documents are unchanged. Copies of the documents, together with a note updating them in the light of the further detailed amendments, are available in the Library of the House and can also be obtained from the Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department.

Under the approved reorganisation schemes, the existing statutory milk marketing schemes will be revoked on 1 November 1994 (the "vesting" date). As a result producers will be free to sell their milk to whom they wish, whether to the successor co-operatives being established under the board's reorganisation schemes, to other co-operatives or marketing groups of producers, or direct to dairies or to manufacturers of milk products. The price at which untreated milk can be bought will no longer be determined by the existing joint committee arrangements and according to its ultimate end-use but by contract between the purchaser and his supplier.

The Scottish Milk Marketing Board will be succeeded by two separate companies, a producer co-operative, Scottish Milk Ltd. and a commercial company, Scottish Pride Holdings plc. The Aberdeen and District Milk Marketing Board will be succeeded by a single company

co-operative, Aberdeen Milk Company, and the North of Scotland Milk Marketing Board by a single co-operative, the North of Scotland Milk Co-operative.

In view of the delay in the vesting date from 1 April 1994 to 1 November 1994, however, milk producers who have already signed a contract with one of the successor co-operatives will no longer be bound by those contracts, and the boards will be writing to them inviting them to exercise their right to withdraw within two weeks; in the case of the Aberdeen board, the board will be cancelling all existing producer contracts with Aberdeen Milk Company and offering a revised contract. I urge all producers, including those who have not yet signed a contract with anyone, to decide as soon as possible to whom they wish to sell their milk from 1 November 1994 and to enter into a contract accordingly so that the necessary arrangements can be put in place for the uplift of their milk from that date.

I am also about to announce today that, following an announcement by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Agriculture Fisheries and Food on 16 June that she and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales will be proposing the establishment of a milk development council for England and Wales, I have decided in the light of the separate consultation I undertook of the industry in Scotland, that Scotland should also be included in this council which will therefore cover the whole of Great Britain. The development council should be operational from 1 November or soon thereafter.

The ending of the statutory milk marketing schemes marks a major step forward in the history of the dairy industry in this country. It will enable competition to flourish in a way not possible before, and the industry will be able to respond better and more quickly to the needs and preferences of consumers.

Kelso Road Bridge

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to be able to approve the necessary capital consents to enable a start to be made on the new road bridge for Kelso.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 6 July 1994]:* The Kelso bridge is part of a local road and any decision relating to the provision of a new bridge are matters for Borders regional council as local roads authority.

The Government set annual block allocations for capital expenditure on roads and transport and any proposals contained in councils' financial plans will be given careful consideration, within the resources available, in setting these levels. Thereafter it is for local authorities to set their own priorities for individual projects, such as a new Kelso bridge, taking account of local needs and circumstances.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Legislation

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what consultations he has had on heritage-related legislation with the Association of Conservation Officers on Bills which have an impact on the heritage.

Mr. Brooke: My Department has not so far introduced any legislation on the conservation of the built heritage and there have therefore been no such consultations. We would, however, expect to consult the Association of Conservation Officers, together with other interests, in the event of such legislation—or proposals for it—being put forward. My Department is always ready to discuss with the Association any particular concerns its members may have about the effect of other legislation on the built heritage.

PRIME MINISTER

Lockerbie Bombing

Q8. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Prime Minister what arrangements have been made to co-ordinate policies and operations in relation to the Lockerbie crime involving the destruction of Pan Am 103 between the Foreign Office, the Home Office, the Scottish Office, the Department of Transport, the Intelligence Services, the Attorney-General and the Crown Office; and which is the lead Department.

The Prime Minister: The Crown Office is the lead Department on matters relating to the prosecution of those suspected of the Lockerbie bombing.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office is the lead department for international aspects.

These Departments consult others on issues for which they are responsible, as they arise.

Mr. Gordon McNally

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Prime Minister on what occasions since October 1991 he has met Mr. Gordon McNally.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 5 July 1994]:* So far as I am aware, Mr. McNally has attended three large functions at which I was also present between October 1991 and March 1993.

Rio Declaration

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Prime Minister (1) if he will make a statement outlining the benefits which will accrue to the manufacturing, construction and retailing sectors of the United Kingdom economy through the acceptance of agenda 21 of the Rio declaration of June 1992;

(2) what assessment Her Majesty's Government have undertaken of the costs *(a)* to date and *(b)* by the year 2000, of complying with the Rio declaration of June 1992;

(3) if he will make a statement summarising the information which he has about the extent to which other signatory countries to agenda 21 of the Rio declaration of June 1992, have begun to implement measures in keeping with the agenda which affect their manufacturing, construction and retailing industries.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 6 July 1994]:* The Rio declaration and agenda 21 clearly recognise the importance of economic development to improvement of the quality of life of present and future generations. The Government are committed to the close involvement of the wealth-creating sectors in the preparation of policies to ensure that economic development is sustainable. Acceptance of the principles of agenda 21 by a large number of the United Kingdom's trading partners will help British business to compete on a level playing field, and

will create substantial new market opportunities for suppliers of cleaner process technologies and environmental goods and services.

The Government seek to take account of the principles of sustainable development in all policies, together with a wide range of other factors. It is often not possible to separate out the cost attributable to abiding by the principles of sustainable development. However, we aim to consider carefully the compliance cost of all new policies.

The United Kingdom Government have been one of the principal proponents of a system of national reporting on progress in the implementation of measures in agenda 21. Our sustainable development strategy was published this January. We shall continue to urge other countries to follow suit through our membership of the Commission on Sustainable Development. We hope that in due course the commission will be able to publish information based on national reports.

EMPLOYMENT

Unfair Dismissal

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of cases alleging unfair dismissal brought before industrial tribunals have disability as their ground; what the degree of success in such appeals is estimated to be; and what estimate he has made as to the extent of the practice of dismissing such employees prior to the minimum term of continuous service which would allow appeals to be brought.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Staff Surveys

Mr. Radice: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what surveys of the views, opinions and attitudes of the staff of his Department have been carried out in the last two years; and if he will place copies of the findings in the Library.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Department conducts an annual attitude survey asking staff for their opinions on internal operational issues such as staff appraisal, communications, job satisfaction, equal opportunities and staff development.

Managers use the results to improve the internal operation of the Department. The results of the 1993 survey are encouraging and show a continuing upward trend compared with previous years.

I have arranged to place copies in the Library of a summary already sent to staff of the responses to the Employment Department's staff attitude survey over recent years.

Blind People (Home Workers)

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement regarding the future of the home workers' scheme for blind people.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Officials are considering the effectiveness of the blind home workers scheme. They are canvassing views from local authority, voluntary body and home worker interest groups on future options for the scheme, and proposals will be put forward in due course.

Child Care

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what provision his Department makes for child care facilities for staff; what is the extent of subsidy to nursery places and holiday playschemes; if his Department *(a)* subscribes to "Childcare Solutions" and *(b)* makes child care vouchers available; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: The Employment Department Group currently supports six workplace nurseries and 49 holiday play schemes. The cost of this support across the group as a whole was £430,000 in 1993-94. This includes net expenditure on nursery places and financial help with additional child care costs incurred through attending training courses or other work-based functions. No part of the group subscribes to "Childcare Solutions" or offers child care vouchers. All child care assistance within the group is subject to meeting value for money considerations.

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what creche facilities are available through the Employment Service for single parents attending Government training centres in the area of the Derbyshire, North-East parliamentary constituency; and how they are advertised.

Miss Widdecombe: There are no creche facilities available directly through the Employment Service. Lone parents in north-east Derbyshire on Government-funded vocational training can claim 75p per hour for each child. This is paid by North Derbyshire training and enterprise council, which runs training for work programmes in the area under its "Skillsbuild" banner. The TEC plans to launch an information pack later this month, aimed at women wishing to return to work, including lone parents. It will be circulated widely and be available in our Employment Service jobcentres in the area.

Employment Service Programmes

Mr. Hawkins: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to exempt foyer residents from the normal eligibility conditions for employment service programmes.

Miss Widdecombe: The Government have decided to give residents of pilot foyers exemption from the basic eligibility conditions for jobclub, job interview guarantee, job search seminars and work trials. This means that these foyer residents, who have particular disadvantages, can now join these programmes on or after their first day of unemployment. In addition the minimum age for joining these programmes has been lowered to 17 for residents of the pilot foyers. The exemptions for 17-year-olds will apply only after the guaranteed offer of a place on youth training has been made, and their education and training options fully and urgently explored by the local training and enterprise council. These conditions will apply from now to residents of the YMCA's foyers in Nottingham, Norwich, St. Helens, Romford and Wimbledon, and are intended to apply to the foyers being newly built in Camberwell, Birmingham and Salford. The Government will keep the effect of the changes and the extra help they give foyer participants under review.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Official Secrets Act

Mr. Radice: To ask the Attorney-General on how many occasions civil servants or former civil servants have been prosecuted under the Official Secrets Act 1989.

The Attorney-General: No central record is maintained of cases prosecuted under the Official Secrets Act 1989. I understand that the Crown Prosecution Service has authorised two prosecutions under section 4 of the Act relating to civil servants.

Development Grants

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Attorney-General if he gave legal advice to the Secretary of State for Wales concerning the payment of grants from the Welsh Development Agency to the Development Board for Rural Wales.

The Attorney-General: By convention, the Law Officers do not normally disclose whether they have been asked to advise on a particular issue or the substance of any advice that they may have given.

Child Care

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Attorney-General what provision his Department makes for child care facilities for staff; what is the extent of subsidy to nursery places and holiday play schemes; if his Department *(a)* subscribes to "Childcare Solutions" and *(b)* makes child care vouchers available; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: It is the policy of the Law Officers' Departments to provide child care facilities for staff where there is a need and arrangements can be justified on value for money grounds. The Crown Prosecution Service provides a subsidy of up to 50 per cent. for nursery places and holiday play schemes. The service also contributes to extra child care expenses incurred by staff when attending training courses. The Treasury Solicitor's Department provides a subsidy of 50 per cent. for the Westminster holiday play scheme. Both the Crown Prosecution Service and the Serious Fraud Office subscribe to "Childcare Solutions". No Department makes child care vouchers available.

TRANSPORT

Rail Privatisation

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when British Rail's rolling stock leasing companies will be sold; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: We have decided that British Rail's passenger rolling stock leasing companies should be sold during 1995.

The three rolling stock leasing compaies were established as subsidiaries of British Rail, as part of the reorganisation of the railways introduced in April this year, to lease rolling stock to British Rail's 25 passenger train operating units. It was made clear at the time the companies were set up that they would be transferred to the private sector as soon as practicable. Detailed leases with each of the train operating units will now be put in place in final form by the end of this year. The companies will then be offered for trade sale as early as possible in 1995.

The privatisation of the rolling stock leasing companies will be a major step in the rail privatisation programme. Freed from the constraints of operating in the public sector, the three companies will be able to bring private sector expertise and commercial practice to the supply of rolling stock to train operators. In particular, they will be free to raise private capital for new investment. I look forward to the development of a thriving competitive market in the provision of passenger rolling stock.

Child Care

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what provision his Department makes for child care facilities for staff; what is the extent of subsidy to nursery places and holiday play schemes; if his Department *(a)* subscribes to "Childcare Solutions" and *(b)* makes child care vouchers available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: Department of Transport staff have access to nursery facilities in Bristol, Hastings and Swansea. Places at holiday play schemes are available to staff in Bedford, Birmingham, Bristol, Exeter, Liverpool, London, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham, and Swansea.

The Department has discretion to provide assistance with child care where this can be justified on value for money grounds, and within overall running cost constraints. The Department's general practice is to assist with start-up or "pump-priming" costs from central funds, leaving local budgets to assist with continuing costs where that is necessary and justified on value for money grounds. Details are not held centrally. The Department does not make child care vouchers available.

Vehicle Emissions

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received in relation to the figures collected by the Royal Automobile Club in relation to carbon monoxide and other noxious car exhaust emissions and the table of different cities in the United Kingdom in order of emission gases concentrations; and if he will make a statement on the effect of noxious exhaust emissions on *(a)* road users, *(b)* pedestrians and *(c)* others.

Mr. Key: I have received no representations on this matter. The Department is liaising closely with the Department of Health on the studies and research now under way into the possible health effects of air pollutants. Future action, in addition to measures already in place or proposed, for reducing motor vehicle pollutants, will be considered in the light of these considerations.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consultations he has had with the Royal Automobile Club in relation to the position of Cardiff in the league table of car exhaust-related emissions of carbon monoxide and other noxious gases; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: None.

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the latest research which has been carried out with Government support in the reduction of emissions from motor vehicles.

Mr. Key: The reduction of motor vehicle pollutant emissions remains a major policy objective. My Department spent £830,000 on research on this topic in 1993-94. New vehicle petrol engine pollutant emissions are much reduced and good progress is being made on future reductions for diesel engines. More research is being undertaken to understand the health hazards of particulates from motor vehicle exhausts.

Railtrack

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what objectives he has set for Railtrack and British Rail in the current financial year; and if he will place a copy in the Library.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State gave on 1 July to my hon. Friend the Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn), *Official Report*, column *773*.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what powers he has retained to control wage agreements entered into by Railtrack.

Mr. Freeman My right hon. Friend has no powers to control Railtrack's wage agreements. As with any Government-owned body it is, however, expected to follow the Government's approach to public sector pay which was set out clearly last autumn by my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Road Construction Losses

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if disciplinary action will be taken against officials in his Department responsible for the losses identified by the National Audit Office in respect of acquisition and management of land and property purchased for road construction.

Mr. Key: The Department and the Highways Agency are giving this report full and careful consideration, but, by convention, substantive comments on National Audit Office reports are not made before the Public Accounts Committee has had an opportunity to take evidence from the Department.

Traffic Area Offices (Running Costs)

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the running costs of the traffic area offices for the financial year 1993-94 in *(a)* total, *(b)* staffing costs, *(c)* accommodation, *(d)* consultant fees, *(e)* information technology purchases, *(f)* stationery, *(g)* works and maintenance and *(h)* other.

Mr. Key: The running costs of the traffic area offices for the financial year 1993-94 were as follows:

Running costs	£
(a) Total	12,373,007
(b) Staffing costs	6,896,695
(c) Accommodation	2,007,852
(d) Consultant fees	119,455
(e) IT purchases/services	1,147,906
(f) Stationery	114,831
(g) Works and maintenance	202,887
(h) Other	1,883,381

Efficiency Saving Target

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if his Department's 20 per cent. efficiency saving target applies to the DSA.

Mr. Key: I have nothing to add to the answer given on 14 June at columns *510-11*.

M11 Link

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what statutory and other environmental bodies were consulted by his Department at the early stage of route development of the M11 link road; and if he will place in the Library a summary of the parts of the advice from the statutory bodies which was not accepted by his Department.

Mr. Norris: This information about the A12 Hackney Wick to M11 link road is available from the inspector's report of the 1983 public inquiry, except that it will not show the instances, if any, where a body had been consulted but not responded. The hon. Gentleman received a copy of the report when it was published in 1985.

Driving Standards Agency

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if the speech of the chief executive of the DSA to the Scottish Driving Examiners Conference on 28 June in respect of the applicability of his Department's efficiency saving target to his agency represents Government policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: In the context of a presentation to the Scottish Driving Examiners Conference, the chief executive of the Driving Standards Agency acknowledged that the Secretary of State was requiring the Department to find a 20 per cent. efficiency gain, but said that he was not yet in a position to comment on the implications for the agency. That was an accurate representation of the position.

Traffic Generation

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he received a copy of the Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment report on traffic generation; and when it will be published.

Mr. Key: I refer the hon. Member to the replies that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) and the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), on 20 May 1994, at columns *596-99*.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Fish Conservation

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what contribution she expects days-at-sea restrictions to make towards achieving the United Kingdom's multi-annual guidance programme target by the end of 1996; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: The United Kingdom's days at sea measures were due to be introduced in January this year. The

National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations sought judicial review of the United Kingdom legislation and the High Court has referred a number of questions to the European Court of Justice as our legislation was based on Community regulations. The Euroepan Court is unlikely to respond until 1995. In those circumstances, the Government decided to suspend the days at sea restrictions pending clarification of the legal position.

Currently we are moving towards our targets via decommissioning and licence penalties. We are also having discussions with the Commission on the possible contribution to effort reduction from technical conservation measures.

Bicycles

Mr. Robathan: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what facilities her Department provides for the parking of the bicycles of visitors to its offices in Westminster.

Mr. Jack: My Department provides racks for 20 bicycles in its Whitehall buildings, 25 in its Millbank buildings and 15 in its Albert Embankment building, all of which are under cover. There are free standing areas, too, which can be used. Visitors are welcome to use these facilities during office hours and subject to security checks.

Child Care

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what provision her Department makes for child care facilities for staff; what is the extent of subsidy to nursery places and holiday playschemes; if her Department *(a)* subscribes to "Childcare Solutions" and *(b)* makes child care vouchers available; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given on 7 March 1994 to the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms Harman), *Official Report*, column 67, which gave details of child care provision for staff in the Department. Most places are subsidised, but the extent of the subsidy varies according to the nursery or play scheme.

The Department does not subscribe to "Childcare Solutions" or make child care vouchers available.

Comfrey

Mr. Hain: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many representations she has received from *(a)* specialist consumer organisations and *(b)* members of the public concerning the ban on comfrey products since the ban was announced; and how many of these representations supported the ban.

Mr. Soames: I have received roughly 100 similar representations objecting to the trade withdrawal. The Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain supports greater controls on the availability of comfrey products. The National Consumer Council and Consumers Association welcomed the voluntary withdrawal.

Mr. Hain: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what consultation was held with *(a)* the Society for the Promotion of Nutritional Therapy and *(b)* specialist consumer groups before the introduction of the ban on comfrey products; what plans she has to review the ban; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: All interested parties were informed at the same time of my intention to seek a voluntary withdrawal of comfrey products on health grounds. Any review of the situation will be based on the best scientific advice available.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Indonesia

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will urge the World Bank and the Governments which are scheduled to send representatives to the forthcoming meeting of the consultation group on Indonesia in Paris to postpone the meeting.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: No.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government have approached the president or any member Governments of the World bank, asking for a postponement of the consultative group on Indonesia meeting in Paris on 7 and 8 July, in the light of the human rights situation in Indonesia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Indonesia's human rights record over the past year has improved. We were therefore surprised and concerned to learn of the recent banning of three journals, a decision which appears inconsistent with the greater spirit of openness that has prevailed in Indonesia recently. But we do not believe the Indonesian action warrants a postponement of this week's consultative group meeting.

Commonwealth Institute

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what has been his response to the Commonwealth Institute's relaunch plan as discussed at the board's executive committee meeting on 21 June;

(2) what has been his response to the proposals for the relaunch plans for the Commonwealth Institute, Scotland as discussed at a meeting where his representatives were present on 21 June.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: As Her Majesty's Government's representative indicated at the meeting of the executive committee on 21 June 1994, we hope to give our response to the various proposals by the middle of this month.

China

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what information he has on *(a)* incentives to conform with the Chinese population control programme, including access to land, better housing, reduction in taxes and extra payments and *(b)* the content of the eugenics laws enacted by Gansu and Liaoning provinces; and what progress has been made in enacting a national Chinese eugenics law;

(2) what information he has on the number and nature of Chinese population control projects sponsored by the United Nations Fund for Population Activities under the memorandum of understanding between China and the UNFPA in 1979;

(3) what reports he has received from Her Majesty's Government's representatives in China concerning the population control programme and in particular the practice of killing children during or immediately after birth;

(4) what information he has on *(a)* the number of United Nations Fund for Population activities staff present in China and their duties in relation to the Chinese population control programme; *(b)* how many Chinese personnel involved in the Chinese population control programme have received training from the UNFPA; and *(c)* how many UNFPA officials based in China work with the Chinese State Family Planning Commission;

(5) what information he has on the steps taken by the United Nations Fund for Population activities to ensure that management information systems and training in programme research and evaluation provided to the Chinese State Family Planning Commission have not and are not being used to enforce birth quotas on the Chinese population;

(6) if he will make a statement on his Department's policy regarding the Chinese national eugenics policy and the forced sterilisation of those regarded as physically or mentally deficient or their partners;

(7) what information he has regarding which Chinese provinces specify the legal insertion of inter-uterine devices into women; and what exemptions are made for women for whom IUDs may not be medically appropriate;

(8) what provision is made in China for couples who are opposed in conscience to artificial contraception, sterilisation and abortion;

(9) what information he has on the levels of fines specified in China for Chinese women in breach of provincial family planning legislation; and how they are related to average rural and urban per capita incomes;

(10) what information he has on the practice of destroying the homes of families in breach of Chinese provincial family planning legislation;

(11) what information he has on the methods used to persuade Chinese women to undergo sterilisation in accordance with provincial laws; and what information he has on the number of Chinese women who have been sterilised;

(12) what information he has on the practice of fining women who refuse to be sterilised in China; and what information he has on the practice in Fuijan province, China, of taking women for forcible sterilisation;

(13) what information he has as to which Chinese provinces do not have laws obliging *(a)* one member of a married couple to be sterilised or *(b)* women to use contraception;

(14) what information he has on the practice of making payments to Chinese women for being sterilised;

(15) what information he has on the reasons for the percentage change in the number of sterilisations conducted in China in 1991;

(16) what information he has on the use of ultrasound equipment in China to detect female unborn children;

(17) what information he has on Chinese official rules requiring expectant mothers to present birth authorisation cards before being admitted to hospital delivery rooms in Canton; and if he will make a statement;

(18) if he will seek clarification from his Chinese opposite number about reports regarding the disappearance of female children; and if he will make a statement;

(19) what information he has on the practice of fining or sacking Chinese district and township officials if local family planning targets are not achieved;

(20) what information he has on Chinese early birth shock brigades and their role in forcible abortions;

(21) what information he has on the effects of the 1991 decision by the Standing Committee of the Chinese Politburo to tighten enforcement of the Chinese birth control programmes on the population of China;

(22) if his officials consider data on the numbers of sterilisations and abortions in China before agreeing funds for his budget for the International Planned Parenthood Federation and the United Nations Fund for Population Activities;

(23) if he will make a statement on his Department's response to the information contained in the articles by Michael Weisskopf from the Washington Post on the Chinese population control programme deposited by his Department in the Library;

(24) what information he has received on high-tides in the Chinese population programme from Her Majesty's Government's representatives in China; and if he will make a statement;

(25) what information he has on the reasons for the prevalence of third trimester abortions in China;

(26) what information he has on the practices of killing babies *(a)* during birth and *(b)* when they are newly born, by doctors in Hohhot, China; and if he will make a statement;

(27) what consideration his Department gives to China's compliance with the right to freely found a family and decide the numbers of children when deciding on the allocation of aid in respect of family planning;

(28) what information he has on the practice of awarding Chinese local officials cash bonuses if they achieve birth targets set by the authorities in Beijing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The hon. Gentleman has tabled 28 questions covering one subject area.

The British Government are concerned about all human rights abuses, whether they occur in China or elsewhere. The Government's views are well known to the Chinese, and we have consistently urged them to conform with internationally recognised standards of behaviour.

Questions 57, 63, 112, 118, 127, 130 refer to Chinese Government policies and their implementation. Questions 111, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 125, 135 refer to provincial population programmes, and the way in which they are implemented at provincial and local level. Questions 59, 119, 120, 121, 124, 126, 129, 131, 132 refer to allegations about practices which have a bearing on reproductive health and population issues, though these are not necessarily the results of central or provincial Chinese government policies.

The issues raised in all these questions are complex. We do not have ready access to the detailed information that would be required to answer the questions raised. Assembling such information would involve a prohibitive cost.

Questions 58, 61, 62 refer to the work in China of the United Nations Fund for Population Activities. My noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development will write to the hon. Member with the information that we have received from UNFPA. In answer to question 128, the Government take account of the efforts being made by the

International Planned Parenthood Federation and UNFPA to promote better reproductive health and children by choice throughout the world, including their efforts in China, when agreeing the level of support they are to receive from the ODA's budget. Both organisations oppose the promotion of abortion as a method of family planning and all forms of coercion in family planning programmes.

Regarding question 134, the Government do not directly finance family planning projects in China. We continue to advocate that all men and women should be able to choose when to have children, and that women, in particular, should be in a position to exercise this choice of their own free will, without pressure of coercion. Those views are well known to the Chinese authorities.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Hong Kong

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those communications he and his predecessors have received from the Governor of Hong Kong regarding the arms supply and related activities of the Rex Group of companies between 1981 and 1991; and what was reported to him in this matter by Mr. Layton and Mr. Pickin.

Mr. Goodlad: It would not be customary to disclose the contents of communications between the Governor and Ministers. These are conducted on a confidential basis.

European Court

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many judgments handed down by the European Court of Justice have gone *(a)* in favour of and *(b)* against each member country.

Mr. Heathcoat Amory: Cases can be brought before the European Court of Justice by various parties under a number of treaty articles. Many cases do not involve member states at all. It would involve disproportionate cost to identify all the cases since the Community was founded which involved member states directly. If the Commission considers that a member state has failed to fulfil its obligations under the treaty, it may take action under Article 169, which can lead to proceedings before the European Court of Justice. Details of judgments issued on cases brought since 1989 under article 169 can be found in the Commission's eleventh annual report on monitoring the application of Community law. A copy of the report is available in the House. The figures for these cases are as follows:

Member state	*Number of referrals*	*Number withdrawn*	*Number still in motion*	*Judgment for commission*	*Judgment for member state*
United Kingdom	5	0	3	2	0
Belgium	24	11	4	9	0
Denmark	3	1	0	2	0
France	4	0	2	2	0
Germany	10	0	7	3	0
Greece	17	6	3	7	1
Ireland	13	7	1	5	0
Italy	39	21	10	7	1
Luxembourg	31	18	11	2	0
Netherlands	17	4	7	6	0
Portugal	4	2	0	2	0
Spain	11	1	5	5	0

It should, however, be borne in mind that, even though the Commission may bring a case against a member state based on several complaints, the Commission need only succeed on one complaint for the judgment to be recorded as being in its favour.

Latvia and Estonia

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current state of relations between Estonia and Latvia; and if he will comment on the implications for the partnership for peace agreements.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We welcome the agreements signed by Latvia and Russia on the withdrawal of Russian troops from Latvia by 31 August, which we hope will form the basis for good relations between the two countries. We are urging Russia and Estonia to conclude a similar agreement. We welcome Estonian, Latvian and Russian signature of the partnership for peace framework document. We look forward, with other NATO partners, to developing closer relations with all three countries through the Partnership for Peace programme.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his policy in the context of *(a)* the Council of Europe *(b)* the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe and *(c)* the United Nations on the human rights implications for Latvia's Russian population of the recent laws on citizenship.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: President Ulmanis has returned to Parliament for reconsideration the draft citizenship law passed by the Latvian Parliament in June. We are urging the Latvians to incorporate into the law recommendations made by the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe and the Council of Europe.

Per Capita Income

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will set out the latest available data on per capita income in each country; and what data are available on per capita wealth by country.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Per capita income and per capita wealth are not measured separately. Both are represented by the data collected on each country's per capita gross national product. I refer the hon. Gentleman to the "World

Bank Atlas 1994", a copy of which is held in the House of Commons Library. The atlas gives the latest GNP per capita information on 207 of the world's economies.

Tibet

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what *(a)* assistance and *(b)* guidance on human rights issues he gives to British companies considering investing in Tibet.

Mr. Goodlad: Neither I nor the embassy in Peking have been approached by any British companies considering investing in Tibet.

European Council

Dr. Liam Fox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish a statement on the forthcoming business in the Council of the European Union.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The following meetings are planned:

A: ECOFIN
B: FAC
C: Agriculture
D: Budget
E: ECOFIN
F: Justice

The following subjects are likely to be discussed:

A—11 July: ECOFIN
Follow-up to Corfu European Council
Broad economic guidelines (adoption of)
Commission annual report on fraud and work programme
Special report on European Court of Auditors
Relations with CEE

B—18-19 July: Foreign Affairs Council
Presentation of German Presidency programme
Implementation of White Paper
Follow up to Corfu European Council
Ex Yugoslavia
Relations with the European Parliament
EU relations with Canada and USA
G7 Summit
Relations with central and eastern Europe
Relations with the Mediterranean basin
State of contractual relations with certain former Soviet Union countries
Public access to information
Relations with Asia
Relations with India
EC/Sri Lanka agreement
International coffee agreement (possible 'A' point)
New import regime for China
Textiles

C—18-19 July: Agriculture
Yellowfats
Tariff quota for mountain and alpine cattle
Agricultural Structures
Amending Directive 64/432 on health problems affecting intra-Community trade in animals
Wine reform
Implementation of simplificatiion of common agricultural policy reform

List of third country establishments

D—25 July: Budget
First reading of draft EC budget 1995
Supplementary budget 1994

E—27 July: ECOFIN
Agenda not yet available

F—28 July: Justice
Agenda not yet available

Child Care

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what provision his Department makes for child care facilities for staff; what is the extent of subsidy to nursery places and holiday playschemes; if his Department *(a)* subscribes to "Childcare Solutions" and *(b)* makes child care vouchers available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: The FCO has 10 places for the under-fives at nurseries in London, subsidised by 50 per cent., and 22 places in a workplace nursery for staff working at Hanslope Park. Staff in London may bid for holiday places for five to 12-year-olds through the Westminster holiday play scheme, also subsidised by 50 per cent.

The ODA offers no nursery provision for staff, but provides holiday play schemes for staff working at each of its three sites. In London this is through the Westminster holiday play scheme—the other two play schemes are ODA-administered. These schemes cater for children aged between five and 14 depending on the scheme and are subsidised by up to 50 per cent.

The provision of child care is on a value for money basis and is contained within existing running costs. The FCO does not subscribe to "Childcare Solutions" or provide child care vouchers.

International War Crimes Tribunal

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on progress being made by the international war crimes tribunal set up in 1993; and if he will list the judges, giving their countries of origin and background.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The acting deputy prosecutor, Mr. Graham Blewitt, is currently setting up the prosecutor's office. A number of investigatory and prosecutorial staff have now arrived in The Hague. Mr. Blewitt is hoping to start the first trials later this year.

The judges of the tribunal and their nationalities are as follows:

President of the Tribunal, H.E. Judge Antonio Cassese, Italy
Vice-President of the Tribunal, H.E. Judge Elizabeth Odio Benito, Costa Rica
H.E. Judge Georges M. Abi-Saab, Egypt
H.E. Judge Jules Deschenes, Canada
H.E. Judge Claude Jorda, France
H.E. Judge Aldophus G. Karibi-Whyte, Nigeria
H.E. Judge Haopei Li, China
H.E. Judge Gabrielle Kirk McDonald, USA
H.E. Judge Rustam S. Sidhwa, Pakistan
H.E. Judge Sir Ninian Stephen, Australia
H.E. Judge Lal Chand Vohrah, Malaysia

Copies of the judges' curricula vitae have been placed in the House of Commons Library.

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans Her Majesty's Government have to introduce enabling legislation necessary for the United Kingdom's ratification of the chemical weapons convention before 18 July.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have no plans to introduce implementing legislation for ratification of the chemical

weapons convention before 18 July. The legislation will be introduced as soon as parliamentary time becomes available.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if it is Her Majesty's Government's policy that the United Kingdom will ratify the chemical weapons convention by January 1995.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We shall ratify the chemical weapons convention as soon as the necessary implementing legislation is in place. No parliamentary time has yet been allocated for this.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Child Support Agency

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the current operation of the Child Support Agency.

Mr. Burt: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove (Mr. Thomason) on 4 July at columns *49-50.*

Compensation

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment he has made of the amounts of compensation received by *(a)* asbestosis sufferers who have won court awards which were appealed against by firms and *(b)* those who received the same award which was accepted by the firm.

Mr. Scott: The information is not available.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the annual running costs of the compensation recovery unit.

Mr. Scott: The costs for the financial year 1993-94 were approximately £2·4 million.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will show the amounts successfully reclaimed by the compensation recovery unit in each year for the past 10 years.

Mr. Scott: Recoveries made under the compensation recovery scheme apply to compensation payments made on or after 3 September 1990 for an accident, injury or disease which occurred on or after 1 January 1989, therefore, the information requested is only available for each financial year since 1990.

I gave the hon. Member this information on 5 July at Cols. *226-27.*

Child Support Act

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to extend phasing in of the provisions of the Child Support Act 1991 to all those with second families.

Mr. Burt: The phasing arrangements apply to all absent parents with a previous court order or written maintenance agreement, who had a second family at the date the new maintenance assessment was made and whose new assessment is more than £20 a week higher than their old liability. We have no plans to extend these arrangements.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the organisations which have made representations to him about the effect of the Child Support Act 1991 on second families.

Mr. Burt: Representations have been received from a number of large organisations: the Child Poverty Action Group, the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux, Families Need Fathers, Stepfamily, the National Council for One Parent Families, and the Campaign for Fair Maintenance.

Representations have also been received from a range of smaller and local organisations.

Benefit-dependent Families

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many children were living in families dependent on benefit in each year since 1979.

Mr. Burt: Families with children may be assisted by a number of social security benefits, and may receive more than one benefit at a time. Child benefit is available for all children regardless of income and is currently payable for 12·5 million children in nearly 7 million families. The number of children in families receiving the main income-related benefits for each year since 1979 are in the table. The number of children in families receiving widowed mothers allowance are also shown. For the purposes of the information in the table, children are defined as aged under 16 years or aged 16 to 19 years and in full-time education.

Number of children in families receiving the following benefits

Year	*Widowed mother's allowance*	*Supplementary benefit/ Income support*	*Family income supplement/ Family credit*	*Housing benefit*	*Community charge benefit*
1979	132	955	184	n/a	n/a
1980	n/a	1,125	n/a	n/a	n/a
1981	119	1,550	226	n/a	n/a
1982	112	1,793	306	n/a	n/a
1983	106	1,868	396	n/a	n/a
1984	111	2,033	428	n/a	n/a
1985	93	n/a	415	n/a	n/a
1986	86	2,227	412	n/a	n/a
1987	81	2,236	457	n/a	n/a
1988	85	2,195	438	370	n/a
1989	81	2,138	656	335	n/a
1990	80	2,151	669	1,807	2,563
1991	78	2,497	736	1,971	2,634

Year	Widowed mother's allowance	Supplementary benefit/ Income support	Family income supplement/ Family credit	Housing benefit	Community charge benefit
1992	80	2,874	829	2,477	3,187
1993	80	3,207	993	n/a	n/a

Notes:
1. Figures are in thousands and are rounded to the nearest 1,000.
2. Families can be receiving more than one benefit at the same time.
3. No information is available for widowed mother's allowance and family income supplement in 1980 due to changes in the way statistics were published.
4. No information is available for supplementary benefit in 1985 because no annual statistical inquiry was carried out due to industrial action.
5. The 1988 and 1989 information for housing benefit and community charge benefit relates to cases without income support.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Iain Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what information he has received on the relationship of housing benefit and the level of pitch rent levied by mobile home site owners.

Mr. Hague: None. Housing benefit is available to help pay reasonable pitch rents in the same way as for the rents of other types of accommodation.

Family Credit

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will instruct the Benefits Agency to give a decision in respect of the claim for family credit submitted by Mrs. G. Foster.

Mr. Burt: The administration of family credit is a matter for Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Robert Maclennan, dated 6 July 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary question, asking about the claim to Family Credit (FC) from Mrs. G. Foster.

You will be aware that Mrs. Foster submitted her claim to FC on 21 January 1994. I can assure you that every effort is being made to resolve this matter and Mrs. Foster will be advised of the outcome in due course. However, due to the complex nature of Mrs. Foster's case, the matter is still under consideration by the Adjudication Officer (AO). AOs are the first tier of the independent adjudicating authorities who decide all claims to Family Credit. The responsibility for interpreting the law and its application in individual cases rests solely with them. No Government Minister or Departmental Official may comment on, or intervene in, matters which are the responsibility of these independent authorities.

The AO will make a decision on the claim as soon as the required information becomes available. However, due to the personal and confidential nature of the case, I have written to you separately and in greater detail to explain this matter.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Child Care

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what provision his Department makes for child care facilities for staff; what is the extent of subsidy to nursery places and holiday play schemes; if his Department *(a)* subscribes to "Childcare Solutions" and *(b)* makes child care vouchers available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hague: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms Harman) on 7 March at column *38*. The extent of subsidy varies according to the nature and location of the child care facilities. About 8,000 staff across the Department have access to the referral services provided by "Childcare Solutions". Child care vouchers are not available.

Contracting Out

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the application of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 to contracting out.

Mr. Hague: When considering the application of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981, this Department takes account of the considerations set out in the guidance on the implications for market testing of the regulations issued on 11 March 1993 by my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, and considers each case on its merits in the light of that advice.

Pensioners

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what has been the percentage change in *(a)* the state pension, *(b)* the pensioners price index and *(c)* the retail prices index since 1979; and what has been the average change in pensioner income.

Mr. Hague: Between November 1979 and April 1994, state retirement pension increased by 147·2 per cent. while the pensioners price index increased by 118·4 per cent. and the retail prices index by 139·4 per cent.

Between 1979 and 1991—the latest year for which these figures are currently available—the average increase in pensioners' income was 42 per cent. above the level of inflation, as measured by the retail price index.

Notes:
1. Percentage figures have been corrected to one decimal place and to whole number for growth in pensioner incomes.
2. The standard rate of basic retirement pension payable to a single person aged under 80 has been used in the calculation.
3. The pensioners price index is a quarterly index; growth has been measured between the last quarter of 1979 and the first quarter of 1994.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Departmental Publications

Mr. Barnes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the future of the weekly bulletin on the contents of recent economics journals, produced by his Department's information and library service.

Mr. Eggar: Following a review of internal publications, the DTI information and library services decided to cease their involvement with this publication and a notification to that effect appeared in the issue dated 3 June 1994.

Her Majesty's Stationery Office has, for many years, undertaken the majority of the printing, publication and sales work on behalf of the Department and it has decided to assume ful responsibility for this publication following the issue dated 1 July 1994. It is now operating in partnership with the universities of Luton and Warwick.

Machine Tools Industry

Mr. Cohen: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proportion of the United Kingdom machine tools industry is devoted to *(a)* armaments production and *(b)* tools capable of producing armaments; what is the total value of the machine tools industry in the United Kingdom; and what was the total value of machine tools exports from the United Kingdom in the last available year.

Mr. Sainsbury: The United Kingdom machine tool industry is devoted to producing machine tools, not armaments. Machine tools themselves can usually be used to make a variety of products, depending on the skill of the operator or their computer programming. It is not possible to estimate how many machine tools are used for particular purposes.

In 1992 sales of United Kingdom-made machine tools were £853 million and exports were worth £456 million. Provisional figures for 1993 indicate that the industry ran a balance of trade surplus of £31 million, reflecting a lower level of imports and higher competitiveness. I have written to the Machine Tool Technologies Association congratulating the industry on this achievement.

Telecommunications

Mr. Cohen: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assistance his Department is giving to the development of telecommunications in central and eastern Europe.

Mr. McLoughlin: The DTI, through promotional events, seminars and ministerial-led trade missions, actively encourages British companies in the telecommunications sector to export to, and invest in, central and eastern Europe. The establishment of joint ventures and the transfer of know-how will encourage the development of, and spread of best practice in, the telecommunications sector in the region. The DTI has appointed an export promoter, a private sector secondee, who deals specifically with promoting trade in the telecommunications sector with central and eastern Europe.

The EU's technical assistance programme, PHARE, has highlighted telecommunications as one of its priority sectors. The United Kingdom is a significant contributor to the PHARE programme. To date PHARE has provided 42·9 million ecu in assistance for the development of telecommunications in the region.

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list his Department's advisory non-departmental public bodies which are required to publish their advice to Government.

Mr. Eggar: None.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the President of the Board of Trade which of the advisory non-departmental public bodies sponsored by his Department are required to lay their annual reports before Parliament; and if he will list them.

Mr. Eggar: None, except that the Secretary of State is required to lay before Parliament a copy of the annual report issued by the Director General of Telecommunications and this includes a report by the Advisory Committee on Telecommunications for England.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the advisory bodies which he has set up in his Department since the publication of "Public Bodies 1993".

Mr. Eggar: "Public Bodies 1993", published in December 1993, lists non-departmental public bodies in existence at 1 April 1993. The following advisory non-departmental public bodies have been established by my Department since then:

Energy Advisory Panel
Advisory Committee for the Joint Environmental Markets Unit
Advisory Committee on Coal Research

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list those of his Department's advisory non-departmental public bodies which the Government are required to consult before legislation proposals; and in respect of which bodies the Government must publish their response to advice supplied by them.

Mr. Eggar: None.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the President of the Board of Trade which of the advisory non-departmental public bodies sponsored by his Department have a statutory basis; and if he will list them.

Mr. Eggar: None, except the Industrial Development Advisory Board and the Advisory Committee on Telecommunications for England.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list his Department's advisory non-departmental public bodies which are required to produce annual reports.

Mr. Eggar: None except the Advisory Committee on Telecommunications for England.

Manufacturing Investment

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 27 June, *Official Report*, column *404*, if his Department has other information on investment in increased manufacturing capacity in addition to that published by the Confederation of British Industry in its industrial trends survey.

Mr. Sainsbury: The CBI "Industrial Trends Survey" is the only major business survey which asks respondents about the reasons for increased manufacturing investment.

Office of Fair Trading (Recommendations)

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to implement the Office of Fair Trading's recommendations on consumer credit;

when he intends to implement the Office of Fair Trading's recommendations on monetary limits; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Department of Trade and Industry and other interested Government Departments are considering the recommendations about monetary limits and other matters in the Director General of Fair Trading's recent report on his review of consumer credit legislation. It is my intention to make a statement in due course.

Overseas Projects Board

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 4 July, *Official Report*, column *10*, if he will give details of the membership and remit of the Overseas Projects Board.

Mr. Needham: The Overseas Projects Board provides expert advice to DTI Ministers and their officials on issues affecting United Kingdom industry's ability to compete effectively for major projects overseas and serves as a focal point for industry to communicate its views to Government.

I have today placed in the Library of the House a current list of the names and occupations of the members.

Parcelforce

Ms Walley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (i) how many casual workers are currently employed by Parcelforce; and what is that figure as a percentage of the number of the overall work force of Parcelforce;

(2) if he will make a statement in respect of the recruitment procedures for casual employees of Parcelforce.

Mr. McLoughlin: I refer the hon. Member to my answer of 30 June 1994, *Official Report*, column *668*.

Access to Environmental Information

Mr. Ainger: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many requests for environmental information under the Access to Environmental Information Regulations 1992 were answered within two months; how many have been refused; and on what grounds in each case.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 6 July 1994]:* The Department does not record centrally requests received under the Environmental Information Regulations 1992. However, as far as we are aware, DTI has to date answered 191 requests for information under the regulations. Of these, 184 were answered within two months; the remainder were answered as soon as either the information requested had been processed or consultations with affected parties had been completed. A total of 146 requests have been declined: 144 because the Department did not hold the information concerned; and two because the information requested did not come within the terms of the regulations.

Rio Declaration

Mr. Ainger: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what are the precise provisions of principle 8 of agenda 21 of the Rio declaration of June 1992; what is his policy in respect of implementing those provisions; and what specific policies have been adopted by his Department in respect of those aspects of principle 8 which commit signatories to achieve sustainable development by eliminating unsustainable patterns of production and consumption.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 6 July 1994]:* Principle 8 of the Rio declaration on environment and development provides that, to achieve sustainable development and a higher quality of life for all people, states should reduce and eliminate unsustainable patterns of production and consumption and promote appropriate demographic policies. As with other Governments participating in the Rio summit, the United Kingdom accepts the broad principles enshrined in the Rio declaration.

The Government's strategy for reducing and eliminating unsustainable patterns of production and consumption is set out in "Sustainable Development: The UK Strategy", Cm. 2426, a copy of which is in the Library of the House. Chapter 20 of the strategy sets out the Government's approach to promoting sustainability in the manufacturing and services sector. Action taken by my Department in support of the strategy will continue to be reported in the Government's annual White Paper on environmental progress and in the Government's "Expenditure Plans for Trade and Industry", published most recently in March 1994, Cm. 2504.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Racial Attacks

15. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he is taking to deal with racial attacks.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We are seeking new powers in the Criminal Justice Bill to deal more effectively with serious racial harassment, particularly where it is persistent. The interdepartmental racial attacks group is currently examining additional practical ways of dealing with the problem including the recommendation of the Select Committee report.

16. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received recently concerning firearms licensing.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I refer the hon. Member to the oral reply that I gave today to a question by the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing).

20. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will review the penalties for unlawful possession of firearms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: We have done so. We have proposed amendments to the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill which will significantly increase the maximum penalties for the unlawful possession and acquisition of firearms.

Crime Prevention Programme

17. **Mr. Ward:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received regarding his programme to tackle crime.

Mr. Howard: I have received many representations from a number of different quarters. The Police Federation has given my programme to tackle crime a particularly warm welcome. It described it as "first class" and said: "It will help tremendously in the fight against crime".

Terrorism

18. **Mrs. Lait:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to improve the legislation dealing with terrorism.

Mr. Howard: We will keep the legislation against terrorism in place for as long as the threat from terrorism continues. The Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill contains new police stop and search powers, creates two new offences and improves the legislation relating to the investigation of terrorism.

Secure Training Orders

19. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the use of secure training orders otherwise than by the Crown court.

Mr. Maclean: The Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill provides that the secure training order will be available to the youth court as well as to the Crown court.

Identity Cards

21. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to introduce identity cards.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The issue is kept under review. We are currently looking at the technical options for identity cards in the context of a wider study of smartcard applications in Government.

Prison Capacity

22. **Mr. Legg:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received regarding prison capacity; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Department receives many letters from individuals, including Members of Parliament, with reference to prison capacity either in connection with particular prisons or in regard to the future plans of the Prison Service.

Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme

23. **Mr. Khabra:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will publish his response to comments on the proposals contained in the White Paper on the criminal injuries compensation scheme.

Mr. Maclean: The Government's response to comments made about reforms of the criminal injuries compensation scheme, described in the White Paper, was made clear in debates in this House on 28 March, and in another place on 2 March and 16 June. There are no plans to publish any other response.

Police (Administrative Burdens)

24. **Mr. Trend:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received regarding administrative burdens on the police; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Last year we reviewed the paperwork burdens on the police and accepted 16 proposals for reducing them. The proposals are now being implemented with the co-operation of the police and the Crown Prosecution Service.

Metropolitan Police (Specialist Squads)

25. **Mrs. Ann Winterton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the progress made to date by the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis in his review of specialist squads within the Metropolitan police force.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I understand from the Commissioner that the service restructuring team began its consideration of the specialist detective squads based at New Scotland Yard at the end of May this year. An initial consultation paper, outlining the main issues, is expected to be published towards the end of the summer.

Prison Population

26. **Sir David Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were in prison at the most recent count.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: On Wednesday 6 July 1994 there were 48,750 prisoners in Prison Service accommodation and 85 prisoners in police cells, giving a total of 48,835 prisoners in custody.

Video Violence and Pornography

27. **Sir Ivan Lawrence:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to limit the accessibility of video violence and pornography to children.

Mr. Maclean: New provisions are contained in the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill which, together with changes already made in the Video Recordings Act 1993, will significantly strengthen the present provisions relating both to the classification of video works and their subsequent supply.

Community Policing

28. **Mr. Bayley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about community policing.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The aim of local management of policing is that the police provide the service which best meets the needs and wishes of the local community. Mutually supportive partnerships between the police and the public lead to successes in the prevention and detection of crime.

Lenient Sentences

29. **Mr. Jonathan Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress he has made in extending the Attorney-General's right to appeal against lenient sentences.

Mr. Maclean: On 1 March the Attorney-General's power to refer unduly lenient sentences to the Court of Appeal was extended so as to cover the offences of

indecent assault, making threats to kill and child cruelty. All the most serious violent and sexual offences are now within the scope of the power. After the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill has received Royal Assent my right hon. and learned Friend intends to extend the power so that it will also apply to cases of serious fraud.

Indecency with Children Act

Mr. Kevin Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many offenders under section 1 of the Indecency with Children Act 1960 there are in the United Kingdom;

(2) how many people have been convicted of offences under section 1 of the Indecency with Children Act 1960 in each of the last three years.

Mr. Maclean: Information for England and Wales on the number of "known offenders"—those found guilty or cautioned—for offences under section 1 of the Indecency with Children Act 1960 for 1990 to 1992 is given in the table. The Act does not extend to Scotland and Northern Ireland. 1993 data are not yet available.

Number of known offenders—those found guilty or cautioned—for offences under section 1 of the Indecency with Children Act 1960[1]
1990 to 1992
England and Wales

Offence description	*Year*	*Cautions*	*Convictions*	*Known offenders*
Gross indecency with boys	1990	53	128	181
	1991	41	91	132
	1992	46	99	145
Gross indecency with girls	1990	41	148	189
	1991	40	128	168
	1992	52	129	181

[1] The Act does not extend to Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Mr. Kevin Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what figures he has on the incidence of reoffending among offenders under section 1 of the Indecency with Children Act 1960.

Mr. Maclean: Full information on the incidence of such reoffending is not available. Some information has been extracted from two studies which use the offenders index:

(i) In a cohort study of around 50,000 people born in England and Wales in 1953 whose convictions have been followed until the end of 1989, 14 people in the sample had at least one conviction under section 1 of the Indecency with Children Act 1960. Of these, four people had at least one further conviction recorded up until the end of 1989; none of these further convictions were for offences under section 1 of the Indecency with Children Act 1960. Two of the 10 without further convictions had been followed up for less than two years.

(ii) In a study of all people discharged from prisons in England and Wales in 1988 whose principal offence was a sexual offence, 215 people had a conviction under section 1 of the Indecency with Children Act 1960. Of these, 35—or 16 per cent.—had at least one further conviction in the four years following discharge, including 12—or 6 per cent.—who were reconvicted for a further sexual offence of any type.

Mr. Kevin Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make available the guidelines issued to police on the maintenance of records of information on offenders under section 1 of the Indecency with Children Act 1960.

Mr. Maclean: No guidelines have been issued. This is a matter for individual chief constables.

The paedophile unit of the national criminal intelligence service maintains a national database of known paedophiles and assists investigators by developing and disseminating intelligence in respect of those involved in paedophile offences.

Child Care

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what provision his Department makes for child care facilities for staff; what is the extent of subsidy to nursery places and holiday play schemes; if his Department *(a)* subscribes to "Childcare Solutions" and *(b)* makes child care vouchers available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: Provision has been made for spending of £380,000 in the current financial year on subsidised child care for staff at various locations. This will provide 134 nursery day care places for children under five and approximately 1,000 holiday play scheme places for children from five to 12 years old. These arrangements generally involve a subsidy of about 50 per cent. of the running costs involved. Subsidised child care provision is provided only if it can be justified on value for money grounds.

The Department does not subscribe to "Childcare Solutions" nor make child care vouchers available to staff.

Immigration

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is considered a sufficient duration for a common law heterosexual relationship between a foreign national and a person settled in the United Kingdom for immigration purposes.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Each application is considered on its own merits. The duration of the relationship is taken into account along with other factors.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his statement of 4 May, *Official Report*, columns *823-26*, if *(a)* the absence of children, *(b)* the inability to have children or *(c)* the absence of intent to marry are considered detrimental to applications made by foreign nationals in common law heterosexual relationships with persons settled in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Not necessarily; applications for leave to remain from unmarried heterosexual couples are considered on their merits.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 9 May, *Official Report*, column *11*, whether the statistic provided in this reply relating to common law partners include same sex partners of persons settled in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) of 16 May, *Official Report*, column *336*, whether there are any other circumstances acceptable as grounds for granting leave to remain to the foreign same sex partner of a person settled in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Each application is considered on its own merits. It is not possible to provide an exhaustive list of the circumstances in which leave to remain on the basis of a same sex relationship might be granted.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) of 16 May, *Official Report*, column *337*, how many applications for leave to remain in the United Kingdom made by foreign nationals on the basis of a same sex relationship with a person settled in the United Kingdom have been *(a)* accepted and *(b)* rejected since 1990.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is not separately identified in the statistics.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) of 16 May, *Official Report*, column *336*, what is considered a sufficient duration for a same-sex relationship between a foreign national and a person settled in the United Kingdom for immigration purposes.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Each case is decided on its own merits and it is not possible to say what period would normally be considered sufficient.

Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act 1987

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total amount of money owed in fines by *(a)* airlines and *(b)* cross-channel ferry companies under the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: As at 31 May, £19·46 million was owed by airline operators and £1·68 million by ferry operators. Action is being taken to enforce the payment of outstanding charges where necessary.

Secure Accommodation

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much he estimates each place in secure accommodation will cost per annum.

Mr. Maclean: The cost per place per annum cannot yet be predicted because the design, build and operation of secure training centres will be subject to competitive tender. But the total costs of secure training orders are estimated to be in excess of £30 million a year. This estimate includes running, building and financing costs, as well as the cost of post-release supervision and Home Office administration costs.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will indicate how many local authority secure places have been provided since the enactment of the Criminal Justice Act 1991; and if he will provide a list of their locations.

Mr. Bowis: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) on 22 April at columns *696-97*, which set out a supply plan for the provision by local authorities of an additional 170 secure places for criminal justice purposes.

Community Charge

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people have been imprisoned in England and Wales in each year since 1990 for non-payment of the community charge, whose principal address was in *(a)* each district council area in Wales, *(b)* Wales as a whole, *(c)* England, *(d)* Scotland and *(e)* Northern Ireland.

Mr. Maclean: No information is available centrally regarding the principal address of those committed to custody. The available information is for England and Wales and is published annually in "Prison statistics, England and Wales", table 6.3 of the 1992 edition, Cm. 2581. A copy of this publication is available in the Library of the House. Provisional information for 1993 shows that 1,157 persons—1,041 males and 116 females—were received into a Prison Service establishment in England and Wales for non-payment of the community charge. Information for Wales, which was based on the numbers sentenced from a court in Wales, by county, has already been given in my earlier reply to the hon. Gentleman on 4 July at column *41*.

Drugs

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what studies his Department has commissioned to estimate the street value of illicit drugs traded annually.

Mr. Maclean: Drug misuse is an illegal and therefore clandestine activity. It is not possible to produce reliable estimates of the street value of all illicit drug purchases traded annually. No such studies have been commissioned, although the scope for fresh research on this question is kept under review.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what studies his Department has commissioned to ascertain what amount of crime is drug-related.

Mr. Maclean: The Home Secretary recently announced plans to commission a series of studies later this year, to build on previous work assessing the links between drug taking and acquisitive crime.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many burglaries or attempted burglaries of pharmacies there were in *(a)* York and *(b)* North Yorkshire in each year since 1979.

Mr. Maclean: The information is not collected centrally.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people from *(a)* York and *(b)* North Yorkshire were convicted of possessing or supplying illicit drugs; and of these how many were convicted of possessing cannabis in each year since 1979.

Mr. Maclean: The number of persons who were found guilty or cautioned in the North Yorkshire police force area for those offences in the years 1986-92 inclusive, is given in the table. Information for earlier years could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. It is not possible to show offenders from the city of York separately.

North Yorkshire police force area

Number of persons

Year	*Supply*	*Possession with intent to supply*	*Possession (all drugs)*	*Possession of cannabis*
1986	18	3	222	196
1987	16	5	281	256
1988	6	2	100	90
1989	17	3	152	139
1990	16	6	147	131
1991	13	11	101	85
1992	15	4	211	176

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many residents of *(a)* York and *(b)* North Yorkshire are currently on probation for drug-related offences.

Mr. Maclean: I understand from the North Yorkshire probation service that it is currently supervising 20 offenders under probation orders following conviction for drug related offences, of whom six are being supervised in York.

Staff Surveys

Mr. Radice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what surveys of the views, opinions and attitudes of the staff of his Department have been carried out in the last two years; and if he will place copies of the findings in the Library.

Mr. Howard: The various agencies and business units of the Home Office are not required to notify the central personnel divisions of staff surveys they conduct. However, we are aware of the following surveys which took place in the two years ending 30 June 1994:

Title	*Date of survey*
Passport Agency Staff Survey	November 1992
Immigration Service (Ports) Staff Survey	December 1992
Fire Service College Customer Satisfaction and Staff Attitude Survey	June/July 1993
Survey of Communications in the Home Office	October 1993
FSD (Finance and Services Directorate of the Immigration and Nationality Department) Quality of Service Programme—Customer Survey	December 1993/ January 1994
Prison Service Staff Survey	January/February 1994

Copies of the results of these surveys will be placed in the Library, with the exception of the FSD survey. The results of the FSD survey were intended to inform local managers and have not been published.

ENVIRONMENT

Cemfuel

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what conclusions have so far been drawn by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution from the trials of Cemfuel at Ribblesdale, Lancashire.

Mr. Atkins: Preliminary results show reduced releases of sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxides. Further work to establish release levels for other pollutants is continuing. Comparative assessments of environmental impacts can be attempted only when all the relevant information is to hand.

Vehicles (Natural Gas)

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the latest research with Government support into the use of compressed natural gas as a vehicle fuel.

Mr. Key: I have been asked to reply.

The Transport Research Laboratory has recently completed its review of existing research on alternative fuels, including compressed natural gas. This work is being developed in a joint study with the Department of Trade and Industry looking at the wider implications of alternative fuels including production and use. In addition, CNG is to be included in the project referred to in the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Coventry, North-East (Mr. Ainsworth) on 28 June at columns *477-78*.

Housing (Defence Establishments)

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from local authorities in relation to the increased demand for local authority housing tenancies from ex-military personnel following the implementation of the Government's "Options for Change" and similar policies.

Sir George Young: My Department has received no specific representations from local authorities on the matter.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what additional expenditure has been made available to local authorities by the Government to provide for additional demand created by reductions in the defence establishment;

(2) what measures he has taken to assist local authorities with increased demand for their housing stock as a result of reductions in the defence establishment.

Sir George Young: Resources for housing capital expenditure by authorities are made available by the Government each year in the form of housing investment programme allocations. HIP allocations in the current financial year total over £1·5 billion. It is for each housing authority to assess and prioritise the housing needs of its area, and to use its resources accordingly.

Environmental Agency

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment by what date he expects the environmental agency to be established.

Mr. Atkins: The Government are committed to establishing the agency as soon as parliamentary time permits the passage of the necessary legislation.

Bicycles

Mr. Robathan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what facilities his Department provides for the parking of the bicycles of visitors to its offices in Westminster.

Mr. Baldry: Cycle racks are available for the use of visitors to my Department's offices at 2 Marsham street, Romney house, Lambeth Bridge house, and Millbank Tower.

Conservation Officers

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what study he has made of the problems of conflicting pieces of primary legislation and the training budgets in local government for maintaining the expertise of conservation officers.

Mr. Baldry: I see no need for such a study.

Building Preservation Trusts

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the application of the Local Government Act 1990 to building preservation trusts in respect of the regulation of companies funded by local authorities; and what account is taken of expenditure by such trusts in calculating a local authority's annual capital expenditure.

Mr. Baldry: Local authority capital finance is regulated in England and Wales by the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. We intend to make an order applying the main provisions to local authority companies but are still considering the precise extent of that order.

Nuclear Discharges

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which signatories of the Paris Commission in 1993 have accepted recommendation 93/5 recommending international scrutiny and consultation in relation to any new or revised discharge authorisation from nuclear reprocessing plants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: At the 15th joint meeting of contracting parties to the Oslo and Paris Commissions on 14 to 19 June 1993 Denmark, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain and Sweden accepted Paris Commission recommendation 93/5. The United Kingdom registered a reservation, as did France and Belgium. The EEC abstained. Belgium has since withdrawn its reservation.

Child Care

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what provision his Department makes for child care facilities for staff; what is the extent of subsidy to nursery places and holiday playschemes; if his Department *(a)* subscribes to "Childcare Solutions" and *(b)* makes child care vouchers available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: My Department has 10 workplace nursery places in the Westminster area and four in Bristol, all of which are at interdepartmental nurseries. There are also 11 places at the Building Research Establishment's own nursery. Subsidy up to a maximum of 50 per cent. of the running costs is available.

The Department participates in interdepartmental holiday play schemes in Westminster, Birmingham, Bristol, Bedford and at the Building Research Establishment. Play schemes cater for children from five to 12 years and operate during half-term holidays and main school holidays. The Department does not subscribe to "Childcare Solutions" or make child care vouchers available to staff.

Crime Prevention

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what are the planned spending allocations for local community safety and crime prevention initiatives from the single regeneration budget for the financial years 1995-96;, 1996-97; 1997-98 and 1998-99;

(2) what proportion of the single regeneration budget the estimates will be allocated to local community and crime prevention initiatives;

(3) in which ways he proposes to fund local community safety and crime prevention initiatives *(a)* in Birmingham and *(b)* nationally through the single regeneration budget.

Mr. Baldry: There are no fixed, centrally determined, spending allocations for categories of initiatives supported by the single regeneration budget from 1995-96 onwards. Subject to on-going commitments, and the funding requirements of the non-departmental public bodies supported by the budget, the level of spending on categories of initiatives such as local community safety and crime prevention will be determined by the success of relevant bids put forward for support by local partnerships in accordance with the bidding guidance for the Budget issued on 14 April 1994, copies of which are in the Library of the House.

Ethnic Minority Grants

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what measures he has taken to protect existing spending commitments for current section 11-funded schemes under the single regeneration budget;

(2) what measures he proposes to take to protect existing ethnic minority business initiative spending commitments under the single regeneration budget;

(3) what measures he proposes to take to protect existing ethnic minority grant commitments under the single regeneration budget.

Mr. Baldry: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment told the House on 4 November 1993, *Official Report*, column *515*, that continuing commitments under the 20 programmes which have been combined in the single regeneration budget will be met. These programmes include the urban part of section 11 funding which has been transferred to the budget, the ethnic minority business initiative and ethnic minority grant.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what are the existing commitments for ethnic minority grant for *(a)* the city of Birmingham and *(b)* nationally in the financial years to 1998-99;

(2) what are the existing spending commitments for section 11 funded schemes *(a)* nationally and *(b)* for the city of Birmingham for the financial years to 1998-99;

(3) what are the existing spending commitments under the ethnic minority business initiative in the financial years up to 1998-99 for *(a)* the city of Birmingham and *(b)* nationally.

Mr. Baldry: The estimated level of commitments under these programmes is shown in the table. These figures are provisional; they contain an estimate of the commitments for schemes due to start in 1994-95, and make assumptions about grant recipients' actual expenditure in 1994-95 and later years. Figures are not shown for section 11 for 1995-96 and later years; the basis of their calculation is to be the subject of discussions with local authorities.

(a) nationally

£ million

	1994-95	*1995-96*	*1996-97*	*1997-98*	*1998-99*
EMBI	0·600	0·318	0·134	—	—
EMG	5·860	2·500	—	—	—
s11 (urban)	60·500	(see note)	—	—	
s11 (non-urban)	49·800	(see note)	—	—	

(b) for the city of Birmingham

Section 11 Allocations notified to recipients within the city of Birmingham for 1994-95 are as follows:

	£ million
Birmingham city council	4,046,501
George Dixon school	81,865
Hall Green school	9,320
Ninestiles school	16,530
Small Heath school	50,626
Birmingham FE colleges	1,376,534
Joseph Chamberlain college	67,762

Information is not yet available about recipients' expenditure upon which the level of commitment to current approved projects in subsequent years will depend, and local authorities will be consulted before the basis on which future allocations is determined. Within the city of Birmingham, current commitments to the city council are predominantly of five-year duration; but funding for other recipients' current projects, with the exception of George Dixon and Ninestiles schools, ends on 31 March 1995.

Ethnic minority grant There are currently four approved projects funded through Birmingham TEC. Three are due to terminate at the end of March 1995 and the fourth at the end of March 1996. Grant expenditure on these four projects in the 1993-94 financial year amounted to around £52,000.

Ethnic minority business initiative The estimated existing commitments for Birmingham are £59,000 in 1994-95, £18,000 in 1995-96 and £4,000 in 1996-97.

Construction Industry

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he plans to publish another state of the construction industry report.

Mr. Gummer: A second state of the construction industry report, produced jointly by my Department and representatives of the construction industry, has just been completed. Copies have been placed in the Library.

WALES

Air Quality

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the relative risks of diesel and petrol engines for air quality in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: No assessment has been made specifically for Wales, but the quality of urban air review group has considered the impact of diesel vehicle emissions on urban air quality over the whole of the United Kingdom. A copy of the group's report, "Diesel Vehicle Emissions and Urban Air Quality", published in January 1994, has been placed in the Library of the House.

Recycling

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his Department's policy on recycling in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Government have set a target of recycling 25 per cent. of household waste by the year 2000.

I will continue to promote increased recycling wherever this is the best practical environmental option.

Local Authority Housing

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the total number of local authority homes now sold in Wales, giving the total amount of moneys raised since 1983; and if he will provide similar figures for each of the local authority housing authorities in the county of Clwyd.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Information on the total number of former council owned homes and which are now owned by the families who live in them and the receipts from these sales from April 1983 to March 1994 is shown in the table.

Local authority dwellings sold between April 1983 and March 1994

	Dwellings sold	*Receipts[1] £000*
Alyn and Deeside	1,304	16,348
Colwyn	708	7,083
Delyn	922	13,767
Glyndwr	813	10,295
Rhuddlan	727	8,239
Wrexham Maelor	3,023	36,041
Clwyd	7,497	91,773
Wales	66,744	799,782

[1] Includes the repayment of principal on local authority mortgages.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to stimulate local authority house building; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I see a vital enabling role for local authorities in assessing housing need in their areas and facilitating the provision of new housing through housing associations and the private sector.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list all those schools in Wales which have grant-maintained status.

Mr. Redwood: I refer the hon. Gentleman to my right hon. Friend's reply to the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) on 9 December at column *307*. Since that date, I have approved the application for grant-maintained status from Mary Immaculate Roman Catholic high school in South Glamorgan.

Ambulance Service, Powys

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the average response time for ambulances in Powys in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Average mean ambulance response times are not available. The median response times—the 50th percentile—for ambulances in Powys for the last five available years are shown in the table:

Year	*Time in minutes at 50th percentile*
1988-89	10
1989-90	10
1990-91	9
1991-92	10
1992-93	9

Child Care

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what provision his Department makes for child care facilities for staff; what is the extent of subsidy to nursery places and holiday play schemes; if his Department *(a)* subscribes to "Childcare Solutions" and *(b)* makes child care vouchers available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Department provides nursery facilities and holiday play care for its staff. It uses 30 places in an 80 place nursery which is run in consortium with other Government Departments. Consortium members pay the accommodation costs and in 1993-94 the Department's contribution was £12,246. The cost to the Department of providing holiday play care during the Easter and summer holidays in 1993-94 was £4,457. The Department is committed to providing child care where it is cost-effective in assisting the retention of trained and experienced staff. The cost of support is evaluated annually. The Department does not subscribe to "Childcare Solutions" or child care vouchers.

Planning Policy

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will produce a planning policy guidance note on sustainable development and planning policies in Wales analogous to PPG 13 in England; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Planning policy guidance note 13, "Highways Considerations in Development Control", remains extant in Wales. The guidance is under review and I shall be issuing revised guidance for Wales.

Health Visitors

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what was the proportion of health visitors to children in each health authority area in September 1992;

(2) what was the proportion of health visitors to children in each health and personal social services board area in September 1992;

(3) how many health visitors were employed in each health authority area in September 1988 and in September 1992.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Reliable estimates of the numbers of nursing staff employed in specific occupational groups, such as health visitors, are not available centrally.

Local Government Responsibilities

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to transfer to Welsh local authorities responsibility for the activities and budget of each of *(a)* the Further Education Funding Council Wales, *(b)* the Curriculum and Assessment Authority Wales, *(c)* Cardiff Bay development corporation, *(d)* the urban regeneration section of the Welsh Development Agency, *(e)* social development section of the Development Board for Rural Wales and *(f)* the non-university section of the Higher Education Funding Council Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: I am announcing changes in the responsibilities of the Development Board for Rural Wales and the Welsh Development Agency today. The functions of all non-departmental public bodies are kept under regular review and any major changes in their status and responsibilities are notified to the House.

HEALTH

Administrative Grant

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the number of full-time equivalent *(a)* general managers, *(b)* administrative and *(c)* clerical staff in the NHS in each year since 1990-91.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information available is shown in the table.

National Health Service General Managers and Administrative and Clerical Staff in England at 30 September 1991 and 1992

Whole-time equivalents

	General Managers	*Administrative and Clerical*
1991	730	127,370
1992	700	135,010

Source: Department of Health statistical form KM49.
Notes:
1. Figures are rounded to the nearest ten.
2. It is not possible to separate administrative and clerical figures; data are collected as a total.
3. Figures for 1992 are the latest available.

Official Secrets Act 1989

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether employees of the new regional health authorities/ management executive outposts will be bound by, or required to sign declarations relating to, the Official Secrets Act 1989.

Mr. Sackville: Employees of the new regional health authorities are not bound by the Official Secrets Act 1989 except in so far as all members of the public with official information in their possession are affected by the Act.

Performance-related Pay

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to introduce performance-related pay into her Department and the NHS executive.

Dr. Mawhinney: All staff in the Department are now covered by performance pay arrangements, the first of which was introduced in 1992.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will make a statement on performance-related pay;

(2) what research she has commissioned into *(a)* the cost of implementing performance-related pay in the NHS and *(b)* the benefits of performance-related pay;

(3) what plans she has to introduce performance-related pay into the NHS; and which employers will be affected.

Dr. Mawhinney: General and senior managers and certain other national health service staff already benefit from performance-related pay. The freedom of trusts increasingly to determine the pay and conditions of their own staff is an important way of making services more responsive to local needs. We are therefore encouraging the introduction of local pay arrangements linked to the success of the organisation in meeting its objectives to improve the quality and quantity of patient care. Any additiional costs would be offest by increased efficiency.

Health Authorities

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimates she has made of the costs of amalgamating district health authorities and family health service authorities.

Dr. Mawhinney: None.

Mental Health Units

Mrs. Browning: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was her response to the recommendation by the Department of Health's mental health nursing review team that an urgent review of the therapeutic suitability of mental health units in district general hospitals should be undertaken.

Mr. Bowis: The report of the mental health nursing review team is still being disseminated throughout the national health service and a series of regional conferences are in the process of being held to consider how the recommendations may be taken forward.

The conference dates and locations are:
May 16—Bristol
May 20—Leeds
June 7—London
September 2—Birmingham

Secure Accommodation

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will carry out an inquiry into the security of local authority accommodation for children in care, including the escape of a 14-year-old Bolton boy from Thornbury house in Oxfordshire; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: Responsibility for all aspects of management of secure accommodation rests with the appropriate local authority. Last year the Department issued "Guidance on Permissible Forms of Control in Children's Residential Care", copies of which are available in the Library, about control and restraint in children's residential care. The Department will also be issuing more general guidance about the provision of secure accommodation. My officials are discussing with the relevant social services departments the circumstances and issues surrounding the particular incident to which my hon. Friend refers.

Mortality Rates

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were the infant and perinatal mortality rates of each EU country at the most recent available date.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave her on 2 December 1993, *Official Report,* column *701,* for the latest available information.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what analysis she has of the infant and perinatal mortality rate by socio-economic group since 1979.

Mr. Sackville: Infant and perinatal mortality statistics, derived from death registrations, are not available by socio-economic group. Tables by social class are published each year in the Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys DH3 annual reference volume "Mortality Statistics, perinatal and infant: social and biological factors", copies of which are available in the Library.

Private Hospitals

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what amount the national health service spent on NHS patients being treated in private hospitals in each year since 1989.

Mr. Sackville: The extent to which national health service purchasers contract with the private sector is a matter for local decision.

Mental Illness

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she will publish the findings of the mental illness study commissioned by the London implementation group.

Mr. Bowis: The London implementation group has not commissioned a study of mental illness.

Aortic Aneurysms

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 29 June, *Official Report*, column *587-88*, what assessment her Department has made as to the reasons for the increase in deaths from aortic aneurysms between 1988 and 1992.

Mr. Sackville: The disease is found predominantly among men aged 65 to 75. The number of men in that age group increased by 31,000 between 1988 and 1992.

Breast Self-examination Campaign

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for health if she will make a statement on the progress of the breast self-examination campaign.

Mr. Sackville: The Chief Medical Officer wrote to all doctors in England in 1991 to provide advice on ways in which women could be involved in the early detection of breast abnormalities. In addition, a leaflet entitled "Be Breast Aware", copies of which will be placed in the Library, has been produced by the national health service breast screening programme, which makes it clear to women what changes should be discussed with their doctor. The leaflet has been translated into a number of languages and has received widespread support. The Department has also recently helped fund a breast awareness video—"Being Breast Aware is for Life", produced by the charity, Womens Nationwide Cancer Control Campaign.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list, for each NHS trust in the former south-east Thames region, those chairmen and non-executive directors who live outside the boundaries of the district health authority in which that trust is situated.

Dr. Mawhinney: A total of 132 of the 186—71 per cent.—chairmen and non-executive directors appointed to national health service trusts within the former South East Thames region live within the boundaries of the district health authority in which the trust is situated. The names of those who live outside the relevant district health authority boundaries are listed.

Guy's and St. Thomas' Hospital NHS Trust
Lord Barney Heyhoe
Professor C. Chantler
Mr. T. Ford
Mr. P. N. Clark
Mr. C. Williams

Lewisham Hospital NHS Trust
Professor M. H. Lessof
Sir Phillip Harris
Mr. R. J. Maxwell
Mrs. G. Mallinson
Mr. S. Bullock

Eastbourne Hospitals NHS Trust
Mr. R. R. Barkshire

Hastings and Rother NHS Trust
Dr. P. Lindon

Optimum Health Services NHS Trust
Ms D. P. Kingsmill
Ms P. M. Munro
Mr. B. Huett

West Lambeth Community Care NHS Trust
Sir Alan Reay
Baroness Cox of Queensbury
Professor C. Carnall
Mr. S. Edwards
Mrs. R. Glanville
Mr. M. Hanson

Maidstone Priority Care NHS Trust
Mr. J. W. Manaton

South Downs Health NHS Trust
Lady Helen Trafford

King's Healthcare NHS Trust
Mr. S. Kalms
Professor A. L. Eddleston
Professor Sir James Black

Thameslink Healthcare NHS Trust
Mr. R. J. March
Mrs. C. Howarth

Queen Mary's Sidcup NHS Trust
Lady Ann Jenkins
Mr. E. M. Hollingsworth

Brighton Healthcare NHS Trust
Dame Audrey Emerton

Greenwich Healthcare NHS Trust
Mr. B. L. Sharland
Mr. J. J. Hewitson

Mid Kent Healthcare NHS Trust
Sir Raymond Rickett
Mr. J. C. Arnold

Bromley Hospitals NHS Trust
Mr. B. Collins
Mrs. C. Freshwater

Dartford and Gravesham Acute Services NHS Trust
Professor M. Kelly
Mr. K. A. Maw

Medway Health NHS Trust
Professor K. G. Burnand
Mr. E. J. Bradley
Mr. W. B. Taylor

Guy's and Lewisham Mental Health Unit NHS Trust
Ms G. Linton
Professor J. P. Watson
Ms M. Rogers

Sir David Nicholas
Mr. R. Rowden

Queen Victoria Hospital, East Grinstead NHS Trust
Mrs. T. Hawksworth

Bexley Community Services NHS Trust
Dr. N. Singer
Mr. R. T. Vaudry
Ms V. C. Leach
Ms J. Binks
Mr. D. M. Lewis
Ms S. P. Davis

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list for each national health service trust in the former North East Thames region, those chairmen and non-executive directors who live outside the boundaries of the district health authority in which that trust is situated.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 4 July 1994]:* A total of 101 of the 180 chairmen and non-executive directors appointed to a national health service trust within the former North West Thames region live within the boundaries of the district health authority in which that trust is situated. The names of those who live outside the relevant district health authority boundaries are listed below.

Barnet Healthcare NHS Trust
Mr. W. Greathead
Mr. A. Hornby
Lady Parkinson

Bedford Hospital NHS Trust
Dr. S. Vyakarnam

Bedford and Shires Health and Care NHS Trust
Mr. J. Quenby

Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Ambulance and Paramedic Services NHS Trust
Dr. K. Robinson

Central Middlesex Hospital NHS Trust
Dr. M. McNicol
Mrs. M. Ryder
Professor C. Normand

Chelsea and Westminster Healthcare NHS Trust
Sir Keith Bright
Ms J. Hill
Mr. A. Lue

Ealing Hospital NHS Trust
Mr. A. Noble

East Herts NHS Trust
Mrs. D. White
Mrs. J. Oram

Hammersmith Hospitals NHS Trust
Mrs. S. Edwards

Harefield Hospitals NHS Trust
Sir Geoffrey Errington
Mrs. A. Collins
Mr. L. Koppen
Mr. T. Lindsay
Dr. S. Saeed
Mr. B. Thompson McCausland

Harrow and Hillingdon Community Health NHS Trust
Mr. A. Woodbridge
Mr. B. Harrison
Mrs. B. Mouli
Mr. D. Sen-Gupta
Ms R. Preston

Hillingdon Hospital NHS Trust
Professor N. Merritt
Baroness Flather
Mr. W. Glyn-Williams
Mrs. J. Harper
Mr. S. Gurney

Horizon NHS Trust
Mr. J. Farrell
Mr. J. Gardner
Mrs. P. Handley
Mr. D. Wright

Hounslow and Spelthorne Community and Mental Health Services NHS Trust
Mrs. T. Golding
Mr. S. Sharma
Mr. A. Cooke

Mount Vernon and Watford Hospitals NHS Trust
Mr. D. Swarbrick
Mrs. C. Chambers
Mr. J. Smith

North Hertfordshire NHS Trust
Mrs. P. Eccles
Mrs. C. Warshaw

North West London Mental Health Health Services NHS Trust
Mr. M. Storey
Ms A. Lapping
Mr. E. Obeng

Northwick Park and St. Mark's NHS Trust
Mr. C. Graham
Mr. J. Jump
Ms E. Owen
Ms H. Rogers

Parkside Health NHS Trust
Mr. T. Campbell Davis
Mr. A. Haggar

Riverside Community Health Care NHS Trust
Ms M. Black
Mr. P. Farmer
Miss J. Cornwell

Riverside Mental Health NHS Trust
Mrs. A. Radford

Royal Brompton NHS Trust
Sir Philip Otton
Professor T. Clark
Mr. W. Manson
Mr. C. Perrin

Royal Marsden Hospital NHS Trust
Mrs. S. Read
Sir Kenneth Stowe
Mr. W. Mills
Mrs. E. Van Cutsem

South Bedfordshire Community NHS Trust
Mrs. P. Campbell
Miss A. Brown

St. Mary's Hospital NHS Trust
Lord Glenarthur
Mr. H. Hawkins
Mr. P. McKenna

Wellhouse NHS Trust
Mr. A. Orton
Mrs. P. Czyzak-Dannenbaum
Mrs. P. Kalms

West Herts Community Health NHS Trust
Mrs. D. Webster

West London Health Care NHS Trust
Rabbi Miriam Lawrence
Mrs. A. Richardson
Mr. B. Churcher

West Middlesex University Hospital NHS Trust
Mr. D. Hoodless
Mr. J. Rounce

Health Service Commissioner

Mr. Brandreth: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she expects to receive the annual report of the health service commissioner for 1993-94.

Mr. Sackville: The health service commissioner has made his annual report on the performance of his functions in England, Scotland and Wales. My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Health, for Scotland and for Wales presented the report to the House on 6 July. It was published today—HC499—and copies have been placed in the Library.

Child Care

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what provision her Department makes for child care facilities for staff; what is the extent of subsidy to nursery places and holiday play schemes; if her Department *(a)* subscribes to "Childcare Solutions" and *(b)* makes child care vouchers available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms Harman) on 7 March, *Official Report*, column *89*.

NHS Prescriptions

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) whether people absent from the United Kingdom but not visiting another country may receive NHS prescriptions;

(2) if people sailing around the world remain eligible for NHS prescriptions.

Dr. Mawhinney: As a general rule, people travelling abroad for short periods may receive medication under the national health service, subject to the clinical judgment of their general practitioner, for a period of up to three months.

Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she received guidance from the Advisory Committee on Dangerous Pathogens concerning Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease; and when the guidance will be published.

Mr. Sackville: The guidance was received at the end of March and is due to be published late August/early September.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 28 June, *Official Report*, column *539*, what guidance to date has been issued to laboratory staff who may handle materials contaminated with the agents causing *(a)* Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease and *(b)* bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

Mr. Sackville: The following guidance has been issued to date:

'Code of Practice for the Prevention of Infection in Clinical Laboratories and Post-Mortem Rooms' (1978); DA(81)22; DA(84)16; 'Categorisation of Pathogens According to Hazard and Categories of Containment' (1st edition, 1984, extended 2nd edition, 1990) from the Advisory Committee on Dangerous Pathogens; and PL(92)CO/4 from the Deputy Chief Medical Officer.

Copies of the documents will be placed in the Library.

GP Fundholders

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to monitor the spending of funds by GP fundholders.

Dr. Mawhinney: Family health services authorities have statutory responsibility for monitoring expenditure by general practitioner fundholders.

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list by health authority and region the underspend or surplus carried forward by GP fundholders in the financial years 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Dr. Mawhinney: Final audited figures for 1992-93 and 1993-94 are not yet available.

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will define patient care in relation to items upon which GP fundholders may spend their financial allocation; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The National Health Service (Fund-holding Practices) Regulations 1993 define the range of services general practitioner fundholders may purchase on behalf of their patients. Copies of the regulations are available in the Library.

Dental Services

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to raise the proportion of the cost of dental treatment paid by patients.

Dr. Mawhinney: National health service dental charges are kept under review, and decisions are made in the light of the Government's priorities for expenditure on the NHS.

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate she has made of the proportion of the population who visit a dentist every six months; and what assessment she has made of the effect of an increase in dental charges on attendance at dentists' surgeries.

Dr. Mawhinney: No such estimate can be made from the information available centrally. There is no evidence to suggest that increases in national health service dental charges have any significant long-term effect on attendance.

EDUCATION

Special Needs

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many and what percentage of disabled children with special educational needs were in mainstream schools in each year since 1979.

Mr. Forth: The total of all pupils who, at some time in their school career, have special educational needs is not

collected centrally. The numbers of pupils with statements of special educational needs—including those who are disabled—in primary, middle and secondary maintained schools in England are not available pre-1985 but are set out below as at January of each year 1985-1993. They are also shown as a percentage of all pupils with statements in maintained[1] schools including special schools.

Year	*Pupils with statements in mainstream schools*	*As percentage of all pupils with statements in maintained sector*
1985	26,800	19
1986	30,000	21
1987	33,300	23
1988	40,900	28
1989	47,300	32
1990	54,300	35
1991	62,000	42
1992	71,200	46
1993	85,000	49

[1] Includes non-maintained special schools.

National Testing

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what help he intends to provide for teachers assessing key stage 1.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend has recently announced that he proposes, for 1995, to fund supply cover for teachers of seven-year-olds engaged on administering tests. This is in addition to the considerable amount of expenditure in support of the implementation of the assessment arrangements in schools—some £180 million—through the grants for education support and training programme over the last four years. A large proportion of this expenditure has been in primary schools.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has made to the Chancellor of the Exchequer to secure extra funding needed to pay the cost of using external examiners in the asessment of key stage 2 and key stage 3.

Mr. Robin Squire: It has not been the practice of this or previous Administrations to disclose details of discussions between Ministers. My right hon. Friend has found the necessary resources from within his Department's £7·5 billion vote programme.

Multi-cultural Education

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received on changes in section 11 funding and their effect on multi-cultural education; and what action he is taking in response.

Mr. Robin Squire: We have received many representations from hon. Members, local authorities and associations, teacher unions, minority ethnic communities and other interested parties about changes in section 11 funding.

My right hon. Friend will continue to monitor, through OFSTED, the standard of educational provision in all maintained schools, including provision for those pupils for whom English is not their first language. Additional support for the latter category through section 11 grants is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary.

School Sports

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education which code of rugby is included within the required school sports contained within the national curriculum.

Mr. Robin Squire: Under the present national curriculum order for physical education, games are mandatory for all pupils from age five to 14. My right hon. Friend has recently published proposals that would extend this requirement to all pupils of compulsory school age. However, individual sports are not prescribed.

Child Care

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what provision his Department makes for child care facilities for staff; what is the extent of subsidy to nursery places and holiday play schemes; if his Department *(a)* subscribes to "Childcare Solutions" and *(b)* makes child care vouchers available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: London-based staff are able to use the Westminster holiday play scheme which is organised by the Office of Public Service and Science. The cost of places is shared equally by parents and the Department. In the year ending 31 March 1994, six members of staff used the scheme for their children on one or more occasions.

Darlington-based staff have access to a play scheme which was set up at the instigation of the Department for Education. Places are shared with other civil servants working in the Darlington area. In the financial year ending 31 March 1994, 105 children have used the scheme. The costs are borne largely on a pro rata basis by the participating Departments, with parents making a small daily contribution.

The Department does not currently subscribe to "Childcare Solutions" or make child care vouchers available.

Colleges (Minor Works Funds)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he has taken to monitor the use of minor works funds in colleges; and what records are available to show the purposes for allocation of these funds in each college.

Mr. Boswell: The monitoring of the use of allocations from the Further Education Funding Council for England for minor works in colleges is a matter for the FEFC.

Minor works funds are paid to colleges by FEFC on production of contractors' invoices and architects' certificates. These are checked against a detailed schedule of works required at each college, prepared for FEFC by Hunter and Partners, chartered surveyors. The FEFC will also be conducting spot-checks of minor works at colleges in the coming months. Colleges are required as a condition of funding to have adequate systems of accounting, audit and internal control, and are thus in a position to demonstrate from their own records how their funds have been used.

Colleges are permitted to transfer recurrent funding received from FEFC to capital purposes, subject to any limits which FEFC may choose to impose. Colleges'

governing bodies have operational autonomy, and are free to decide how to spend such funding in the best interests of their college.

The FEFC must be consulted about transactions affecting land or buildings which involve capital sums in excess of £100,000, and where FEFC funds are likely to be required for maintenance of the property. Its consent is required where its funding is applied to developments significantly affecting the value of property, or where material disposals of publicly funded assets are envisaged.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Motor Vehicles (Explosives)

Mr. Robathan: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on how many occasions since 1990 motor cars have been found to contain explosives, or had explosives placed underneath them, in Northern Ireland.

Sir John Wheeler: The available information is for all motor vehicles, including motor cars, and is as follows:

	Number of incidents
Vehicle Bombs	116
Under car booby traps	97

Figures for "finds" recovered specifically from motor vehicles are not available.

Mr. Robathan: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on how many occasions bicycles containing illegal explosive devices have been used by terrorists in incidents in Northern Ireland since 1990.

Sir John Wheeler: Once, on 30 March 1990.

Fire Safety

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how the views of the fire service branch, Department of the Environment (Northern Ireland), will be sought and taken into account during the present cross-Department review of fire safety legislation and its enforcement within the United Kingdom.

Mr. Tim Smith: Copies of the report of the scrutiny of fire safety legislation and enforcement have been sent to the Department for comment and for circulation to other interested bodies. Any comments submitted to the review team will be considered by Ministers when the consultation period has ended.

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether the final decision on changes to fire safety legislation and its enforcement in Northern Ireland, following the current cross-Department review, will rest with Parliament.

Mr. Tim Smith: Full implementation of the recommendations in the report of the scrutiny of fire safety legislation and enforcement would require changes to both primary and subordinate legislation. Changes to primary legislation would require an Order-in-Council. Changes to subordinate legislation while subject to consultation, could be introduced without debate. However, no decisions on implementation will be made before consultation on the report ends on 31 October 1994.

Drug Offences

Rev. William McCrea: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women were convicted of drug offences in Northern Ireland during (i) 1992 and (ii) 1993.

Sir John Wheeler: The information is as follows:

Persons convicted of drug offences in Northern Ireland: at all courts

Year	*Male*	*Female*
1992	262	12
1993	401	22

Homelessness

Rev. William McCrea: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people were accepted as statutorily homeless in Northern Ireland during the last three years; and how many are *(a)* over 21 years old and *(b)* under 21 years old.

Mr. Tim Smith: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. However, I am advised by its chief executive that the numbers of applicants accepted as being either homeless or threatened with homelessness in the last three years are as follows:

Year	*Number of applicants*
1991-92	7,494
1992-93	7,549
1993-94	7,216

Information is not recorded on the number of applicants over and under 21 years of age.

Child Care

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what provision his Department makes for child care facilities for staff: what is the extent of subsidy to nursery places and holiday play schemes; if his Department *(a)* subscribes to "Childcare Solutions" and *(b)* makes child care vouchers available; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Wheeler: In the Northern Ireland civil service departments staff may contribute to staff child care costs where this is justified on value-for-money grounds. There are currently 36 subsidised places provided in registered nurseries. The Child Support Agency Northern Ireland subsidises 50 per cent. of the weekly cost up to a maximum of £30 and the Department of the Environment (NI) subsidises 35 per cent. of the weekly cost up to a maximum of £28. In addition eight holiday play schemes are assisted. The holiday play schemes which are located throughout Northern Ireland are deficit funded in their first year and thereafter 50 per cent. of accommodation and 40 per cent. of staff costs are funded. The Northern Ireland civil service does not subscribe to "Childcare Solutions" or provide child care vouchers to staff.

The London Office currently subsidises four places in a registered nursery. The amount of the subsidy is 50 per cent. of the full cost each week.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Child Care

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what provision his Department makes for child care facilities for staff; what is the extent of subsidy to nursery places and holiday playschemes; if his Department *(a)* subscribes to "Childcare Solutions" and *(b)* makes child care vouchers available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: This answer covers the Cabinet Office, including the Office of Public Service and Science and its agencies, the Central Office of Information, and Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

Workplace nurseries are available to staff at the Civil Service college and the Chessington computer centre. Holiday play schemes are available to staff working in departmental buildings in London and at CCTA in Norwich.

The Civil Service college contributed £11,819 to staff places at its nursery in 1993-94. Chessington computer centre contributed £39,493 to staff places at its nursery in 1993-94.

The Westminster holiday play scheme is available to all staff in London and is subsidised by reimbursing staff 50 per cent. of the cost incurred. The holiday play scheme available to staff at CCTA in Norwich is subsidised at a rate of £850 per annum.

The Westminster holiday play scheme is also available to COI staff in London and is subsidised by reimbursing staff 50 per cent. of the cost incurred.

A workplace nursery and holiday play scheme is available to HMSO staff in Norwich. In 1993-94, HMSO contributed £81,370 to the nursery and £1,757 to the holiday play scheme.

The Cabinet Office, the OPSS and its agencies, the COI and HMSO do not subscribe to "Childcare Solutions" or make child care vouchers available.

When determining what child care assistance to provide, the Cabinet Office, the OPSS and its agencies, the COI and HMSO, in common with all other Departments, ensure that it is justified on value for money grounds.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 8 July 1994

ENVIRONMENT

Unfit Properties

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish tables showing for each region and nation an estimate of the number of unfit properties, together with the distribution of these properties by tenure, and the number of renovation grants committed in the most recent available year.

Sir George Young: The first table shows estimates of the numbers of unfit dwellings. The second table shows estimates of approvals of mandatory and discretionary renovation grants in England during the financial year 1993-94. Figures are provided for England. For figures for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, I refer the Member to the respective Secretaries of State.

Table 1: Unfit Dwellings: by Tenure and Region: England 1991

Thousands of dwellings

Standard statistical region	*Owner occupied*	*Private rented*	*Local authority*	*Housing association*	*Vacant*	*Total*
Northern	31	32	21	4	10	99
Yorkshire and Humberside	85	27	31	2	11	156
East Midlands	90	19	22	0	7	138
East Anglia	34	15	11	2	3	65
Greater London	127	56	69	24	25	301
South East	119	64	26	5	26	239
South West	57	33	14	0	18	123
West Midlands	39	39	29	0	9	117
North West	132	47	42	3	36	260
England	715	333	265	41	145	1,498

Source: English House Condition Survey.

Table 2: Mandatory and discretionary renovation grants: Approvals 1993-94 Numbers of grants

Standard statistical region	*Mandatory*	*Discretionary*
Northern	2,750	300
Yorkshire and Humberside	4,240	1,040
East Midlands	4,110	1,040
East Anglia	1,420	90
Greater London	4,500	520
South East	6,300	1,100
South West	3,610	340
West Midlands	4,590	370
North West	5,200	420
England	36,710	5,230

Source: Estimated from reports by local authorities on the housing statistics return P1D.

Juveniles (Publicity)

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidelines he has issued to local authority councillors in respect of using juveniles under local authority supervision for publicity purposes.

Mr. Baldry: None. The only guidelines on local authority publicity which my Department has issued is the 1988 code of recommended practice on local authority publicity which does not cover the use of juveniles for publicity purposes. I have placed a copy of the code in the Library.

Carbon Dioxide Emissions

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what were the figures for carbon dioxide emissions resulting from household use of energy in the United Kingdom in each year since 1990; and what is the *(a)* estimate and *(b)* Government target for 2000.

Mr. Atkins: The 16th edition of the "Digest of Environmental Protection and Water Statistics" shows that emissions of carbon dioxide from household energy use were estimated to be 42 million tonnes of carbon—MtC—in 1990, 44 MtC in 1991 and 43 MtC in 1992. Emissions in 1990 were relatively low because the year was particularly warm. The Government have not set a specific target for domestic sector emissions in 2000, although the measures announced in our climate change programme are expected to achieve a reduction of around 4 MtC below the underlying trend, which is currently expected to be about flat for the domestic sector.

Climate Change (Insurance)

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with representatives of Lloyd's insurance market on the risks associated with global climate change.

Mr. Atkins: I have had no such discussions, but the possible impact of climate change on the financial services industry, including insurance, is one of the issues that will be addressed in the second assessment report of the intergovernmental panel on climate change, and my department is providing financial support for one United Kingdom expert who has been asked to act as a contributing author on that issue.

Housing Safety

Mr. Gale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce new controls to improve safety standards in houses in multiple occupation.

Sir George Young: The Government are aware of the continuing concern about the number of hotels in resort areas which are operating as benefit hostels and of the wider concern about safety standards in all houses in multiple occupation—HMOs.

Ministers share these concerns, but they are also anxious to avoid regulation unless it can be clearly demonstrated that such regulation is both essential and practical.

Local authorities already have considerable powers to improve standards in HMOs, and to establish HMO registration schemes. They also have a statutory duty to ensure adequate fire safety standards in the larger HMOs. The issue of benefit hostels raises separate considerations and planning controls relating to the conversion from hotel to hostel use have recently been tightened.

It is clearly necessary to consider carefully what more, if anything, needs to be done in both these areas. I have therefore instructed my officials in the Department of the Environment to begin immediate discussions with interested parties, on the case for a licensing system and how it might operate, with a view to issuing a formal consultation paper in the late summer. Full-scale licensing would require primary legislation and the paper will need to examine the scope for measures to tackle these problems both with or without legislation.

EDUCATION

Contracts

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education on what occasions in the last 10 years he or a Minister in his Department has given a direction to civil servants to award a contract against the advice of the civil service; what was the subject matter of the contract and its value; and when it was awarded.

Mr. Boswell: The Secretary of State has not in the last 10 years directed the Department's accounting officer to award any contract against official advice.

Special Educational Needs Conferences

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many conferences his Department has organised to promote the new code of practice for special educational needs; when and where they are to be held; what is the cost for a delegate from a school to attend; and how much additional copies of the information packs on the code of practice will cost.

Mr. Forth: The Department, together with the Department of Health, the Welsh Office, the National Children's Bureau and the Council for Disabled Children, arranged six conferences to help disseminate the code of practice on the identification and assessment of special educational needs. The conferences were held in London on 15 June, Manchester on 21 June, York on 24 June, Cardiff on 1 July, Bristol on 5 July and Birmingham on 7 July. The cost of attendance for each delegate was £94. Delegates were given an information pack including a copy of the code, the guide for parents and a handbook. Additional copies of the code and the guide for parents can be obtained free; additional copies of the handbook cost £6·50 each.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Child Witnesses

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what measures are being taken by courts in Staffordshire to protect child witnesses, with particular reference to the use of screens and television link equipment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Both court centres in Staffordshire, namely Stafford and Stoke on Trent, have screens available, and Stafford also has live television link equipment and video playback equipment for use in the presentation of evidence by child witnesses. All magistrates courts have access to screens and the use of the television link equipment at Stafford, if required.

Contracts

Mr. Byers: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department on what occasions in the last 10 years he or a Minister in his Department has given a direction to civil servants to award a contract against the advice of the civil service; what was the subject matter of the contract and its value; and when it was awarded.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Never.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Somalia

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth affairs what progress has been made recently by *(a)* the United Nations development programme, *(b)* the Food and Agriculture Organisation, *(c)* the World Health Organisation, *(d)* UNOSOM—the United Nations operation in Somalia, *(e)* the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and *(f)* UNICEF in developing reconstruction and other services in north west Somalia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Details of the activities of UNDP, FAO, WHO and the role of UNOSOM in north-west Somalia have been provided in answers to the hon. Member on 24 February at columns *398-99*, 28 February at column *546*, 1 March at column *631*, 15 April at columns 303 and 329 and 14 June at columns 393-94.

UNICEF activities in the region include: health—mother and child health programmes, immunisation, treatment and prevention of cholera, support for hospitals and health centres; education—construction of one Koranic school in Hargeisa, with 10 additional schools targeted for rehabiliation, training programme for koranic school teachers; and water and sanitation—emergency trucking of water, rehabilitation of shallow wells and hand pump installation.

UNHCR has confirmed the completion of 148 quick impact projects—QUIPS—to assist the resident population and returning refugees. A further 216 projects continue

including those in the water, health, education, agriculture, livestock and income generation sectors. UNHCR has also made available US$2·6 million for demining activities and is involved in discussions with regional authorities on the repatriation of Somali refugees from Ethiopia and Djibouti.

The United Nations development office is planning a multi-donor mission to Woquooly Galbeed region to take forward discussions with regional authorities on the priorities and conditions necessary for developing reconstruction activities and services to that region.

Know-how Fund Projects

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list each know-how fund project by country and date; and how much has been *(a)* committed and *(b)* spent on each project.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Fabricant) on 28 June at column *471*. Such lists are placed in the Libraries of both Houses at regular intervals.

Know-how fund expenditure in recipient countries to March 1933—detailed figures for 1993-4 are not yet available—is as follows:

	£
Albania	39,000
Azerbaijan	81,000
Belarus	26,000
Bulgaria	2,810,000
Former Czechoslovakia	14,599,000
Georgia	26,000
Former German Democratic Republic	502,000
Hungary	13,023,000
Latvia	350,000
Lithuania	486,000
Poland	32,722,000
Romania	3,823,000
Russian Federation	14,475,000
Slovenia	45,000
Ukraine	3,193,000
Regional projects[1]	4,969,000

[1] For 1992-93 includes Environment projects.

Palestine

Mr. Ottaway: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further assistance Her Majesty's Government are providing to the new Palestinian administration in Gaza and Jericho.

Mr. Hurd: In response to the urgent needs of the Palestinian authority, Her Majesty's Government have decided to provide an extra £5 million of bilateral assistance this year. A total of £3 million will be for immediate running costs, and £2 million for increased technical cooperation. Part of these funds will be for the Palestinian police. This will help meet the urgent requirements in the key area of maintaining law and order.

The success of the new Palestinian administration in Gaza and Jericho is critical for the future of the peace process. Provision of start-up costs is an immediate need.

Her Majesty's Government have previously announced their intention to contribute £70 million of assistance to the Palestinians and the peace process during 1994-95 and 1996-97, through bilateral and multilateral channels. Many programmes are already underway. Their focus is support for the structures of Palestinian administration: the police, for whom we are already providing training and equipment; the Palestinian Monetary Authority; legal structures and the judiciary; water management and health care. We are also providing assistance for the planned Palestinian elections.

HOME DEPARTMENT

National Lottery

Mr. Alan Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects the first grants to be made to charities by the National Lottery Charities Board.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: This will be a matter for the board to decide.

Electoral Law (Disabled People)

Mr. Alan Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what role will be played by his Department in the forthcoming consultation on disability; and what plans he has to publish a consultation paper on countering unfair discrimination against disabled people in electoral matters.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. Friend, the Minister for Disabled People, will be co-ordinating action on this front and will involve other Departments as necessary. We have no plans to produce a separate consultation paper.

Bicycles

Mr. Robathan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many occasions bicycles have been found to contain illegal explosive devices for the use of terrorists, on the mainland of Great Britain.

Mr. Howard: The available records indicate that there have been two explosions in Great Britain involving bicycle bombs: in 1939 an IRA bicycle bomb exploded in Coventry killing five people and in 1979 a bomb exploded in a mailbag on a postman's bicycle in Streatley, Berkshire. Since then there have been three occasions when Irish Republican terrorists are believed to have been responsible for bicycle bomb attacks elsewhere, twice in Northern Ireland and once at a British military installation in Germany.

Computer Contracts

Mr. Keen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the current position of his Department over the award of the contracts for the processing of historical criminal records to *(a)* overseas based and *(b)* United Kingdom based processing companies; and whether members of the project team have visited processing facilities in the Philippines with regard to this contract.

Mr. Howard: After careful consideration of the competing bids, which included a visit by members of the project team to the Philippines, it has been decided to award the contract to PCL Group, which submitted the bid

which was judged to represent the best overall value for money to the taxpayer. The work will be carried out, under conditions of the strictest security, in Rickmansworth and Glasgow. The contract provides for the conversion of some 3 million records over 18 months, creating a database which will be of immense value to the police service in the investigation of crime.

Mr. Keen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what important factors his Department uses when determining the award of contracts involving computerisation of *(a)* criminal records and *(b)* general processing information of a sensitive nature.

Mr. Howard: The criteria for evaluation will vary according to the nature of the work to be done; the details are given in the announcement in the Official Journal of the European Communities which launches every substantial procurement. In the case of the current project to computerise the national collection of criminal records, the award criteria, other than price, were stated as

"Proven ability to process the required throughput volumes, achieving the required quality and security levels, in the required timescale" (Supplement to the Official Journal of the European Communities, 25 November and 4 December 1993).

Jersey

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make representations to the Government of Jersey concerning their refusal to allow United Kingdom citizens to gain residential and home ownership rights on the island.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No. Jersey is an internally self-governing dependency of the Crown, and by constitutional convention my right hon. and learned Friend does not seek to intervene in matters such as the island's housing regulations.

Polling Stations (Disabled Access)

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made by his Department since April 1992 to make polling stations more accessible to people with disabilities.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 7 July 1994]:* We regularly remind local authorities about their obligation to choose, wherever practicable, buildings which provide access for the disabled. Advice on helping disabled electors provided by the Spastics Society was circulated to returning officers in April 1993. The guidance included a checklist for carrying out accessibility audits at polling stations. A further reminder about the needs of disabled voters was included in our guidance for acting returning officers at the European parliamentary elections earlier this year. My officials met representatives of the Spastics Society and the Royal National Institute for the Blind as part of the post-election review and their concerns have been reflected by the working groups which reported their findings in March. My officials have recently met representatives of the local authority associations to discuss the findings and will report to me in due course on the outcome of the post-election review.

EMPLOYMENT

Unfair Dismissal

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what proportion of unfair dismissal claims have resulted in reinstatement in each of the last five years;

(2) how many unfair dismissal claims have resulted in reinstatement in each of the last five years.

Miss Widdecombe: Only about one third of all unfair dismissal claims are heard by an industrial tribunal. The majority are settled or withdrawn, often as a result of conciliation by the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service. The number of unfair dismissal claims where reinstatement or re-engagement have been ordered by an industrial tribunal and their proportion of all unfair dismissal claims is shown in the following table:

1 April to 31 March	*Number*	*Per cent.*
1989-90	59	0·33
1990-91	63	0·32
1991-92	71	0·28
1992-93	73	0·22
1993-94	72	0·17

Gender Identity Disorder

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to reinforce the employment rights of individuals suffering from gender identity disorder.

Miss Widdecombe: We have no such plans.

Industrial Tribunals

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to make it clear on the face of the application form for an industrial tribunal hearing that consent to having the case heard by a chairman sitting alone in chambers, once given, cannot be withdrawn.

Miss Widdecombe: Industrial tribunals are independent judicial bodies and such matters are for the presidents of the tribunals to consider. However, I understand that the tribunals' new explanatory booklet on procedures, which the guidance note on the application form asks applicants to read, will make it clear that once such written consent is given by the parties it cannot be withdrawn, although the chairman may exercise his discretion to sit with lay members.

Gas Poisoning and Explosions

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many non-industrial deaths and serious injuries have occurred in each of the last five years due to gas poisoning and explosions.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is shown in the table:

	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93
Number of fatalities					
Explosion/fire	6	15	11	8	3[1]
Carbon monoxide poisoning	41	34	30	33	39[1]
Number of injuries					
Explosion/fire	42	67	48	63	33[1]
Carbon monoxide poisoning	94	88	131	184	170[1]

[1] Provisional.

The statistics, as gathered, do not differentiate between fires and explosions. Carbon monoxide poisoning is caused by the products of combustion escaping from an appliance into living accommodation. The gas supplied through the mains is not poisonous.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

British Library

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what are the reasons for the increase in the cost of building the new British library; and what steps are being taken to control the budget.

Mr. Brooke: A former Minister for the Arts, Mr. Luce, announced to the House on 5 June 1990, that the total cost of the project would be about £450 million. This cash budget has not changed, although it is likely to be exceeded temporarily while we deal with the commercial issues arising from the technical problems encountered recently. I remain determined to bring the overall project costs back to the cash budget set in 1990.

An independent consultant carries out cost risk analyses for the Department of National Heritage at regular intervals to ascertain confidence levels that the project will keep within the overall budget and we take action, as necessary, if these raise any concerns. As a result of one such analysis during 1993, we reduced the cost of the two phases of the project, in full consideration with the British library.

Monthly financial reports are produced for the department showing, for each element of the work, the amount spent and committed against budget. Quantity surveyors value the cost of the work as it proceeds and the management contractor and independent superintending officer each certify what has been done before we authorise payment. We also exercise strict control over contractual changes which have to be carefully examined and costed before we approve them, where justified.

Pools Advertising

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what representations he has received from the advertising association regarding pools advertising on television and radio.

Mr. Brooke: The director-general of the Advertising Association wrote to me in November 1993 asking me to reconsider the ban on pools advertising on television and radio.

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what representations he has received from the Pools Promoters Association on amendments to codes of practice of the Independent Television Commission and the Independent Radio Authority regarding pools advertising.

Mr. Brooke: None.

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) what estimate he has made on the effect of the national lottery's turnover if the football pools were given equal access to advertising on television and radio;

(2) what estimate he has made of the effect on pools turnover if a national lottery is permitted to advertise on television and radio and pools are not.

Mr. Brooke: None.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Regional Financial Assistance

Mr. Milburn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what level of regional financial assistance was made available to each of the standard United Kingdom regions in each year since 1978-79 *(a)* at current prices and *(b)* at 1978-79 prices.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave him on 5 June 1992, *Official Report*, columns *676-78* for information on regional financial assistance since 1978-79. The latest information is regularly published in "Regional Trends". The GDP deflators to convert the expenditure to the 1978-79 prices are published in the public expenditure statistical supplement to the "Financial Statement and Budget Report".

Energy Report

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he has taken to publicise and distribute copies of his first annual energy report; what has been the cost of publication of the report; and if he will make a statement on the degree and type of response he has received on the report to date.

Mr. Eggar: I launched volume 1 of the first annual energy report at a press conference on 15 June and mentioned it subsequently at the press conference for the International Energy Agency review of United Kingdom energy policy on 30 June. About 250 copies of the report have been sent out to relevant parts of the media. Volume 2—the Brown Book—had been launched, as usual by the end of April, to coincide with the offshore technology conference in Houston. Further publicity for the report will be provided when the "Digest of Energy Statistics" is published later this month. HMSO, as publisher and vendor of the report, has also carried out its own publicity initiatives. Over 1,500 copies of volume 2 have been sold to date.

The direct cost of publishing the report was borne by HMSO. The cost of designing the new formats for the two volumes and of typesetting and proofing was about £40,000. The cost to the Department of official time

immediately involved in preparing both volumes of the report was about £120,000. In addition, officials in DTI and other Departments contributed to and commented on the report. This cost is estimated to be of the order of £10,000. The members of the energy advisory panel gave their time free of charge.

I have had a favourable reaction to the report from the energy advisory panel. Further reaction is invited within the report itself.

Radiocommunications Agency

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the effectiveness with which the Radiocommunications Agency is carrying out its functions in relation to interference problems in Tonge Park avenue, Bolton.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Radiocommunications Agency under its chief executive Jim Norton. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Jim Norton to Mr. Peter Thurnham, dated 8 July 1994:

The President of the Board of Trade has asked me to reply to your Question about the Agency's handling of an interference problem in Tonge Park Avenue, Bolton.

The last investigation carried out by the Radiocommunications Agency in Tonge Park Avenue was in 1992, at which time residents reported an amateur radio installation as the source of interference to television and radio reception. Agency staff inspected the amateur station and in September 1992, following extensive tests, the amateur agreed to voluntarily restrict his power output. Apparently this cured the problem as no further complaints were received.

However, you wrote to me on 28 June 1994 on behalf of your constituents Mr. and Mrs. Lever of 41 Tonge Park Avenue to say that the interference has re-occurred. I am sorry to learn of this. I have asked my local staff to carry out an up to date inspection of the amateur station and I will write again as soon as possible.

Insolvency Service

Mr. Mark Robinson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what targets he has set the Insolvency Service executive agency for 1994-95.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Against the background of a declining number of compulsory insolvencies and a significant increase in the resources for 1994-95, I have set the Insolvency Service the target of reducing the number of its open cases to a level equivalent to approximately 12 months inpout. This will involve the service in closing 53,000 cases. I also expect the service to increase the number of proceedings taken for the disqualification of directors of failed companies where there is evidence of misconduct and, similarly, to increase the effectiveness of its investigative effort. To that end official receivers will be placing greater emphasis on disqualification and prosecution work. This will be aided by an increased use of private sector professionals and by the strengthening of the specialist's resources of the disqualification unit.

In addition, I have set the service the following quality of service targets for 1994-95:

- to report to creditors on assets and liabilities within 8 weeks in at least 80 per cent. of all cases; and within 12 weeks in 98 per cent. of all cases;
- to hold the initial meeting of creditors within 12 weeks in at least 80 per cent. of all cases; and within 16 weeks in 98 per cent. of all cases;
- to submit reports within 10 months in at least 80 per cent. of cases where there is evidence of criminality;
- to submit disqualification reports within 15 months in at least 80 per cent. of cases where there is evidence of unfit conduct by directors;
- to check and action at least 95 per cent. of payment requisitions within five days or by the due date.

These targets are based on an assumption of 35,000 new cases and a requirement to operate within its agreed expenditure budget of £57·5 million for 1994-95.

In addition, I expect the chief executive of the service to continue to reply within 10 working days to all letters from Members of Parliament delegated to him for reply.

Telecommunications Licences

Mr. Mark Robinson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many telecommunications licences have been granted since the duopoly review in March 1991.

Mr. Heseltine: A total of 47 telecommunications licences have been issued since March 1991. In addition, I have now decided in principle to grant licences to Concert —the BT/MCI joint venture which has recently obtained clearance from the United States Department of Justice —and AT and T. Draft licences will be prepared and will be subject to consultation in due course. Public consultation is obligatory for all public telecommunications operator licences, such as AT and T's. It is not obligatory in the case of Concert's non-PTO application. However, I have decided that in this case it would be appropriate to give interested parties the opportunity to comment. The issue of the licences is subject to agreement on the detailed terms and conditions.

Regional Support

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was *(a)* the planned expenditure and *(b)* the actual expenditure on regional support in 1993-94.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 28 June 1994]:* The information on planned expenditure is published in the DTI's 1994 "Expenditure Plans, 1994-95 to 1996-97", a copy of which is available in the House of Commons Library. Final figures on the actual expenditure on regional support in 1993-94 are not yet available. They will be published in the appropriation accounts in due course.

TREASURY

Severe Hardship Unit, Glasgow

Mr. Byers: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which members of his Department visited the Department of Social Security severe hardship unit in Glasgow in April; what was the purpose of their visit; what recommendations they have made following their visit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: Treasury officials paid a visit to the severe hardship unit in Glasgow for discussions about the administration of income support payments to young people. Advice from them or from any other official to Ministers would be treated as confidential in the normal way.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Crown Prosecution Service

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Attorney-General when and by whom the decision was taken to set up a committee to investigate the possibility that the Crown Prosecution Service might be privatised; who are the members of that committee and what other positions they hold; how many times the committee has met; what provisional date has been set for privatisation; what plans he has to publish a Green Paper and to consult publicly on the proposed privatisation; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: I announced on 6 December 1993, *Official Report*, column *59*, that consideration would be given to whether the Crown Prosecution Service, the Serious Fraud Office and the Treasury Solicitor's Department should become executive agencies under the "next steps" initiative. I further announced on 27 April 1994, *Official Report*, column *234*, that prior options studies were being undertaken, to establish whether agency status or other options would be appropriate. The Government's first report on the citizens charter, published in 1992, announced that privatisation is one of the options considered before an agency is set up. Other options include contractorisation and market testing.

The prior options and agency studies for CPS and SFO are being overseen by an interdepartmental steering group which comprises officials from my own Department, CPS, SFO, the Lawyers Management Unit, Home Office, Lord Chancellors Department, Treasury and Office of Public Service and Science. The steering group has so far met on two occasions and is charged with reporting to me by late autumn this year. No decisions have yet been made nor will they be made until the process is completed. In my announcement on 27 April I invited contributions from interested parties. These continue to be welcome and should be sent to:

Mr. S. Guy
Crown Prosecution Service,
50 Ludgate Hill,
London EC4M 7EX

Ms J. Rowe
Serious Fraud Office,
Elm House,
10-16 Elm Street,
London, WC1X OBJ

SOCIAL SECURITY

Child Support Agency

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) to what extent problems in the Child Support Agency computer system and the EDS application have contributed to the backlog in the agency's work;

(2) to what extent the Child Support Agency office staff of clerical grade are finding difficulty in accessing, using and reacting to their computer system; and what assessment has been made of the effects of, and remedies for, the difficulties experienced by Child Support Agency staff;

(3) to what extent the Child Support Agency has been hampered in its national operation by *(a)* downtime of the Child Support Agency computer system central IBM mainframe computer and data links and *(b)* the overrun of night-time batch processing into office hours;

(4) how many incorrect assessments, mis-identifying of absent fathers and other maladministration have been made due to mistakes involving the Child Support Agency computer system;

(5) what proportion of those cases taken on by the Child Support Agency are being dealt with clerically without the aid of the Child Support Agency computer system; and how many of the assessments made by the agency have been made clerically;

(6) to what extent the Child Support Agency has been hampered in the regional centres by non-availability of the centre's own server computers.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to my hon. Friend.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. James Pawsey, dated 8 July 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question regarding the Child Support Agency computer system.

As with any large, new system, areas where improvements can be made have been identified. There is a continuous programme of improvements to the system including a planned quarterly enhancement to increase functionality. All relevant staff have been trained to use the system, and are generally doing so competently. Advice and support are available in the event of difficulty.

You asked how many incorrect assessments had been made due to mistakes involving the computer system. Wrong assessments can occur because clients of the Agency provide incorrect information or because Agency staff make mistakes. Whilst this can cause incorrect data entry, the computer system is not known, with one exception, to have caused an incorrect assessment or misidentification of an absent parent. The exception occurred recently when, due to a programming fault, errors occurred on 789 assessments. These were identified within two days and remedial action is being taken.

You were concerned about the effect of computer system downtime on Agency operations. Although non-availability of the system can have a disruptive effect, this cannot be measured precisely because the staff also perform non-system tasks which can be pursued during the course of any loss of service.

You also asked what proportion of cases are being dealt with clerically; and how many of the assessments made by the Agency have been made clerically. Figures available for the year 1993-94 show that a total of 205,400 assessments were made by the Agency, of which 8,100 were assessed clerically.

I hope that this reply is helpful.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many maintenance assessments have been wrongly calculated by the Child Support Agency since its establishment.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Greville Janner, dated 7 July 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about maintenance assessments which have been wrongly calculated.

The Agency routinely monitors maintenance assessments to ensure that they are accurate with regard to law, process, procedure and money to be paid. A composite accuracy rate is not available as such, but stringent procedures are in place to minimise the risk of inaccurate assessments.

Additionally, adjudication decisions and appeals in Agency centres are regularly examined by the Central Adjudication Services, an independent body who annually provide the Secretary of State with a report on the adjudication standard of the Agency.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what average amount of money received from absent parents the Child Support Agency holds at any time pending the forwarding of those payments to parents with care of children;

(2) how much interest the Child Support Agency has received to date from moneys received from absent parents prior to their payment over to parents with care of children.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from John T. Hughes to Mr. Hugh Bayley, dated 8 July 1994.

In her absence the Chief Executive, Mrs. Hepplewhite, has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Questions to the Secretary of State for Social Security about client funds temporarily held by the Agency.

I can confirm that the Agency does not receive interest from the bank in respect of client funds temporarily held by the Agency. Instead, the Agency's bank charges are abated.

During April and May this year, the average amount of money received from absent parents and awaiting onward transmission to parents with care at any one time was approximately £620,000. This is based on the average volume of daily receipts, the proportion attributable to parents with care and the clearance times of the different payment methods.

I hope that you find this reply helpful.

Lesbian Parents

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what maintenance payments are due from fathers of children born to unmarried lesbians; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: Under the Child Support Act and regulations, a parent with care who claims or receives income support, family credit or disability working allowance is required to give her authority for maintenance to be pursed from the absent parent unless there is a risk of harm or undue distress occurring to her or any child living with her. If benefit is not in payment it is a matter for the parent with care whether she seeks a child support maintenance assessment.

A man who fathers a child has a responsibility to pay maintenance under child support legislation. This applies whether the mother lives alone or with a new partner. However, where a woman attends a licensed centre for artificial insemination by an anonymous donor the donor cannot be treated as the absent parent.

Occupational Pension Schemes

Mr. Duncan-Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he plans to lay regulations before Parliament to allow occupational pension schemes to reinstate former employees' protected rights as he announced in his statement to the House on 23 June, *Official Report*, column 359.

Mr. Hague: The Protected Rights (Transfer Payment) Regulations 1987 preclude the transfer of protected rights into an occupational pension scheme where the member is not employed by the contributing employer. Following representations from officials of the Securities and Investments Board and the occupational pensions sector, we have decided to remove this restriction and have today laid before Parliament appropriate amendment regulations. Reinstatement will remain at the discretion of the schemes' trustees in the light of their schemes' rules. However, the new regulations will enable schemes who wish to do so, to accept the transfer of protected rights even where the individual is no longer employed by the contributing employer.

Contracts

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security on what occasions in the last 10 years he or a Minister in his Department has given a direction to civil servants to award a contract against the advice of the civil service; what was the subject matter of the contract and its value; and when it was awarded.

Mr. Lilley: I am advised that there is no knowledge of any such directions being issued in my Department in the last ten years.

WALES

Disability

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to ensure further education opportunities for young people suffering from muscular dystrophy; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Further Education Funding Council for Wales is responsible for ensuring adequate arrangements are in place to meet the needs of all students with learning difficulties or disabilities.

The Council has built into its recurrent funding methodology a significant element to recognise the discrete costs of provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and to enable such students to access and integrate successfully in mainstream courses.

Planning Procedures

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to ensure that full planning permission is required from county councils in order to construct any building, plant or machinery.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: No.

Contracts

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on what occasions in the last 10 years he or a Minister in his Department has given a direction to civil servants to award a contract against the advice of the civil service; what was the subject matter of the contract and its value; and when it was awarded.

Mr. Redwood: This information is not held centrally. I am looking at how difficult it would be to obtain it and at what cost.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to announce approval of and the names of the chairmen and board membership of those trusts intended to commence their existence on 1 April 1995.

Mr. Redwood: Decisions on whether or not to establish further NHS trusts in Wales are expected to be announced in the autumn following statutory public consultation. Announcement of the membership of any further trusts would be made as soon as possible thereafter.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list those health trusts in Wales which *(a)* are and *(b)* are not achieving a 6 per cent. rate of return with respect to the financial year 1993-94 management accounts.

Mr. Redwood: All but one of the 14 trusts expect to achieve a 6 per cent. rate of return for 1993-94. The rate of return for the South and East Wales ambulance trust may be marginally lower at around 5·7 per cent. The actual outcome will be known following the audit of the annual accounts for each trust.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received from the trusts in Wales with respect to the 6 per cent. rate of return on capital, with respect to rolling forward interest payments, or adjustment of the *(a)* 6 per cent. rate of return or *(b)* the valuation of capital stock; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: I have regular discussions with the chairmen of Welsh NHS trusts on a range of issues. Trusts have a duty to achieve their statutory financial targets.

GP Referral Letters

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairmen of the Welsh health authorities and trusts in relation to the timing of the opening of letters from general practitioners to consultants marked urgent and very urgent for triage by *(a)* others or *(b)* the consultants themselves; and what analysis he has made of the impact of setting maximum periods for the opening of general practitioner's referral letters.

Mr. Redwood: I have not discussed these matters with the chairmen of Welsh health authorities and trusts, nor have I considered assessing the impact of such targets.

DEFENCE

Dispersal Programme

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will estimate how many jobs in his Department, transferred to Glasgow under the dispersal programme, have subsequently been re-allocated elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Aitken: Some 1,400 jobs were transferred to Glasgow on dispersal in 1986. Of these, some 63 jobs in the directorate of contracts have been moved to collocate with the single-service directorates they support at Andover, Brampton and Bath.

Official Service Residences

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) of 1 July, *Official Report*, column *764*, if he will state the latest valuation of the official service residences and the annual running costs of the residences.

Mr. Hanley: It is, of course, not feasible to value properties accurately without placing them on the open market. My Department does, however, assign estimated sale valuations where possible and the latest valuation for official service residences is approximately £34,000,000. This valuation covers 67 of the 77 residences in the United Kingdom and overseas. Not all properties have a valuation assigned to them as some are located within defence establishments and could not be sold separately, whilst others belong to foreign Governments. Annual running costs for individual residences are not held centrally, but the total maintenance and furniture and equipment costs for the last two financial years for all residences is approximately £5,000,000. The annual cost for domestic and household staff for all residences is approximately £5,000,000.

Contracts

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what occasions in the last 10 years he or a Minister in his Department has given a direction to civil servants to award a contract against the advice of the civil service; what was the subject matter of the contract and its value; and when it was awarded.

Mr. Aitken: I refer the hon. Member to the answers given by my hon. Friend the Minister for the Armed Forces on 10 March 1994, *Official Report*, column *401*, and 22 March 1994, *Official Report*, column *174*, which list the occasions when a formal direction has been given, five of which related to the award of a contract. The value of individual contracts is commercial-in-confidence information.

TRANSPORT

Birmingham Northern Relief Road

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what was the cost of conducting the public inquiry into the Birmingham northern relief road which concluded in 1988;

(2) what stage the 1988 Birmingham northern relief road inquiry reached; and what happened to the report from that inquiry.

Mr. Key: These questions relate to matters which are now the responsibility of the Highways Agency; the chief executive will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Mr. Mike O'Brien, dated 7 July 1994:

You asked the Secretary of State for Transport what was the cost of conducting the 1988 inquiry into the Birmingham Northern Relief Road, what stage that inquiry reached, and what happened to the Inspector's report.

The 1988 public inquiry costs have not been isolated from other costs incurred on the public sector scheme. The costs could only be identified by reference to individual accounts and as this would incur a disproportionate amount of staff time and cost to research, I regret I am unable to supply you with the information you request.

The public inquiry into the publicly funded scheme closed in September 1988 after the Inspector had heard all the evidence. The Inspector's report of the inquiry was submitted to the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Transport at the end of March 1989. As you know, it has not been released and the Orders to which it related have been withdrawn.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to publish the report of the public inquiry into the Birmingham north relief road in 1988.

Mr. Key: None. The draft orders which were the subject of the inquiry have been withdrawn and the report would not be relevant to the scheme now proposed.

Environmental Impact Assessments

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 29 June, *Official Report*, columns *632-34*, if he will list each scheme for which an environmental impact assessment has been started.

Mr. Key: This question relates to the operational matters of the Highway Agency. I have asked the chief executive, Mr. Lawrie Haynes, to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Mr. Harry Cohen, dated 29 June 1994:

The Minister for Roads and Traffic, Mr. Robert Key, has asked me to write to you in reply to your recent Parliamentary question about environmental assessments.

An environmental assessment is carried out for each scheme in the national roads programme and an Environmental Statement is published for those schemes which are likely to have a significant effect on the environment.

The environmental assessment commences at a very early stage in the development of a scheme. The Trunk Road in England 1994 Review identifies the schemes in the national road programme together with their priority.

London Underground (Fires)

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 28 June, *Official Report*, column *478-80*, what changes have been made in the method used to calculate confirmed fire incidents on London Underground in any of the years since 1990; and when these changes were applied.

Mr. Norris: The method of calculation has not been changed since 1990.

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 28 June, *Official Report*, columns *478-80*, why no figures are available for confirmed fire incidents on London Underground before 1990.

Mr. Norris: Only figures from 1990 onwards are readily accessible from London Underground's database. Since 1988, Her Majesty's railway inspectorate has published some data on fires in its annual reports on railway safety, which are held in the House Libraries, but this is not in a format directly comparable with that already provided, and does not separately identify escalator fires.

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent discussions he has had with London Underground concerning fire safety precautions on London Underground rolling stock, how often checks are made on the fire safety of London Underground rolling stock; and if he will publish the content of those discussions.

Mr. Norris: I have regular meetings with London Underground to discuss a variety of issues, including safety. It is not our practice to disclose the content of such discussions, which are confidential to the participants. All London Underground trains are subject to routine maintenance procedures of which safety checks and inspections form an integral part. These include visual inspections of all fire extinguishers, emergency lighting, emergency exits and tests of train safety systems, such as passenger alarms, after every 24 hours of service. Further, more comprehensive, checks are made over longer periods.

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 28 June, *Official Report*, columns *478-80*, regarding fires on the London Underground; if he will provide equivalent figures for British Rail, Network SouthEast to 30 March 1994.

Mr. Freeman: The information is not readily available in the form requested. During the eight years of Network SouthEast's existence, accidents were reported, until about mid 1993, under BR regional headings, making direct retrieval of NSE data impracticable.

National figures are available in the HM railway inspectorate's annual reports, copies of which are in the Library.

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 28 June, *Official Report*, columns *478-80*, how many of the confirmed fire incidents, for each of the years for which figures are available, involved rolling stock that was in use; whether any passengers were using the rolling stock during any of those incidents; and how many passengers were involved in each confirmed fire incident on London Underground rolling stock.

Mr. Norris: Summary information on the total numbers of rolling stock fires and of passenger injuries on London Underground is published in the annual reports of Her Majesty's railways inspectorate on railway safety, which are held in the House Libraries. However, London Underground has advised that the further information requested is not readily available.

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 28 June, *Official Report*, column *478-80*, how many passengers were injured in fires on London Underground, in all categories; and how many staff were injured on London Underground in each of the years for which figures are available.

Mr. Norris: Summary information on passenger and staff injuries is published in the annual reports of Her Majesty's railways inspectorate, which are held in the House Libraries. However, London Underground has advised that a breakdown of the causes of such injuries to the level of detail requested is not readily available.

London Underground (Passenger Satisfaction)

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the cost to London Underground of the passengers charter in each of the last three years; and what discussions he has held with London Underground about them.

Mr. Norris: Production and distribution of the customer charter cost London Underground £114,000 in 1992, £248,000 in 1993, and £130,000 in 1994. I regularly discuss a wide range of issues with London Underground.

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish London Underground's customer satisfaction figures for 1993-94, indicating which targets were, and which were not, met; and when he last met London Underground to discuss the figures.

Mr. Norris: London Underground met all its customer satisfaction targets for 1993-4, and the figures are set out in the following table. I regularly discuss a wide range of issues with London Underground.

London Underground Limited: 1993-94 Customer satisfaction statistics

	Targets set for 1993-94	*Overall performance for year 1993-94*
Cleanliness of trains	81	85
Cleanliness of stations	89	90
Staff helpfulness and availability	86	88
Information on trains	86	93
Information on stations	81	83
Ticket purchasing	92	92

Source: London Underground Limited.

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he had with London Underground about the passengers. charter, published on 28 June; what consideration was given to including references to fire or accident safety on the London Underground; and what plans there are to include references to these matters in the charter.

Mr. Norris: I regularly discuss a wide range of issues with London Underground. Its 1994 charter includes a new target for customer satisfaction with safety and security.

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with London Underground about lowering ticket prices to encourage tourism and inward investment in the capital.

Mr. Norris: I regularly discuss a wide range of issues with London Underground. However I am not aware of any proposals by London Underground to reduce its ticket prices.

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with London Underground regarding the installation of help points at all London Underground stations; and by what year such installations will be complete.

Mr. Norris: I regularly discuss a wide range of issues with London Underground. The programme for installation of help points at underground stations is a matter for it, but I understand that no date has been set for all stations to be so equipped.

Motor Vehicle Pollutants

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will list the statutory controls currently applied to vehicle exhaust emissions;

(2) what representations he has received concerning the level of pollutants resulting from motor vehicle exhaust emissions;

(3) what consultations his Department has undertaken concerning the level of pollutants resulting from motor vehicle exhaust emissions;

(4) what consultations he has undertaken with other European Union states concerning the level of pollutants resulting from motor vehicle emissions;

(5) what plans he has to strengthen the controls currently applied to vehicle exhaust emissions.

Mr. Key: Regulations made under the Road Traffic Act 1988 control the construction and "type approval" of new vehicles and the use of vehicles as regards exhaust emissions. These are largely derived directly from obligations under EC directives. Enforcement of in-use requirements through the MOT and roadworthiness test is effected under vehicle testing regulations made under the 1988 Act. A convenient summary of emission requirements to be met by new vehicles entering into service can be found in the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 1993 (SI No. 1993 No. 2199).

The Department receives regular representations from Members and from the public at large on the effects of vehicle pollutants on the environment and health. The Department is also liaising closely with the Departments of Health and Environment on studies which they have commissioned on these matters.

The Department is actively involved with other member states and the European Commission in developing a range of measures at EC level to further reduce vehicle pollutants. Existing controls on emissions will be tightened in 1996 for all vehicles in use. Also in 1996, new heavy diesel powered vehicles will be required to meet more stringent emission standards, as will new cars and vans in 1997 under EC directives already agreed.

The Department has also taken a leading role in the EU with a number of initiatives aimed at further improvements in vehicle emissions. These include improved in-service measures to reduce diesel smoke and particulate emissions; the adoption of "on-vehicle" emission diagnostic systems to promote rapid repairs and permit effective roadside enforcement and during the annual test; and new test procedures for new vehicle approvals, to be combined with reduced emission limits, to more adequately reflect actual on-road behaviour and to take maximim advantage of emerging vehicle technology.

These measures form an integral part of a series being considered by the European Commission that will be applied to all classes of vehicle by the year 2000. In the light of the DoH and DOE sponsored studies currently underway, the Department will also be encouraging the Commission to propose emission standards in line with the advice given. Nevertheless, as a result of measures already in place, we are already set to see a marked and progressive decline in pollutants from motor vehicles that will extend well into the next decade.

Metro Systems

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with other European Transport Ministers regarding the provision of safe and effective metro systems.

Mr. Norris: My right hon. Friend regularly discusses a wide range of issues with European colleagues.

Coventry Eastern Bypass

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport who is responsible for the maintenance of the verges of the Coventry eastern bypass.

Mr. Key: The Highways Agency is responsible for the general maintenance of the verges of the Coventry eastern bypass. This is carried out by Warwickshire county council as maintenance agent for the agency. Litter clearance is the responsibility of Rugby district council and Coventry city council.

Driving Standards Agency

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the role of the DSA's service in the national network of driving test centres.

Mr. Key: Responsibility for the subject of this question has been delegated to the Driving Standards Agency under its chief executive Dr. S. J. Ford. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from S. J. Ford to Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody, dated 7 July 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked the Chief Executive to reply to the questions you asked about the role of DSA's service in the national network of driving test centres.

The primary aim of the Driving Standards Agency is to promote road safety by testing drivers and driving instructors fairly and efficiently. In pursuing this aim the Agency is expected to improve the efficiency and effectiveness with which it carries out the statutory functions of the Secretary of State for Transport in connection with driver testing. Driving tests are delivered through a network of driving test centres in Great Britain. The Agency aims to furnish a high quality of service to its customers. Ministers have confirmed that the preservation of the national network of centres is an important part of DSA's service, although a balance has to be struck between the cost of maintaining this network and the fees charged for tests.

Heavy Goods Vehicles

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what statutory requirements or guidance exists regarding speed and distance limitations for reversing heavy goods vehicles involved in road maintenance or repair work.

Mr. Key: There are no statutory requirements governing the speed or distance of reversing vehicles. However, the highway code says that drivers should reverse with care, and if they cannot see clearly, they should get someone to guide them. This is particularly relevant for large vehicles.

On road maintenance and repair work, as on other contract work, contractors are bound by health and safety legislation to assess the risk to staff and others of the work activities and to produce safe working procedures to minimise any risk. In certain circumstances, limitations may be placed under the contract on the distance which vehicles are allowed to reverse for operational reasons; and it is normal to have a maximum speed limit through the site.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he has taken to require heavy goods vehicles to be fitted with reversing alarms, reversing lights or be accompanied by a pedestrian look-out when reversing.

Mr. Key: Reversing alarms may be fitted as an aid to safety on heavy goods vehicles over 2 tonnes gross weight and to other categories of vehicles where the driver's vision might be obscured by the size or shape of the vehicle. Reversing lamps are permitted on all vehicles.

The prime responsibility for ensuring that reversing is carried out safely rests with the driver. The clear advice given in the highway code should be followed: drivers should reverse with care, and if they cannot see clearly, they should get someone to guide them.

Crossrail

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how he now envisages the crossrail project being taken forward; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: In view of the fact that the private Bill originally promoted by London Underground and British Rail cannot now be progressed, I have agreed with the promoters that they should instead seek powers for the project under the Transport and Works Act 1992. They will start work on this at once. It remains the Government's policy that the project should be financed as a joint venture, with a substantial private sector contribution.

Vehicle Emissions

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the figures for carbon dioxide emissions resulting from transport in the United Kingdom in each year since 1990; and what is *(a)* the estimate and *(b)* the Government target for 2000.

Mr. Key: The figures for carbon dioxide emissions resulting from transport are:

Year	*Emission/ MtC*[1]
1990	33
1991	33
1992	33
1993	[2]—

[1] Data from "Digest of Environmental Protection and Water Statistics (DoE 1994)
Million tonnes of Carbon emitted by source.
[2] No data as yet available.

"Climate Change—The UK Programme" published in January 1994 sets out how the Government intend to fulfil their Rio commitments and return emissions to their 1990 levels by 2000. Measures were identified in the programme to reduce projected emissions in 2000 by 10MtC to meet this aim. In the transport sector emissions in 2000 were forecast to be 36·5 MtC; annual increases in fuel duty of at least 5 per cent. above inflation are expected to reduce this level by about 2·5 MtC.

Contracts

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on what occasions in the last 10 years he or a Minister in his Department has given a direction to civil servants to award a contract against the advice of the civil service; what was the subject matter of the contract and its value; and when it was awarded.

Mr. Norris: None.

Rail Disputes

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consultation he has had with the chairman of Railtrack and the Health and Safety Commission concerning the instituting of an independent testing procedure for non-signalmen or taking control of panel boxes during periods of industrial dispute.

Mr. Freeman: The duty to ensure the competence of employees to carry out safety critical work rests with the employer, under the Railways (Safety Critical Work) Regulations 1994.

The Health and Safety Executive's railway inspectorate has carried out checks to ensure that Railtrack, as the employer of signalmen, allows only competent persons to take charge of panel boxes during periods of industrial dispute. The railway inspectorate will continue to carry out checks, as necessary.

Road Surfaces

Mr. David Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what studies his Department has made of the comparative costs of road resurfacing as between conventional asphalt surfaces and porous asphalt; what plans he has for a further use of porous asphalt in order to reduce road noise; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 20 June 1994]:* This question concerning road surfacings is an operational matter for the Highways Agency. I have asked the chief executive, Mr. Lawrie Haynes, to write to my right hon. Friend.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Mr. David Howell, dated 7 July 1994

The Minister for Roads and Traffic, Mr. Robert Key, has asked me to write to you in response to your question relating to comparative cost of porous asphalt and its use.

The Highways Agency monitors the cost of porous asphalt on contracts. These studies indicate that, for heavily trafficked trunk roads, the comparative cost of porous asphalt can be between 50 per cent. to 100 per cent. more expensive than conventional asphalt surfaces. This relates to the cost of the material itself. There are additional costs for increased road thickness to compensate for the lower strength of porous asphalt surfacing and for provision of appropriate drainage. While there are also indications that additional winter maintenance will be needed figures are not yet available for this.

The criteria for using porous asphalt were presented by the Minister to the House in the adjournment debate on 15 May 1992 and permit use where conditions are suitable and it is cost effective. They are set down more fully in Press Notice No. 204 issued on the 28 July 1992 a copy of which I attach. Porous asphalt surfacing is being considered for use on schemes within the criteria laid down.

Highways Agency

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the number of Department of Environment typists used by the Highways Agency; and what is the total cost per year of this.

Mr. Key: As this is a matter for the Highways Agency, I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Lady direct.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody, dated 7 July 1994.

The London offices of the Highways Agency make no use of DOE typists, and neither do the Agency's Regional Offices in Bedford, Birmingham, Bristol and Nottingham. The situation in Manchester, Leeds and Newcastle differs as follows:

Manchester; the Agency meets the cost of 6 DOE typists for which we expect to pay £81,318 in 1994/95.

Leeds; the Agency meets the cost of 3 typists plus half the costs of a typing manager which, for 1994/95 will be £55,731, and £11,773, respectively.

Newcastle; the Agency has use of a DOE typing pool under a service agreement. The cost of this service for 1994/95, based on accepted usage patterns, will be £87,594.

SCOTLAND

Local Government Finance

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish tables showing the current loan debt of each Scottish local authority in respect of their *(a)* general services capital programmes, *(b)* housing accounts and *(c)* other accounts, including those to which specific grant is paid; if in the case of *(a)* he will express this in terms of (i) total debt, (ii) annual repayment charges and (iii) annual cost to each eligible council tax payer; if in the case of *(b)* he will express this in terms of (i) total debt, (ii) annual repayment charges and (iii) annual burden on each tenant of that authority; if in the case of *(c)* he will specify the name of the account or programme and express the current fiscal situation in terms of (i) total debt, (ii) annual repayment charges and (iii) annual burden on each relevant individual; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: The tables give the latest available information separately for general fund services—excluding domestic sewerage—housing revenue account, water and sewerage services. Footnotes to the tables explain the source and derivation of the figures shown. Loan charges on general fund services are taken into account in the distribution of aggregate external finance to individual local authorities and the level of each authority's debt on these services has little or no effect on the level of council tax.

General Fund

	Capital debt[1] outstanding at 31 March 1993 (excluding domestic sewarage) *(£000)*	*Loan charges[2] 1993-94 (excluding domestic sewerage)* *(£000)*
Scotland	4,301,088	652,406
Borders	77,820	11,781
Central	127,988	19,262
Dumfries and Galloway	93,410	13,489
Fife	187,636	27,392
Grampian	304,285	45,652
Highland	181,661	27,276
Lothian	423,144	65,043
Strathclyde	1,268,029	193,542
Tayside	177,980	29,514
Orkney	0	6,565
Shetland	0	7,350
Western Isles	86,210	14,061

	Capital debt[1] outstanding at 31 March 1993 (excluding domestic sewarage) (£000)	Loan charges[2] 1993-94 (excluding domestic sewerage) (£000)
Berwickshire	3,631	716
Ettrick and Lauderdale	6,392	917
Roxburgh	8,873	1,186
Tweeddale	2,644	444
Clackmannan	8,564	1,166
Falkirk	23,595	3,583
Stirling	23,644	3,429
Annandale and Eskdale	4,256	749
Nithsdale	10,516	1,376
Stewartry	2,190	354
Wigtown	5,149	832
Dunfermline	11,200	1,584
Kirkcaldy	16,021	2,160
North East Fife	12,830	1,772
Aberdeen City	62,914	9,431
Banff and Buchan	8,443	1,129
Gordon	9,788	1,512
Kincardine and Deeside	6,894	962
Moray	10,871	1,736
Badenoch andd Strathspey	1,481	184
Caithness	5,068	786
Inverness	7,652	1,173
Lochaber	6,425	1,086
Nairn	1,703	283
Ross and Cromarty	17,509	3,024
Skye and Lochalsh	5,448	864
Sutherland	3,864	675
East Lothian	15,749	2,706
Edinburgh City	237,430	31,502
Midlothian	11,572	1,830
West Lothian	22,021	2,920
Argyll and Bute	34,917	5,171
Bearsden and Milngavie	6,522	1,065
Clydebank	25,500	3,307
Clydesdale	8,614	1,473
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	8,390	1,191
Cumnock and Doon Valley	8,426	1,393
Cunninghame	29,948	4,676
Dumbarton	13,759	2,650
East Kilbride	6,622	1,215
Eastwood	4,894	656
Glasgow City	363,156	42,632
Hamilton	25,864	3,465
Inverclyde	38,278	4,992
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	13,683	2,031
Kyle and Carrick	18,081	3,070
Monklands	34,801	5,639
Motherwell	37,832	5,779
Renfrew	35,247	5,490
Strathkelvin	18,124	1,842
Angus	7,778	1,391
Dundee City	38,489	7,452
Perth and Kinross	19,664	2,828

Sources: [1] Capital debt outstanding returns (CDO 93).
[2] Provisional outturns 1993-94.

	Housing		
	[1]Capital debt 31 April 1994 £ thousands	[1]Loan charges 1994-95 £ thousands	Rent burden per house [2]per annum £
Scotland	3,867,414	503,170	775·40
Orkney Islands	7,314	912	793·04
Shetland Islands	56,197	5,535	2,222·16
Western Isles	44,898	6,426	2,951·91
Berwickshire	9,795	1,416	667·92
Ettrick and Lauderdale	15,898	1,993	571·22
Roxburgh	46,037	4,755	1,045·28
Tweeddale	5,139	597	497·79
Clackmannan	29,356	4,448	626·48
Falkirk	102,506	15,091	620·80
Stirling	49,912	7,281	774·62
Annandale and Eskdale	34,798	5,114	1,247·25
Nithsdale	37,304	4,858	789·95
Stewartry	15,746	1,905	943·44
Wigtown	23,774	3,358	936·66
Dunfermline	57,196	8,576	549·96
Kirkcaldy	80,951	10,900	577·84
North East Fife	26,546	3,067	573·27
Aberdeen	160,129	19,902	625·85
Banff and Buchan	54,850	6,333	655·18
Gordon	67,240	9,004	1,797·20
Kincardine and Deeside	37,691	4,722	1,421·82
Moray	52,058	5,649	670·19
Badenoch and Strathspey	9,411	1,117	1,210·40
Caithness	28,204	4,504	1,280·55
Inverness	48,981	6,047	1,017·67
Lochaber	34,762	4,421	1,921·26
Nairn	9,370	1,164	1,177·14
Ross and Cromarty	60,880	9,192	1,719·35
Skye and Lochalsh	16,348	2,143	2,736·83
Sutherland	18,906	2,534	1,593·71
East Lothian	47,492	6,649	583·91
Edinburgh	258,192	32,466	914·46
Midlothian	22,226	3,505	395·64
West Lothian	61,178	8,566	522·32
Argyll and Bute	49,535	6,995	1,089·51
Bearsden and Milngavie	9,214	1,384	994·72
Clydebank	38,834	5,701	708·16
Clydesdale	21,675	3,480	447·75
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	15,307	1,981	616·37
Cumnock and Doon Valley	27,267	4,152	514·44
Cunninghame	72,379	9,329	524·10
Dumbarton	50,102	6,082	647·63
East Kilbride	4,863	603	681·42
Eastwood	7,009	885	540·62
Glasgow	1,065,488	133,328	1,075·83
Hamilton	72,532	9,988	605·33
Inverclyde	93,900	9,594	643·20
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	52,142	5,624	420·41
Kyle and Carrick	61,700	7,844	618·86
Monklands	98,762	14,712	674·24
Motherwell	112,308	18,033	583·66
Renfrew	133,959	15,501	555·69
Strathkelvin	45,144	5,250	682·08
Angus	37,045	4,949	444·78
Dundee	117,143	18,373	688·28
Perth and Kinross	49,822	5,232	461·19

Sources:
[1] Housing revenue account 1994-95.
[2] Loan charges divided by estimated housing stock 1994-95.

	Capital debt[1] outstanding at 31 March 1993 (£000)	Water loan charges[2] 1992-93 (£000)	Burden on community water chargepayer per annum[3] £	Capital debt[1] outstanding at 31 March 1993 (£000)	Sewerage[4] loan charges[5] 1992-93 (£000)	Burden on community chargepayer per annum[6] £
Scotland	588,010	78,879	10·64	669,979	93,031	11·65
Borders	12,531	1,691	11·35	10,716	1,925	14·14
Central	28,002	3,944	5·51	35,376	5,186	10·92
Dumfries and Galloway	23,326	2,985	12·36	17,821	2,388	12·07
Fife	41,964	5,443	9·15	42,292	4,796	10·06
Grampian	94,753	11,935	17·93	83,112	11,682	12·15
Highland	24,339	3,500	12·03	32,326	4,455	13,69
Lothian	111,440	13,983	11·89	117,778	15,433	14·10
Strathclyde	203,134	27,769	8·09	262,425	36·001	9·37
Tayside	39,784	6,608	11·33	61,616	9,196	14·36
Orkney	2,763	223	6·37	1,165	75	1·99
Shetland	0	0	0	0	0	0
Western Isles	5,974	798	23·57	5,352	894	25·77

Sources:
[1] Capital debt outstanding returns (CDO 93).
[2] LFR 21 (water) returns 1992-93.
[3] Doglestic element of expenditure on loan charges divided by water chargepayers.
[4] Includes domestic sewerage.
[5] LFR 19 (sewerage) returns 1992-93.
[6] Domestic element of expenditure on loan charges divided by community chargepayers.

Cancer

Mr. Chisholm: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps are being taken to ensure that nationally agreed protocols on cancer treatment are being followed by all doctors.

Mr. Stewart: It is expected that national audit projects currently being undertaken on cancer treatment will result in the production of additional clinical guidelines. These will be disseminated to clinicians to be translated into local protocols. Compliance with guidelines is promoted in postgraduate education and is monitored through clinical audit, through the purchaser/provider contracting process and through national outcome studies.

Mr. Chisholm: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many specialist cancer units exist in Scotland; and what plans there are to increase the number.

Mr. Stewart: There are five specialist cancer centres in Scotland at present and there are no plans to increase this number.

Mr. Chisholm: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many cancer specialists of all kinds there are in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: At 30 September 1993 there were 11 consultants in medical oncology and 31 in radiotherapy working in the national health service in Scotland. The diagnosis of cancer and the treatment of cancer patients are also provided by consultants in palliative medicine and in many other medical and surgical specialties.

Mr. Chisholm: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many consultants in medical oncology there are in Scotland; and how many are paid for by the national health service.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 1 July 1994]:* There were 11 consultants in medical oncology in Scotland at 30 September 1993, the latest date for which information is available centrally, of whom seven are in clinical academic posts. Four of the 11 have their salaries paid by the national health service.

Mr. Chisholm: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the cancer survival rate figures collected by the Scottish cancer intelligence unit.

Mr. Stewart: In April 1993 the Scottish Office published a volume on cancer survival rates in Scotland. This publicatioin examined trends in cancer survival over time in Scotland for a range of cancer sites. The Scottish cancer intelligence unit is currently undertaking a further study into cancer survival in Scotland. Once this study is complete the results will be publicly available.

In addition, the European Organisation for Research and Treatment of Cancer has set up a working group to examine regional variations in cancer survival within Europe. Scotland has a strong representation on this group and a preliminary report is expected by the summer of 1995.

Mr. Chisholm: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many cancer operations were carried out in Scotland last year by *(a)* the 10 per cent. of surgeons who performed the highest number of such operations and *(b)* the 10 per cent. of surgeons who carried out the lowest number.

Mr. Stewart: In Scotland in 1993, 24,084 principal operations were carried out by the 10 per cent. of consultants performing the highest number of principal operations on patients with a preliminary diagnosis of malignant neoplasm. This accounts for 20 per cent. of the total surgical workload of these particular consultants.

In the same year 107 principal operations were carried out by the 10 per cent. of consultants performing the lowest number of principal operations on patients with a primary diagnosis of malignant neoplasm.

Mr. Chisholm: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many surgeons in Scotland carried out cancer operations last year.

Mr. Stewart: In 1993, 1,068 consultants performed principal operations on patients with a primary diagnosis of malignant neoplasm in NHS hospitals in Scotland.

Mr. Chisholm: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many cancer operations were carried out in Scotland last year.

Mr. Stewart: In 1993 there were 45,661 principal operations performed in NHS hospitals in Scotland for patients with a primary diagnosis of malignant neoplasm.

Mr. Chisholm: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of cancer patients last year was referred initially to a consultant oncologist.

Mr. Stewart: The information requested is not available centrally.

Mr. Chisholm: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the availability of chemotherapy for cancer patients.

Mr. Stewart: The clinical resource and audit group and the Scottish health management efficiency group set up a joint working group to examine the management of non-surgical cancer services in Scotland. The working group reported in April 1992 and its recommendations were commended to health boards. I have arranged for a copy of the report to be placed in the Library of the House.

The Scottish Cancer Co-ordinating and Advisory Committee which was established as a result of the working group's report is setting up focus groups on the commonest cancers with the intention of providing advice on good practice including chemotherapy.

In addition the report "Quality Control in Cancer Chemotherapy" produced jointly by the Royal College of Physicians and the Royal College of Radiologists was circulated to all clinical oncologists, all medical oncologists and to the chief executives of NHS trusts.

Birds (Protection)

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will consider extending the acceptance of the evidence of one witness in criminal courts granted by section 36 of the Prisoners and Criminal Proceedings (Scotland) Act 1993 to offences under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 beyond those involving egg collection; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Corroboration of evidence is an important safeguard in our system of justice and there are no plans to consider extending the acceptance of the evidence of one witness in criminal courts to other offences under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Ministry of Defence Clothing Organisation

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he has taken to attract the Ministry of Defence Clothing Organisation to Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: Scottish Office officials are in regular contact with the Ministry of Defence on a wide range of issues.

Prison Suicide

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many *(a)* suicides and *(b)* attempted suicides have taken place in custody, including police stations, in Scotland in each of the past 10 years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information on the number of suicides in custody over the past 10 years is set out in the table. There are difficulties with the definition of attempted suicide and in any case such data are not collected centrally.

	Police custody	*Penal custody*	*Total*
1984	0	5	5
1985	1	6	7
1986	2	7	9
1987	1	7	8
1988	0	7	7
1989	2	6	8
1990	0	3	3
1991	0	4	4
1992	4	9	13
1993	1	5	6

Timber

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what action the Government are taking to promote timber from sustainably managed forests.

Sir Hector Monro: In January 1994 my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland launched the United Kingdom sustainable forestry programme, a comprehensive statement of the Government's policies for the sustainable management of the United Kingdom's forests and for helping other countries in the sustainable management of theirs.

The Government have every confidence in the standards that are applied to the production of timber from British forests. Through its approval of plans of operations, the Forestry Commission is able to ensure that timber is grown and harvested in accordance with guidelines that are founded on the principle of sustainable forestry; The Commission, with the Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland, has published today a booklet describing the means we use to ensure that the felling and regeneration of woodland and the creation of new woodland is done with proper regard to the environment. The booklet will serve to assure buyers of products made from British timber that they can do so in the knowledge that our forests are managed responsibily. I have arranged for copies of the booklet to be placed in the Libraries of the House.

Internationally, the Government will participate fully in efforts to promote sustainable forest management as we indicated in the United Kingdom sustainable forestry programme. Later this month the Government are hosting jointly with India an international workshop to help prepare for the 1995 meeting of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development at which forestry will be a key theme. The main objective of the workshop is to develop possible formats for national reporting to the CSD on forestry issues to allow progress to be assessed on the implementation of the forest principles adopted at the UN conference on environment and development—UNCED—and the forestry aspects of agenda 21 and other UNCED agreements.

The Government are also taking forward the action points that were agreed last year at the European Forestry Ministers conference in Helsinki at which I represented the United Kingdom. One of the main aims of the follow-up is to develop standards for sustainable forestry which might form the basis for promoting international agreement.

Seal Shooting

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether a specific guideline has been given in the guidelines issued by his Department to chief constables relating to the issuing of firearms certificates with regard to permission to shoot seals in the vicinity of creels; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 7 July 1994]:* No specific guideline relating to the shooting of seals has been given to chief constables in guidance provided on the issuing of firearm certificates. The issuing of firearm certificates and any restrictive conditions imposed on them are operational matters for each chief constable.

Recycled Paper

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of his Department's *(a)* press releases and *(b)* written answers are printed on recycled paper.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 7 July 1994]:* The title pages of all news releases from the Scottish Office are of recycled paper. Percentages of recycled paper depend on the length of releases, which vary from day to day.

No written answers to parliamentary questions are printed on recycled paper. The paper used, however, is from renewable timber produced on a full sustained basis and is bleached without the use of chlorine gas.

The ministerial and official headed paper used by my Department is made from recycled paper.

Health Visitors

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the proportion of health visitors to children in each health board area in September 1992.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 7 July 1994]:* The information requested is shown in the table.

Health Visitors[1][2] per 1000 children aged under 5: (Whole time equivalent as at 30 September 1992[3])

	Numbers
Scotland	4·3
Argyll and Clyde	4·2
Ayrshire and Arran	3·6
Borders	3·8
Dumfries and Galloway	3·1
Fife	5·0
Forth Valley	5·0
Grampian	4·6
Greater Glasgow	4·4
Highland	3·4
Lanarkshire	4·2
Lothian	4·5
Orkney	3·7
Shetland	4·1
Tayside	4·5
Western Isles	4·2

[1] Excludes combined duty nurses and health visitors in training. Includes field work teachers.
[2] Grades G to I. These staff are assumed to be qualified health visitors.
[3] Population figures used in the above calculations are based on estimates for 30 June 1992.

Research and Technology Grants

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the number and value of Government and EC grants for research and technology offered to companies in Fife and Scotland for each year since 1991; and what was the actual take-up of grants by companies in *(a)* Fife and *(b)* Scotland in each of these years.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 17 June 1994]:* The innovation element of the regional enterprise grants scheme is the only company-related research and technology assistance for which my right hon. Friend has responsibility. The information relating to this scheme is as follows:

Financial year	*Number of offers made*	*Value £ thousands*	*Number of offers accepted*	*Actual expenditure incurred £ thousands*
Scotland				
1991-92	69	1,578	51	1,210
1992-93	103	2,401	95	1,452
1993-94	87	1,969	72	1,714
Fife				
1991-92	13	285	11	50
1992-93	9	223	7	191
1993-94	9	223	8	121

The European Commission and other Government Departments such as the Department of Trade and Industry, the Department of the Environment and the Ministry of Defence are also actively involved in assisting projects which fall within their particular spheres of responsibility.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Cross-border Co-operation

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he proposes to publish the reports on cross-border co-operation on public transport and other matters referred to in his statement of 17 June.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The reports to which the hon. Gentleman refers were prepared to inform discussion at the Anglo-Irish intergovernmental conference held on 17 June rather than for publication. Details of discussions between Governments are confidential and I shall not be publishing the reports.

Ballynahone Bog

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will designate Ballynahone bog as an area of special scientific interest.

Mr. Tim Smith: Planning permission for the extraction of peat Ballynahone bog was granted in 1988 on the recommendation of the Planning Appeals Commission following a local public inquiry.

The Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland is reviewing the conservation status of certain habitats which come within the ambit of the EC directive on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora. These include lowland raised bogs of which Ballynahone bog is an example.

Hualon Corporation (Textiles)

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he now has to review the decision to provide inward investment aid to encourage the Hualon Corporation to develop new textile facilities in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tim Smith: The Hualon project has been the subject of a detailed appraisal and scrutiny process not only by Her Majesty's Government but by the European Commission. I have no plans to review our decision to offer assistance in respect of the project.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what recent representations he has received concerning the proposals to provide inward investment aid to encourage the Hualon Corporation to develop new textile facilities in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tim Smith: I and my ministerial colleagues have received four recent representations concerning the Hualon project, including two from the textile industry.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what consultations his Department had with trade associations and individual companies in the textile and clothing sector prior to the decision to provide inward investment aid to encourage the Hualon Corporation to develop new textile facilities in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tim Smith: The Department responsible did not consult with either any individual company or trade association before reaching its decision. It did, however, seek the advice of leading independent internationally recognised consultants in the textile and clothing sector.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what consideration he gave to the implications for existing textile producers prior to taking the decision to provide inward investment aid to encourage the Hualon Corporation to develop new textile facilities in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tim Smith: In deciding to offer selective financial assistance to this, or any other project, the Industrial Development Board is required to consider potential job displacement not only in Northern Ireland but in Great Britain. In this case the conclusion was that Hualon's products would compete principally with imported fabrics and therefore not cause any significant job displacement. This was also the conclusion of the European Commission which examined the project from a European perspective.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what consideration he gave to the recent conviction in Taiwan of senior officials of the company prior to deciding to provide inward investment aid to encourage the Hualon Corporation to develop new textile facilities in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tim Smith: I have been fully aware for some time of the allegations against certain shareholders in Hualon Corporation in Taiwan but concluded that the allegations against certain individuals, which are currently unproven should not preclude IDB from offering assistance to a publicly quoted corporation with a long and successful commercial track record.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Bangladesh

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Government of Bangladesh about the sentencing of a 13-year-old Brahmbanbaria girl for illicit sex; and what further steps he will take to persuade the Bangladesh Government that the sentence should not be carried out.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We are aware of this case. We understand that the police are taking measures to prevent the sentence being carried out.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the major human rights issues that he takes up with the Government of Bangladesh.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We and our European partners regularly discuss with the Bangladesh authorities a wide range of human rights issues, including the freedom of expression and the treatment of minorities.

China

Dr. John Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the implications for United Kingdom policy of the granting of most favoured nation status to China.

Mr. Hurd: The British and Hong Kong Governments supported the renewal by the United States of most favoured nation status for China. Non-renewal could have severely damaged Hong Kong's economy. The best way to advance rights in China is through a policy of economic engagement, not isolation.

Dr. John Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) when he last raised with the Chinese Government the continuing transfer of Chinese people into Tibet;

(2) what information he has received on human rights in Tibetan prison camps;

(3) what recent representations he has made to the Chinese Government to restore the rights and freedoms of Tibetans in Tibet.

Mr. Hurd: We continue to receive reports from non-governmental organisations and other sources about human rights abuses in Tibet and threats to Tibetan identity, including population transfer. We and our European Union partners have repeatedly expressed our concern to the Chinese authorities, including at this year's session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. In the Government's response of 1 July to the Foreign Affairs Committee's report on relations with China we again publicly expressed our concern on all these matters.

Dr. John Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if he will make a statement on the Chinese Government's adherence to the convention against torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment;

(2) what information he has in respect of reports of torture in detention centres and prisons in China.

Mr. Hurd: There continue to be disturbing reports of torture and other abuses in Chinese detention centres and prisons. As is made clear in the Government's response to the report of the Foreign Affairs Committee on relations with China, we urge the Chinese Government to implement fully their obligations under the convention against torture and the other conventions to which China is signatory.

Dr. John Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action the Government have taken to encourage the Chinese Government to review its policy on freedom of religion.

Mr. Hurd: We and our European Union partners have repeatedly raised this and other human rights issues. The European Union, for example, expressed its concern in the United Nations Commission on Human Rights about the regulations concerning religious practice which had been promulgated in January.

Dr. John Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's relationship with China.

Mr. Hurd: We wish to develop a wide-ranging relationship with China. The future of Hong Kong is a central issue; as permanent members of the UN Security Council, we are in close touch on international issues; we conduct a dialogue on human rights; and we week actively to increase Britain's economic links with the fast-growing Chinese market.

Dr. John Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what measures he is taking to ensure that any product exported from China does not come from prison camp labour.

Mr. Hurd: The import of prison made goods is banned by the 1897 Foreign Prison Made Goods Act (amended 1988). HM Customs and Excise is responsible for enforcing the Act's provisions, in response to evidence supplied by others.

Dr. John Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will urge the Chinese Government to undertake an urgent review of the death penalty.

Mr. Hurd: This issue was stressed in the report by Lord Howe's delegation which was published last year. The European Union has urged the Chinese authorities to restrict the use and the arbitrary application of the death penalty.

Dr. John Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has received on the number of prisoners held in forced labour camps in China.

Mr. Hurd: We have no precise information on the number of prisoners held in so-called "re-education through labour" camps. Estimates range from 1 to 10 million.

Dr. John Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on nuclear weapon testing carried out in China.

Mr. Hurd: We have made clear that we regret the test carried out by China at its Lop Nor site on 10 June. The Chinese Government have however repeatedly stated their commitment to the comprehensive test ban treaty negotiations in Geneva. We welcome their contribution to these negotiations.

Sri Lanka

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the outcome of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees meeting in Geneva on 22 June at which Sri Lankan repatriation programmes were discussed.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The meeting focused on the bilateral agreement signed in January between Switzerland and Sri Lanka on the repatriation of rejected asylum seekers. The main purpose was to enable non-governmental organisations to discuss how they might best monitor the cases of those returning to Sri Lanka under the agreement.

Palestine

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the setting up of the Palestinian administration in the former occupied territories; and what consequent communications he has made to the Palestine Liberation Organisation.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We welcome the appointment of members of the Palestinian authority, and the good start made by the Palestinian police. We have told Arafat that we will continue to provide practical support to the new Administration.

Mr. Ottaway: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further assistance Her Majesty's Government are providing to the new Palestinian Administration in Gaza and Jericho.

Mr. Hurd: In response to the urgent needs of the Palestinian authority, Her Majesty's Government have

decided to provide an extra £5 million of bilateral assistance this year. some £3 million will be for immediate running costs, and £2 million for increased technical cooperation. Part of these funds will be for the Palestinian police. This will help meet the urgent requirements in the key area of maintaining law and order.

The success of the new Palestinian Administration in Gaza and Jericho is critical for the future of the peace process. Provision of start-up costs is an immediate need.

Her Majesty's Government have previously announced their intention to contribute £70 million of assistance to the Palestinians and the peace process during 1994-95 and 1996-97, through bilateral and multilateral channels. Many programmes are already underway. Their focus is support for the structures of Palestinian Administration: the police, for whom we are already providing training and equipment; the Palestinian Monetary Authority; legal structures and the judiciary; water management and health care. We are also providing assistance for the planned Palestinian elections.

Antarctic Treaty

Ms Glenda Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what procedure for consultation with non-governmental organisations he intends to follow with respect to the preparations for United Kingdom participation in the inter-sessional Antarctic treaty consultative meeting on liability scheduled to take place in The Hague in October.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The German and Dutch Governments have very recently invited us to attend a group of experts meeting on liability from 7 to 9 November.

We have not yet had an opportunity to consider what consultations may be appropriate before that meeting.

Ms Glenda Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to promote the guidelines for visitors and expedition organisers to the Antarctic, agreed at the 18 Antarctic treaty consultative meeting held in Kyoto, Japan, in April.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The guidelines for visitors and expedition organisers have been published as part of Command Paper 2580 and were sent to the Association of British Travel Agents in May.

We shall discuss with others, including the International Association of Antarctic Tour Operators, how best to promote these guidelines more widely.

Committee of the Regions

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will indicate the mechanism by which regional representatives are nominated to the European Committee of the Regions; and if he will also publish the names of representatives currently nominated by United Kingdom region and the term of office they have yet to serve.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Each member state nominates the number of members allocated to it in article 198a of the treaty, and an equal number of alternate members. Members and alternate members are appointed for four years by the Council, acting unanimously on these nominations. The term of office for United Kingdom members and alternate members runs until 25 January 1998. United Kingdom members and alternate members are as follows:

United Kingdom Members of the COR

England
- Councillor Simon Day
- Lady Elizabeth Anson, DL, JP
- Sir Peter Bowness, CBE, DL
- Councillor Colin Warbrick, CBE
- Councillor Christopher Penn
- Councillor Toby Harris
- Councillor Albert Bore
- Councillor Josie Farrington
- Councillor George Gill
- Councillor Dennis Pettitt
- Councillor Janet Silett
- Councillor Graham Tope
- Councillor David Belottie
- Councillor Roy Cross

Scotland
- Councillor Charles Gray
- Councillor Rosemary McKenna
- Councillor Brian Meek
- Councillor Duncan McPherson
- Councillor Daniel Coffey, JP

Wales
- Councillor John Evans
- Lord Lloyd Kenyon (Councillor)
- Councillor Eurig Wyn

Northern Ireland
- Councillor Reg Empey
- Councillor Dennis Haughey

United Kingdom Alternate Members of the COR

England
- Councillor John Morgan, OBE
- Councillor Doreen Fleming, OBE
- Councillor Fraser Mitchell
- Councillor Elgar Jenkins, OBE
- Councillor Paul White
- Councillor John Battye
- Councillor Hedley Salt
- Councillor Kenneth Bodfish
- Councillor Ian Swithinbank
- Councillor Sally Powell
- Councillor Peter Soulsby
- Councillor Peter Cocks, CBE
- Councillor Tony Prior
- Councillor Milner Whiteman

Scotland
- Councillor Keith Geddes
- Councillor Jean McFadden
- Councillor Marcus Humphrey
- Councillor Peter Peacock
- Councillor Clive Sneddon

Wales
- Councillor Keith Griffiths
- Councillor Bill Hughes
- Councillor Jill Evans

Northern Ireland
- Councillor Simpson Gibson
- Alderman Sean Neeson

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Contracts

Mr. Byers: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on what occasions in the last 10 years he or a Minister in his Department has given a direction to civil servants to award a contract against the advice of the civil service; what was the subject matter of the contract and its value; and when it was awarded.

Mr. Jack: From records currently available, I am not aware of any such instances. It is the Department's policy to let contracts on the basis of value for money.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Bicycles

Mr. Robathan: To ask the Lord President of the Council what facilities the Cabinet Office provides for the parking of bicycles of visitors to its offices in Westminster.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave him yesterday at columns *267-68*.

HEALTH

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list her Department's advisory non-departmental public bodies which are required to publish their advice to Government.

Mr. Sackville: The Committee on Medical Aspects of Food Policy and the Committee on Dental and Surgical Materials.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the advisory non-departmental public bodies sponsored by her Department which have a statutory basis.

Mr. Sackville: The following is the information:

Administration of Radioactive Substances Advisory Committee;
British Pharmacopoeia Commission;
Clinical Standards Advisory Group;
Committee on Dental and Surgical Materials;
Committee on the Safety of Medicines;
Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation;
Medicines Commission;
Standing Dental Advisory Committee;
Standing Medical Advisory Committee;
Standing Nursing and Midwifery Advisory Committee;
Standing Pharmaceutical Advisory Committee;
Unrelated Live Transplant Regulatory Authority.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list those of his Department's advisory non-departmental public bodies which the Government are required to consult before legislation proposals; and in respect of which bodies the Government must publish their response to advice supplied by them.

Mr. Sackville: The Government are required to consult the Medicines Commission prior to proposals for legislation. They are not required to publish their response to advice from any advisory bodies.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the advisory non-departmental public bodies sponsored by her Department which are required to lay their annual reports before Parliament.

Mr. Sackville: The British Pharmacopoeia Commission, the Medicines Commission and the Committee on Safety of Medicines.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the advisory bodies she has set up in her Department since the publication of "Public Bodies 1993".

Mr. Sackville: The Advisory Committee on the Registration of Homeopathic Products and the Effectiveness Review of Policy on Services for Drug Misusers.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list her Department's advisory non-departmental public bodies which are required to produce annual reports.

Mr. Sackville: The British Pharmacopoeia Commission, the Committee on the Safety of Medicines, the Joint Planning Advisory Committee, the National Health Service Advisory Service and the Medicines Commission.

NHS Management

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what arrangements exist to publish the national management letters on the national health service, referred to in paragraph 36 of "Accounting for Independent Audit", published jointly by her and other Departments.

Mr. Sackville: None.

Obstetric Cholestasis

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what plans she has to fund research into the cause, detection and treatment of obstetric cholestasis and its epidemiology;

(2) what is the current incidence of obstetric cholestasis;

(3) if she has sought evidence from abroad as to any link between still births and obstetric cholestasis;

(4) what the Government are doing to ensure that health professionals know about obstetric cholestasis.

Mr. Sackville: The main agency through which the Government support biomedical and clinical research is the Medical Research Council, which receives its grant-in-aid from the office of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. The council is always willing to consider for support soundly based new scientific proposals in competition with other applications.

As to the incidence of obstetric cholestasis, the medical literature suggests that one pregnancy in 1,000 is affected by the condition. Some of the material on this subject has come from abroad, in particular the United States.

I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave her on 22 June at column *198* for information for health professionals.

Drug Addiction

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the change in the number of registered child drug addicts; and what plans she has to tackle the problem.

Mr. Bowis: Year on year changes in the number of registered drug addicts, and of registered child drug addicts in particular, should be interpreted carefully because, while changes in the figures may indicate that there are more young addicts, they may also indicate more coming forward for treatment or a higher rate of compliance with reporting arrangements.

The Government will continue to develop prevention and publicity campaigns alerting parents and young people

to the dangers of drug misuse. Guidance issued by the Department of Health in April, EL(94)11 and subsequent letter, encouraged health authorities to review the needs of drug misusers locally and ensure that the range and choice of treatment services available included provision, where appropriate, for young people. Copies of the guidance and letter are available in the Library.

Beta-agonists

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research her Department has conducted into the health effects of prolonged low-level consumption of *(a)* clenbuterol and *(b)* other beta-agonists.

Mr. Sackville: Clenbuterol is not a licensed medicinal product in the United Kingdom and the Department has not conducted any research specifically into the health effects of its prolonged low level consumption. A large number of beta-agonists are licensed for the treatment of asthma on the basis of evidence of quality, efficacy and safety assessed by the licensing authority. A working party of the Committee of Safety of Medicines was set up in May 1991 to review information on the safety of beta-agonists in the treatment of patients with asthma. Its findings were published in the bulletin "Current Problems no. 33" in February 1992, a copy of which is available in the Library. This concluded that beta-agonists are of value in the relief of symptoms of asthma and that the overall benefits of treatment with beta-agonists outweigh the risk of any side effects.

Children

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the progress by January 1994 towards implementation of the United Nations convention on the rights of children; and if she will give it a star rating.

Mr. Bowis: This information is set out in the United Kingdom's first report to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, which was published in March. Copies are available in the Library.

Children's Beds, East London

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 28 June, *Official Report*, column *534*, if she will list the NHS trusts and health authorities responsible for the provision of children's wards and beds in east London; and what arrangements are made for an overall regional perspective beyond the boundary of each unit.

Dr. Mawhinney: Two health authorities, East London and the City and Redbridge and Waltham Forest, are responsible for arranging services to meet the health needs of people in East London. In-patient services for children are provided at the Royal Hospitals national health service trust, Newham Healthcare NHS trust and Forest Healthcare NHS trust in addition to the Queen Elizabeth hospital for children, Hackney.

North Thames regional health authority is responsible for holding all its health authorities to account for the provision of appropriate services for their populations.

Assessment (Consultants and GPs)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress her Department is making on assessment of *(a)* consultants and *(b)* general practitioners; and what are the reasons for the differences between assessment of these two groups.

Dr. Mawhinney: Consultants and general practitioners are not at present subject to assessment. Assessment needs to be linked to a formal scheme of continuing medical education. These are issues explored in a consultation paper launched at a conference on 13 June chaired by the Government's Chief Medical Officer. The consultation period ends on 30 September. Copies of the document will be placed in the Library.

Ex-service men

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what priority is given to ex-service men and women within the national health service; and what steps her Department takes to ensure that this is widely known throughout the national health service.

Mr. Sackville: Ex-service men and women do not normally have priority within the national health service. However, if they are war pensioners they are entitled to receive priority examination and treatment for the condition or conditions for which they receive a pension or received a gratuity. Health service guidelines (94)28 dated 16 May, which is standing guidance, reminded the national health service about this entitlement. Copies of the guidance are available in the Library.

Dental Services

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of the people living in the family health service authority covering Hornsey and Wood Green are currently registered as national health service dental patients; and what is the figure for Britain as a whole.

Dr. Mawhinney: As patients are free to register with a dentist outside the family health services authority area where they live the information requested is not available. At 30 April 1994 the proportion of the population registered with a dentist in Great Britain was 57·8 per cent.

Health Care For People With Disabilities

Mr. Alan Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what role will be played by her Department in the forthcoming consultation on disability; and if she will publish a consultation paper on countering unfair discrimination in health provision and the health service.

Mr. Bowis: My right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People, will be co-ordinating action on this front and will involve other departments as necessary.

The national health service provides services for everybody on the basis of their clinical need. A consultation paper on this will not therefore be necessary.

NHS Supplies Authority

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 26 April, *Official Report*, column *152*, on the NHS Supplies Authority, what

percentage savings in Supplies Authority purchasing costs was assessed by its consultants as achievable as at April 1994 for the divisions for whom benchmarking comparisons were carried out; whether such savings have been achieved across all divisions over each of the last six months; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The information is not available in the form requested. For 1993-94 the National Health Service Supplies Authority was targeted to achieve purchasing cost savings of £57 million, or four per cent. of the value of all contracts negotiated in the year. The actual saving achieved was £71·65 million, broken down as follows:

Division/Unit	*Savings (£ million)*
National Purchasing Unit	36·55
Central	6·31
North East	6·50
North Thames Anglia	4·27
North West	6·45
South and West	5·96
South East	5·60

GP Fundholders

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what advice she offers fund-holding general practitioners on how to reduce the cost of hospital treatment required by their patients;

(2) to what extent she expects a fund-holding general practitioner to follow his patient's wishes with regard to the choice of hospital to which they are sent for treatment;

(3) what advice she has given to fund-holding general practitioner's with regard to the number of hospitals they hold contracts with.

Dr. Mawhinney: General practitioner fundholders are able to purchase services on behalf of their patients and, in consultation with them, from whichever hospital offers the best quality care and value for money.

World Health Organisation

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what role she plays in exercising oversight of the operations of the World Health Organisation.

Dr. Mawhinney: Each year a Minister from the Department attends the world health assembly, the annual meeting of the World Health Organisation, at which the operations of the organisation are discussed. We also receive reports from the Chief Medical Officer on the meetings of the executive board of the World Health Organisation and the European Regional Committee meeting, and on all other major developments.

Negligence Claims

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many medical negligence claims have been made against NHS hospitals and NHS trust hospitals in each of the last eight years; what was the cost of those claims for each year, including *(a)* compensation legal costs and *(b)* fees paid to doctors for medical opinions; and what was the average time taken from commencement of complaint to settlement.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer my hon. Friend to the replies I gave the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) on 14 March at columns *537-38* and on 10 May at columns *84-85*.

Dementia

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to introduce a national monitoring system of those suffering from dementia.

Mr. Bowis: It if for each health authority to assess and monitor the health needs of their population including people suffering from dementia and, together with local authorities, to provide a range of appropriate services.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action she intends to take to improve support for those suffering from dementia who live alone.

Mr. Bowis: Health authorities and local authorities are required to assess the health and social care needs of their population and to make appropriate arrangements to meet those needs. Such assessments will identify additional care and support services needed by those living alone.

Infertility

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make it her policy to collect information from district health authorities regarding their policies on the purchase of in vitro fertilisation treatment, and the number of district health authorities who currently provide IVF treatment.

Mr. Sackville: There are no plans to collect information centrally on the purchase or provision by district health authorities of in vitro fertilisation treatment.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on her Department's policy on the limiting by health authorities of IVF treatment to women of 34 years and under.

Mr. Sackville: Decisions about the availability of IVF treatment are for individual health authorities. Advice is available to health authorities and clinicians in two publications drawn to the attention of the National Health Service in 1992:

(a) The Effective Health Care Bulletin on management of subfertility, published for the NHS Management Executive by a consortium of Leeds and York universities and the research unit of the Royal College of Physicians.

(b) The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists publication "Infertility—Guidelines For Practice".

Copies of both publications are available in the Library.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what assessment she has made of the effects on health experienced by couples unable to have children of their own;

(2) what analysis has been made of the implications of childlessness upon marriage stability in infertile couples;

(3) what information she has available on the effect on mental health in couples who are unable to have children of their own.

Mr. Sackville: There have been studies on the effects of childlessness in couples carried out by independent

researchers, some of which are referred to in the Effective Health Care bulletin series entitled "The Management of Subfertility". The position is summarised as follows:

"There is some evidence that subfertility causes considerable emotional stress and distress in some couples, which effects many areas of their life. Subfertility may result in social handicap preventing fulfilment of social roles and realisation of personal and societal expectations for parenthood."

The bulletin was made available to the national health service in 1992. Copies are available in the Library.

Contracts

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Health on what occasions in the last 10 years she or a Minister in her Department has given a direction to civil servants to award a contract against the advice of the civil service; what was the subject matter of the contract and its value; and when it was awarded.

Mr. Sackville: There have been no such occasions.

NHS Trust Membership

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list for each national health service trust in the former Yorkshire region, those chairmen and non-executive directors who live outside the boundaries of the district health authority in which that trust is situated.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 5 July 1994]:* A total of 133 of the 150—89 per cent.—chairmen and non-executive directors appointed to a national health service trust within the former Yorkshire region live within the boundaries of the district health authority in which that trust is situated. The names of those who live outside the relevant district health authority boundaries are listed.

Harrogate Health Care NHS Trusts
Mrs. J. Wesson

East Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust
Mrs. S. Smith

Royal Hull Hospitals NHS Trust
Dr. N. Varey

Grimsby Health NHS Trust
Mrs. M. Clarke

Scunthorpe and Goole Hospitals
Mrs. E. Redfearn
Mrs. L. Stone

Scunthorpe Community Health NHS Trust
Mr. B. Beaumont

Bradford Hospitals NHS Trust
Mr. R. Walker
Mr. C. Thomas
Dr. G. Alderson

Bradford Community NHS Trust
Professor M. Schofield

Huddersfield NHS Trust
Mr. J. Dyson

Calderdale Health Care NHS Trust
Dr. I. Hughes

Leeds Community and Mental Health Services Teaching
Ms S. Tate
Professor G. Wistow

United Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust
Mr. T. John

St. James's University Hospital NHS Trust
Miss E. Lorrimar

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list for each national health service trust in the former North East Thames region, those chairmen and non-executive directors who live outside the boundaries of the district health authority in which that trust is situated.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 5 July 1994]:* Ninety of the 168 chairmen and non-executive directors appointed to a national health service trust within the former North East Thames region live within the boundaries of the district health authority in which that trust is situated. The names of those who live outside the relevant district health authority boundaries are listed.

Barking, Havering and Brentwood Community Health Care NHS Trust
Mr. O. Barnes
Mr. W. Kirwan

Basildon and Thurrock General Hospitals NHS Trust
Mr. J. Smale

Camden and Islington Community Health Services NHS Trust
Mr. M. Creeger
Rabbi Julia Neuberger
Mrs. S. Peters

Chase Farm Hospitals NHS Trust
Mr. W. Brown
Mrs. S. Cooper
Mr. I. Doherty
Mr. A. Felix
Mr. G. Griffiths
Mrs. J. Higgins

Enfield Community Care NHS Trust
Mr. R. Bohrer
Mrs. A. Killick
Mr. E. Walters
Mr. D. Walters

Essex Rivers Healthcare NHS Trust
Mrs. J. Jones
Mr. P Woods

Forest Healthcare NHS Trust
Lord Jenkin

Haringey Healthcare NHS Trust
Mrs. H. Malcolm
Mrs. M. Wakelin-Saint

Havering Hospitals NHS Trust
Mrs. H. Aitken
Mrs. G. Botwright
Mr. G. Jennings
Mr. I Kirkpatrick
Mr. T. Williams

Hospitals for Sick Children NHS Trust
Sir Brian Hill
Sir Robert Clarke
Professor R. Levinsky
Mrs. M. Bradshaw
Mr. R. Horne
Miss J. Laing

Mid Essex Hospital Services NHS Trust
Mr. R. Munro

Moorfields Eye Hospital NHS Trust
Mr. H. Peppiatt
Mr. J. Brighouse

Mrs. R. Gilmore
Mrs. J. Goffe

New Possibilities NHS Trust
Mrs. M. Attwood

Newham Healthcare NHS Trust
Mrs. R. Walters
Ms D. Williams
Mr. R. Braithwaite
Mr. S. Innes

North Middlesex NHS Trust
Mr. J. Dixon
Mr. S. Hilliard
Professor N. McIntyre
Mrs. J. Ross

Redbridge Health Care NHS Trust
Mr. M. Smith

Royal Free, Hampstead NHS Trust
Baroness Gardner of Parkes
Mr. L. Licht

Royal Hospital of St. Bartholomew, The Royal London Hospital and London Chest Hospital NHS Trust
Sir Derek Boorman
Mr. S. Gray
Ms L. Knox

Royal London Homeopathic Hospital NHS Trust
Mr. R. Chris
Mrs. M. Cooper
Mr. R. Jones
Mr. D. Maxwell

Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital NHS Trust
Mr. R. Field
Mrs. J. Flindall
Mr. R. Franklin
Mr. W. Grassick
Mr. N. Proddow

Royal National Throat, Nose and Ear Hospital NHS Trust
Lady Butterworth
Mr. S. Cox
Mr. K. Gardner
Mr. A. Dudley
Mr. K. Stevens
Dr. F. Thompson

Southend Health Care NHS Trust
Mr. D. Friend
Mrs. M. Tucker

Tavistock and Portman Clinics NHS Trust
Mr. A. Vineall
Mr. R. Morris
Sir James Gowans

Thameside Community Healthcare NHS Trust
Mrs. J. Mee

University College London Hospitals NHS Trust
Sir Ronald Mason
Baroness Dean
Mr. P. Brading

Whittington Hospital NHS Trust
Mr. C. Marks
Mr. L. Rice

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 11 July 1994

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Bicycle Routes

36. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, representing the Church Commissioners, what progress he has made in financing bicycle routes through Church Commissioners' land.

Mr. Alison: The Commissioners are always prepared to consider sympathetically proposals for cycle routes across their land, provided these create no conflict of interest with their duties to their primary beneficiaries, the serving and retired clergy. No such proposal has been received recently.

Rents

37. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, representing the Church Commissioners, what changes have occurred in rents received in the past five years for church lands.

Mr. Alison: Gross agricultural rents per acre increased from £57·75 in 1989 to £62·62 in 1993, a rise of 8·43 per cent. against a retail prices index increase of 27·84 per cent. Over this period, the Commissioners' agricultural portfolio was reduced by 14,924 acres, producing net sales proceeds of £76·6 million.

PRIME MINISTER

European Commission

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 30 June to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) *Official Report,* columns *660-61,* regarding the presidency of the European Commission, if he will now set out the criteria he will apply to candidates for the appointment.

The Prime Minister: I shall consider candidates on their merits. I will need to be satisfied that the next President will run an efficient and accountable Commission, and act in the interests of the European Union as a whole.

Meetings with Members

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Prime Minister how many hon. Members and right hon. Members he has met at official meetings on constituency matters at No. 10 Downing street in 1993-94; what were their political parties; and in which regions were their constituencies.

The Prime Minister: I regularly have meetings with right hon. and hon. Members, at both No. 10 and the House of Commons, to deal with specific and general matters which relate to their constituencies and interests.

Lowe Bell Communications

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his reply of 26 April to the hon. Member for Pendle (Mr. Prentice), *Official Report,* column *47,* how much Sir Tim Bell has claimed in expenses in connection with the D-day public relations contract awarded to Lowe Bell Communications.

The Prime Minister: To date, Lowe Bell has claimed a total of £11,346, net of VAT, for administrative costs and expenses. This is within the agreed upper limit of £12,500, net of VAT.

Government Information

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister what is the policy of the Government on the supply of information to the media on economic performance and distribution of earnings, where the information can be obtained directly or indirectly from the Central Office of Information data bank.

The Prime Minister: This is a matter for individual Government Departments.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister whether he will make it his policy that all Departments should provide substantive replies to hon. Members' questions rather than referring them to the Library.

The Prime Minister: No.

Child Care

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Prime Minister what provision his Department makes for child care facilities for staff; what is the extent of subsidy to nursery places and holiday play schemes; if his Department *(a)* subscribes to Childcare Solutions and *(b)* makes child care vouchers available; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 7 July 1994]:* For these purposes my office is part of the Cabinet Office. I therefore refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on 7 July 1994, *Official Report,* columns *323-24.*

Ecological Sustainability

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Prime Minister what steps he is taking to ensure that there is a full discussion of ecological sustainability at the Group of Seven summit in July.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 8 July 1994]:* At my initiative the members of the Group of Seven industrialised countries have already adopted an action plan to give practical effect to the agreements reached at Rio. At the Naples Group of Seven summit the United Kingdom will continue to stress the importance of the environment as a priority for international co-operation.

Contracts

Mr. Byers: To ask the Prime Minister on what occasions in the last 10 years he has given a direction to civil servants to award a contract against the advice of the civil service; what was the subject matter of the contract and its value; and when it was awarded.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 8 July 1994]:* There have been no such occasions in respect of myself or my predecessor.

Ex-service Personnel

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Prime Minister what steps he will be taking to give effect to the decision taken by the House on 1 July on the welfare of ex-service people.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Prime Minister what action he is taking to implement the resolution on welfare of ex-service people approved by the House on 1 July.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 8 July 1994]:* We already have in place substantial administrative arrangements to meet the special needs of ex-service personnel, which involve close liaison between the relevant Departments; we believe these arrangements most effectively serve the welfare needs of the ex-service community. The Government attach great importance to achieving high quality services, and will continue to keep areas of concern to veterans under review.

TREASURY

Asset Disposal

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what progress has been made in realising unwanted assets held by Government Departments.

Mr. Portillo: The disposal of unwanted assets is the responsibility of individual Departments. Information is not collected centrally.

Public Utility Regulators

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what rules govern the use by public utility regulators of public money to hire Government relations consultants.

Mr. Portillo: The rules governing the use of public relations consultants are contained in the Cabinet Office document "Guidance on Government Publicity and Advertising", which is available in the Library of the House. General principles on the purchase of consultancy services are set out in section 31 of "Government Accounting".

EU Agricultural Spending

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 30 June, *Official Report*, column *931*, what procedures are available to the European Union for paying sums of agricultural spending in 1995 exceeding the limits agreed at Edinburgh.

Sir John Cope: The agricultural guideline agreed at Edinburgh can be amended or breached only by the unanimous agreement of the Council of Ministers. The United Kingdom has made it clear that it can foresee no circumstances under which it would agree to this. The Commission will therefore be obliged to manage expenditure within the guideline.

Manufactured Trade

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current share of consumer goods in imported finished manufactures; and by how much the unit value has increased since August 1992 to the latest available date.

Mr. Nelson: The information requested for the first part of the question is available on the Central Statistical Office database, which can be accessed through the Library of the House of Commons. The unit value for consumer goods increased by 13·3 per cent. between August 1992 and April 1994, the latest date for which data are available. The unit value for finished manufactures increased by 15·0 per cent. over the same period.

Rugby Players

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what arrangements are made for the collection of employers' contributions by rugby union clubs who are paying or financially rewarding players.

Mr. Dorrell: The Inland Revenue's arrangements for the collection of employers' national insurance contributions in respect of the remuneration of rugby players are the same as those for any other taxpayer.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 20 January, *Official Report*, column *779*, what arrangements are now made for the payment of income tax and national insurance by rugby union players.

Mr. Dorrell: The Inland Revenue's arrangements for the payment of income tax and national insurance contributions by rugby union players operate in the same way as for any other taxpayer.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects to receive a report from the Inland Revenue special investigation branch regarding the conclusion of its inquiry into the payment of income tax and national insurance by rugby union players; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The conduct of any inquiry by the Inland Revenue into payment of income tax and national insurance is an internal matter of the Department and I would not expect to receive a report. I do not propose to make a statement.

Mortgage Tax Relief

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the most recent figures on the amount of mortgage tax relief allowed for home owners in Scotland.

Mr. Dorrell: The information is given in my reply to the hon. Member on 20 June 1994, *Official Report*, column 2.

Exchange Rates

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what are the reasons for supporting and participating in recent central bank intervention to support the United States dollar; and what effect this has had on interest rates;

(2) to what extent the United Kingdom Exchequer is bearing the exchange rate risk of Bank of England intervention to stop the foreign exchange value of the United States dollar from falling;

(3) what consideration Her Majesty's Government give to the balance of payments in deciding whether to intervene in the foreign exchange market to support the United States dollar;

(4) whether he will publish the evidence he has on whether *(a)* the yen is overvalued and *(b)* the United States dollar is undervalued;

(5) what United Kingdom economic interest is served by the Bank of England's recent participation in central bank intervention to support the United States dollar at the current rate of exchange.

Mr. Nelson: The Bank of England participated in concerted intervention in support of the dollar on 4 May and 24 June 1994, on behalf of the United Kingdom Government. The concerted intervention reflected a concern shared with other Governments about recent developments in international financial markets. The Government consider greater exchange rate and capital market stability to be in the United Kingdom's interests. There are a large number of factors which may have influenced recent dollar and yen exchange rates. The intervention was undertaken to steady market conditions.

Developing Countries' Debt

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current total of outstanding debt owed to the United Kingdom by developing countries.

Mr. Nelson: The total outstanding debt owed to ECGD and the ODA by developing countries, excluding eastern Europe, is £6·47 billion.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the value to the United Kingdom of debt interest payments from developing countries in 1993-94 from *(a)* payments to the Export Credits Guarantee Department, *(b)* payments to the Overseas Development Administration, *(c)* payments to the Commonwealth Development Corporation and *(d)* in total.

Mr. Nelson: Debt interest payments from developing countries in 1993-94 were *(a)* £228 million, excluding eastern Europe, to ECGD *(b)* £4·2 million to ODA, *(c)* £81·9 million to the CDC, *(d)* totalling £314·1 million.

Disability (Consultation)

Mr. Alan Howarth: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what involvement his Department will have in the Government's forthcoming consultation and consideration of issues relating to disability and discrimination and possible legislation.

Mr. Portillo My right hon. Friend the Minister for Disabled People will be co-ordinating action and will involve other Departments as necessary.

Prices Policy

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is Government policy in respect of the price of *(a)* goods and *(b)* services.

Mr. Nelson: The Government aim to keep underlying inflation, as measured by the RPI excluding interest payments, in the range 1 to 4 per cent. and to bring it down to the lower half of this range by the end of the present Parliament.

Economic Growth

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the average annual rate of economic growth from 1964 to 1973 and from 1979 to the latest possible date, together with the reasons for any difference.

Mr. Nelson: Rates of economic growth can be calculated from the estimates for gross domestic product published in *Economic Trends*, which is available in the Members' Library. There are many influences on the rate of economic growth.

Full Employment

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the Government's definition of full employment; and what part a return to full employment plays in formulating its fiscal, monetary and exchange rate policies.

Mr. Nelson: The Government's economic policy aims to create the right conditions for a high and sustainable level of employment. This requires permanently low inflation, sound public finances and a continuing programme of reform designed to improve the efficiency of markets and strengthen the long-term supply performance of the economy.

Balance of Trade

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish figures for trade with EC countries on the same basis as tables 4, 5, 6, and 7 of the press notices on the monthly balance of trade with countries outside the EC.

Mr. Nelson: The information is available from the CSO database which may be accessed by the House of Commons Library.

Upper Limb Disorders

Dr. Marek: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many persons are taking actions for stress-related upper limb disorders against the Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise.

Mr. Dorrell: There are at present 106 cases relating to repetitive strain injuries and/or upper limb disorders being pursued by current and former employees of the Inland Revenue, and 15 by Customs and Excise.

EU Directives

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what progress has been made in implementing the investment services directive and the capital adequacy directive.

Mr. Nelson: A consultation document on the implementation of the investment services directive and the capital adequacy directive is being issued today. Copies have been placed in the Libraries of the House.

Lotteries

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what changes he intends to make to the tax treatment of lotteries run by charities.

Sir John Cope: In the past the Inland Revenue has accepted that where a subsidiary company operates a lottery on behalf of a charity, the income from the lottery belonged to the subsidiary company for tax purposes. The company could relieve the income from tax by passing it to the charity under a deed of covenant.

The Inland Revenue has received legal advice that this treatment is incorrect where the lottery is a society lottery organised under section 5 of the Lotteries and Amusements Act 1976. Where a subsidiary company promotes a society lottery on behalf of the charity, but the charity itself is registered as the society under the Act, the view is that the income from the lottery belongs to the charity, not the subsidary company, and the charity is therefore taxable on the income.

In order to prevent charities from being disadvantaged by this change of view of the law the Government have decided to introduce legislation in the next Finance Bill to exempt charities from tax on income from society lotteries provided the income is applied solely to the purposes of the charity.

Income from small lotteries under section 3 of the Lotteries and Amusements Act 1976 will also be exempted.

Subject to approval by Parliament the exemption will apply, for income tax, for tax years after 1994-95 and, for companies, for accounting periods beginning after 31 March 1994. In anticipation of the proposed legislation the Inland Revenue will give charities relief from tax on a concessional basis for lottery income arising in earlier periods where the tax liability has not yet been settled.

Income Tax

Ms Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the reduction in tax payable in 1995-96 resulting from full indexation of relief on the married couple's allowance for those aged over 65 years to pensioner couples paying tax at *(a)* the lower rate, *(b)* the basic rate and *(c)* the higher rate if they are (i) 65 to 74 years and (ii) 75 years and over taking account of the proposals announced in his Budget of November 1993.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 17 June 1994]:* In 1995-96 the age-related married coupies allowances will be increased by £330, as announced in the November 1993 Budget. This is significantly higher than the increase which would result from indexation of the allowances.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Institute of Chartered Accountants

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he last discussed the effectiveness of the disciplinary procedures of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales with the institute.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: My officials meet regularly with the Institute to discuss a wide range of matters, including particular aspects of its disciplinary procedures. The last such meeting was on 26 May.

Ministerial Visits

Mr. Worthington: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the purpose of his visit to Saudi Arabia on 28 June; whom he met; what trading matters he discussed; and with what outcome.

Mr. Heseltine: The purpose of my visit to Saudi Arabia on 28 June was in response to a Saudi request for advice on future privatisations. I was accompanied by a delegation of British business men expert in privatisation. Meetings were held with the Saudi Ministers of Commerce, Finance, Industry and Electricity, Defence and Post and Telecommunications. The opportunity was also taken to further certain British bids for contracts; the Saudi Government noted the interest of the United Kingdom Government in these potential contracts.

Insolvency Service

Mr. Kevin Hughes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what has been the level of funding of the Insolvency Service in each of the past five years; and what is the extent of the new resources that have been made available to *(a)* the service and *(b)* the area of director disqualification.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The running cost outturn for the Insolvency Service for each of the last five years were:

£

Year	*Million*
1989-90	32·8
1990-91	35·6
1991-92	40·3
1992-93	[1]51·4
1993-94	[1]54·8

[1]Includes amounts for superannuation and internal DTI services, for earlier years calculated as:

£

Year	*Million*
1989-90	+4·2
1990-91	+4·7
1991-92	+6·2

A total of £57·459 million has been allocated to the Insolvency Service from my Department's running costs for 1994-95. Included in this allocation is £1·831 million to fund the additional work required to meet the case closure target of 53,000, and £1 million additional in the area of investigation including director disqualification.

Mr. Kevin Hughes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many Insolvency Service staff were employed in the area of director disqualification in each of the last five years.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Staff in the Insolvency Service employed in the area of director disqualification comprise *(a)* those in the disqualification units in London and Edinburgh engaged directly on disqualification work and *(b)* specialist staff in official receivers whose duties include the investigatory process which may result in the submission of prosecution and disqualification reports. Their number were as follows:

(a) Staff employed directly on disqualification work

Year	Number
1989-90	45·00
1990-91	43·50
1991-92	50·50
1992-93	46·00
1993-94	47·00

(b) Staff employed in the investigatory process

Year	Number
1989-90	568·00
1990-91	587·50
1991-92	590·50
1992-93	587·50
1993-94	568·00

In addition to *(a)* above, as at 30 June 1994 the disqualification unit employed 11 additional staff comprising three seconded from the private sector; four on loan from other Government Departments and four sandwich students. For 1994-95 further resources have been provided to enable up to 14 extra staff, including 10 specialist staff from the private sector, to be added to the complement of the disqualification unit. Thirty specialist staff from the private sector will be added to the complement of official receivers.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade further to his answer of 27 June, *Official Report*, column *403-4*, concerning tenders for the second stage review of the Insolvency Service, why he considered it appropriate to invite Stoy Hayward Consulting to bid in a single tender action; what consideration he gave to offering others to bid in order to determine whether he was receiving value for money; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The decision was taken to invite Stoy Hayward to bid for the second stage review in a single tender action because:

(a) Stoy Hayward's bid for the initial stage work had been by some considerable margin the most keenly priced; and

(b) in the course of their work on the first stage review they had shown that they provided excellent value for money.

These considerations together with the fact that it had become familiar with the work of official receivers and the structure of the Insolvency Service led to the decision that the costs involved in a competitive tendering exercise would not be justified.

Mr. Burden: To ask the President of the Board of Trade in how many cases referred to the Insolvency Services disqualification unit in each year since 1989-90 disqualification proceedings have been commenced.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The number of companies in relation to which reports under the Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986 have been made and the number of disqualification proceedings commenced is as follows:

Year	Cases	Proceedings Commenced
1989-90	3,444	462
1990-91	4,508	449
1991-92	6,171	700
1992-93	6,710	564
1993-94	7,521	464
[1]1994-95	1,506	170

[1] Up to 30 June.

Note: The figures quoted for the number of cases are those for the number of companies reported on. However, the figures quoted for proceedings commenced refer to individuals. It is estimated that on average proceedings are issued against 1·5 directors in any one company.

Mr. Burden: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was *(a)* the budget and *(b)* the staffing levels of the Insolvency Service's disqualification unit for each year since 1989-90.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The budget for the Insolvency Service's disqualification unit was:

	£ million
1991-92	1·17
1992-93	1·34
1993-94	1·85
1994-95	1·90

Separate figures for disqualification running costs within Insolvency Service budgets were not kept prior to 1991-92.

The staffing levels of disqualification unit were:

	Number
1989-90	45·00
1991-91	43·50
1991-92	50·50
1992-93	46·00
1993-94	47·00

The unit currently employs an additional 11 staff comprising three seconded from the private sector; four on loan from other Government Departments and four sandwich students. For 1994-95 further resources have been provided to enable up to 14 extra staff, including 10 specialist staff from the private sector, to be added to the complement of the disqualification unit.

Mr. Burden: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what criteria he uses to classify cases referred to the Insolvency Service into different priority classifications.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: While each case is considered on its merits the main criterion is the totality and materiality of the unfit conduct alleged having regard to the size of the deficiency, period of trading and previous failures, if any. In addition the following criterion are employed:

public companies have a quoted share issue

companies in which the petition was presented in the public interest by the Secretary of State or other regulator

companies dealing largely with the public attracting high publicity or numerous complaints

material losses by the public or matters of wider concern to the business community

quasi criminal misapplication of assets or third party property in material amounts

successive phoenix failures of less than two years trading periods.

Mr. Burden: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many cases referred to the Insolvency Service's disqualification unit have been classified as category A in each year since 1989-90.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The system of classification was not introduced by the disqualification unit until July 1991. The figures from then show:

Cases identified as category A

Year	*Number*
1991-92	21
1992-93	49
1993-94	197
[1]1994-95	129

[1] To 30 June 1994.

Mr. Burden: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many category A cases referred to the Insolvency Service's disqualification unit in each year since 1989-90 were not completed by the Insolvency Service's disqualification unit within the two-year period in which disqualification proceedings may be brought.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The system of case categorisation was introduced in July 1991. Details of cases abandoned after categorisation are not maintained in the manner requested. The total number of cases identified as meriting further investigation but which were not taken forward were:

Year	*Number*
1991-92	369
1992-93	332
1993-94	763
[1]1994-95	94

[1] To 31 May 1994.

These totals include cases which were not proceeded with because of parallel criminal proceedings, the bankruptcy of the potential respondent or the discovery of evidence which would refute or mitigate the allegations of misconduct.

Company Insolvencies

Mr. Kevin Hughes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the number of company insolvencies and how many companies ceased to trade in each of the last five years; and in how many of these cases creditors did not institute liquidation proceedings.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Information on company insolvencies is regularly published by the Association of British Chambers of Commerce, on behalf of the Department of Trade and Industry, in "Business Briefing"; copies are available in the Library of the House. The figures concerned were most recently published in the edition dated 6 May. The figures for voluntary liquidations show the number of insolvency cases not instituted by creditors.

Information on companies ceasing to trade for reasons other than insolvency is not available.

Vernacare Equipment

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he will complete his investigations into possible breaches of European Union law in respect of the supply of Vernacare equipment in Holland as stated in his Department's letter of 7 March to the hon. Member for Bolton, North-East.

Mr. Needham: We have raised Vernacare's difficulties several times with the Dutch authorities. We are now assisting the company to prepare a complaint to the Commission, which we will support.

Atomic Energy Authority

Mr. Robert Jackson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what conditions or restrictions are placed by the Government on the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority in taking part in negotiations with its trade unions on the pay and conditions of its staff.

Mr. Eggar: Pay and conditions of service for its employees are a matter for the UKAEA with the exception of its pension schemes which require the approval of my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade.

Departmental Inspectors

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he will list for the period 1979 to 1993 *(a)* the names of individuals acting as inspectors for his Department who are partners in law and accountancy firms, giving the name of the firm in each case and *(b)* the law and accountancy firms which have been criticised in inspectors' reports.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Table A lists Companies Act inspectors from legal and accountancy firms who have acted during the period 1979 to 1993 and whose appointment has been announced. Table B lists firms of solicitors and accountants who have been criticised in inspectors' reports published from 1979 and the reports concerned.

Table A

Inspector	*Firm*
Mr. J. Darby FCA	Arthur Young
Mr. H. Moore FCA	Moore Stephens & Co.
Mr. I Bowie FCA	Peat Marwick Mitchell & Co.
Mr. K. Webb FCA	Thornton Baker & Co.
Mr. J. Hillyer FCA	Hill Vellacott
Mr. T. Harding FCA	Tansley Witt & Co.
Mr. P. Ainger FCA	Price Waterhouse
Mr. A. Humphries FCA	Baker Sutton & Co.
Mr. P. Foss FCA	Moores Rowland
Mr. R. Morcom FCA	Pannell Kerr Forster
Mr. B. A. Kemp FCA	Safferys
Mr. P. Dobson FCA	Ernst & Whinney
Mr. B. Currie CA	Arthur Andersen
Mr. A. Hardcastle FCA	Peat Marwick McLintock
Mr. I. Watt FCA	KPMG Peat Marwick
Mr. P. DuBuisson FCA	BDO Binder Hamlyn
Mr. M. Lickiss FCA	Grant Thornton
Mr. A. Ridler FCA	Pannell Kerr Forster
Mr. K. Carmichael FCA	Longcrofts
Mr. D. Anton FCA	Coopers & Lybrand Deloitte
Mr. R. Youard	Slaughter & May
Mr. M. McIver	Bird Semple & Crawford Herron
Mr. D. MacLeod FCA	Ernst & Whinney
Mr. H. Aldous FCA	Robson Rhodes
Mr. J. Eden	Bevan Ashford
Mr. C. Chudley FCA	Bromhead & Co.
Mr. L. Ziman	Nabarro Nathanson
Mr. W. Hoffman FCA	Baker Tilly
Mr. B. Worth FCA	Clark Whitehill
Mr. G. Lane FCA	Chantrey Vellacott
Mr. G. Staple	Clifford Chance
Mr. T. Tress FCA	Hays Allen
Mr. R. Lewis FCA	Kidsons Impey
Mr. D. Spence CA	Grant Thornton
Mr. D. Anton FCA	Deloitte Haskins & Sells
Mr. M. Boohan FCA	Grant Thornton

Inspector	Firm
Mr. J. Venning FCA	Robson Rhodes
Mr. P. Powell FCA	Moore Stephens
Mr. R. Turner FCA	Neville Russell
Mr. J. Scott FCA	BDO Binder Hamlyn
Mr. J. White FCA	KPMG Peat Marwick
Mr. A. Gilroy FCA	BDO Binder Hamlyn
Mr. J. Heywood FCA	Price Waterhouse
Mr. B. Burn FCA	BDO Binder Hamlyn

Table B

Inspectors' report	Firm
Burnholme & Forder Ltd.	Josolyne Layton-Bennett & Co.
Brayhead Ltd.	
Orbit Holdings Ltd.	CT Moore & Co.
	Peat Marwich Mitchell & Co.
Ashbourne Investments Ltd.	Wright Stevens & Lloyd
Data Investments Limited	Robson Rhodes
Cornhill Consolidated Group Limited	Singleton, Fabian & Derbyshire
Kina Holdings Limited	Harold Everett Wand & Co.
	Dixon Wilson Tubbs & Gillett
	Collins & Co.
Scotia Investments Limited	Lubbock Fine
	Richards Butler
Gilgate Holdings Limited and others	Thornton Baker & Co.
	Gerald Edelman & Co.
Norwest Holst Limited	Price Waterhouse
Ramor Investments Limited	Price Waterhouse
Greenbank Trust Limited	Pannell Kerr Forster
House of Fraser Holdings Plc	Herbert Smith
Milbury Plc	Arthur Young
	Hancock & Willis
Minet Holdings Plc	Black Geoghegan & Till
WMD Underwriting Agencies Ltd.	Josolyne Layton-Bennett
	Arthur Young
Alexander Howden Group Plc	Josolyne Layton-Bennett
	Arthur Young
	de Paula Turner Lake
	Peat Marwick Mitchell
Aldermanbury Trust Plc	Levy Gee
	Spicer & Pegler
Sound Diffusion Plc	Arthur Young
Rotaprint Plc	Arthur Young
	Ernst & Whinney
The Milford Docks Company	Coopers & Lybrand
	Lovegrove & Durant
Edencorp Leisure Plc	Ernst & Young
Norton Group Plc	Hacker Young
	Taylor Joynson Garrett
Astra Holdings Plc	Stoy Hayward
	Baileys Shaw & Gillett
London United Investments Plc	KPMG Peat Marwick
CR Driver & Co. Ltd.	
The Bestwood Plc	BDO Binder Hamlyn
Atlanta Fund Managers Limited	

Scott Inquiry

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects to receive the report of the Scott inquiry.

Mr. Heseltine: The timing of the report is a matter for Lord Justice Scott.

Newspapers

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what consultations have taken place with his Department and representatives from newspaper wholesalers and retailers as part of the follow-up action resulting from the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on the supplies of national newpapers in England and Wales.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: A wide range of representations were submitted during the period for written representations on my Department's proposals following this report. I and my officials have subsequently held discussions with representative parties from the industry, including publishers, wholesalers and both existing and aspiring retailers, to discuss the terms of a statutory order and the possible alternative of an industry code of practice. I shall announce my decision as soon as possible.

Fire Safety Regulations

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he will next meet representatives of the fire brigades and fire brigades unions to discuss changes in regulating fire safety and fire regulations enforcement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: In announcing publication of the report of the review of fire safety legislation and enforcement on 22 June, *Official Report*, column *228-29*, my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade made it clear that the Government were committed to full consultation with all interested parties. This consultation process is now underway with a closing date of 31 October. I understand that the Home Office is already making arrangements for discussions with the relevant fire service organisations.

Deregulation Unit

Mr. Burden: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the budget of the deregulation unit for the years 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The budget for the deregulation unit in 1992-93 was £790,000 and for 1993-94 it was £1,239,000.

The Bill team which was set up in 1993 to deal with the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill had a budget in 1993-94 of £252,000.

Mr. Burden: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many staff were employed in the deregulation unit in the years 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The number of staff employed in the deregulation unit constituted the equivalent of 23·6 man years in 1992-93 and 33·8 man years in 1993-94.

The Bill team which was set up in 1993 to deal with the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill employed 13 people in 1993-94.

Mr. Burden: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many staff hours in his Department have been devoted to work on deregulation unit values in the year 1993-94.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The deregulation unit devoted approximately 52,000 hours to deregulation work in 1993-94. In addition, the Deregulation and Contracting

Out Bill team which was set up during 1993 devoted approximately 12,000 hours to deregulation work in 1993-94. Officials in other parts of the Department also work on deregulatory issues from time to time, but it is not possible to ascertain how many hours they spent on this work in 1993-94.

Coal Industry

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proposals he has for the transposition into United Kingdom law of the provisions of European Union legislation suspending until 23 July 2002 the ban on state aid to the coal industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Commission decision 3632/93/ECSC of 28 December 1993 establishing rules for state aid to the coal industry is directly applicable in the United Kingdom, as in all member states. Consequently no United Kingdom legislation is needed to give effect to this particular European legislation.

Association of International Accountants

Mr. Mark Robinson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the application submitted to him under the Companies Act 1989 by the Association of International Accountants.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I have decided to recognise the accountancy qualification offered by the Association of International Accountants as a recognised professional qualification for company auditors under section 32 of and schedule 12 to the Companies Act 1989. I have placed in the Libraries of the House copies of the AIA's rules and guidance, on the basis of which I have taken this decision.

Frogs' Legs

Mr. Dafis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will request the European Commission to call for a European Union ban on the import of frogs' legs from Bangladesh.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 8 July 1994]:* Trade in two species of frog, including their legs and other parts, from Bangladesh is already strictly controlled under the convention on international trade in endangered species. I have no plans to seek any further restrictions.

MINIS Return

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he plans to publish his Department's annual MINIS—management information system—return.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 8 July 1994]:* The MINIS 94 returns for the Department were published today. A set has been placed in the Library of the House. The MINIS returns for the DTI's executive agencies will be published later in July together with a departmental MINIS overview.

Beer Orders

Mr. Wareing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what the mechanism is for monitoring the beer orders; how he obtains the necessary information in order to carry out such monitoring; and when he intends to review their operation.

Mr. Neil Hamilton *[holding answer 7 July 1994]:* As the hon. Member is aware, monitoring compliance with the Beer Orders is the responsibility of the Director General of Fair Trading. The five major brewers who are subject to the Supply of Beer (Loan Ties, Licensed Premises and Wholesale Prices) Order 1989 and the Supply of Beer (Tied Estate) Order 1989—the "Beer Orders"—gave undertakings to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to supply detailed information each year about the composition of their estates in order to allow the DGFT to determine whether the number of tied premises is within the maximum permitted by the Tied Estate Order. The details provided are independently audited.

In the case of the other provisions of the Beer Orders, including the guest beer requirement, the Office of Fair Trading is reliant on complaints to identify possible breaches by the brewers. All complaints are carefully examined.

There are no plans at present to ask the DGFT to conduct a special review of the operation of the orders beyond his normal monitoring role.

Child Care

Mr. Barnes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what provision his Department makes for child care facilities for staff; what is the extent of subsidy to nursery places and holiday play schemes; if his Department *(a)* subscribes to Childcare Solutions and *(b)* makes child care vouchers available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 7 July 1994]:* My Department aims to promote a culture where managers are understanding of the need for staff to balance work and child care responsibilities and is committed to exploring child care schemes which give value for money.

The DTI provides school holiday play scheme places, and certain of its executive agencies provide nursery places, at subsidies of between 40 and 50 per cent. The DTI neither subscribes to Childcare Solutions nor provides its staff with child care vouchers.

Inntrepreneur Ltd.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what recent meetings he has held with European Commissioner Van Miert; at which of those meetings the matter of Inntrepreneur Estates Ltd's application for exemption under article 85 of the treaty of Rome was raised; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton *[holding answer 7 July 1994]:* Neither I nor my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade have held any recent meetings with Commissioner van Miert. However, when my officials met officials from directorate general IV on 4 May to discuss a number of issues relating to competition in the brewing industry they were told that a decision might be expected before the summer on IEL's application for an exemption under article 85 for its standard tenancy agreement.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what recent representations he has recently received in respect of *(a)* the minimum purchasing obligation and *(b)* the rents imposed on public house tenants by Inntrepreneur Estates Ltd; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton *[holding answer 7 July 1994]:* Since answering a similar oral question from the hon.

Member on 11 May 1994, *Official Report*, columns 315-16, my officials and I have received four representations from or on behalf of IEL lessees in respect of rents, and held one meeting with the Courage Leaseholders Association, at which the question of rents was also raised. I have received no recent representations in respect of minimum purchasing obligations imposed under IEL leases.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what recent discussions he has had with Grand Metropolitan Estates Ltd. in respect of Inntrepreneur lessees; what advice he has given the company about dealing with IEL tenants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton *[holding answer 7 July 1994]:* Neither I nor my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade have had any recent discussions with Grand Metropolitan Estates in respect of IEL lessees.

Chemical Weapons Convention

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what preparations have been conducted within Government Departments in readiness for the entry into force of the chemical weapons convention.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 7 July 1994]:* My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has responsibility for implementation in the United Kingdom of the chemical weapons convention, and this Department would host the national authority provided for under the convention. The DTI liaises closely, both directly and through the appropriate interdepartmental committees, with those other Government Departments which may have an interest in the convention.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Legal Aid

42. **Mr. Hawkins:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what plans he has for reform of the legal aid system to ensure that its benefits are available only to British citizens.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Anyone may apply for legal aid to pursue a case in the English courts, regardless of nationality, provided that their case is within the scope of the scheme. There are no plans to restrict legal aid to British citizens.

44. **Mr. William O'Brien:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what representations he has received from the West Yorkshire area concerning eligibility for legal aid; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Since January 1994, the Lord Chancellor's Department has received five representations concerning legal aid eligibility from the West Yorkshire area, two of which were from hon. Members and three from members of the public.

Lockerbie Air Crash

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what are his responsibilities in relation to the investigation of the destruction of Pan Am 103 over Lockerbie.

Mr. John. M. Taylor: None.

Debt Recovery

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what plans he has to protect the rights of wives *(a)* when a court orders the sale of the matrimonial home to pay off the husband's debts and *(b)* where the husband continues to incur debts against the wife's income.

Mr. John M. Taylor: (a) Under current legislation, where a husband and wife are co-owners of the matrimonial home and the husband becomes bankrupt or a charging order is made against him, the court has a discretion whether or not to order sale of the home to meet the debts. The interests of the wife and the creditors will be considered by the court in reaching its decision. Unless the circumstances are exceptional the court will usually order a sale, though the wife will, of course, be entitled to her share of the proceeds of sale. I have no plans to introduce new legislation.

(b) It is difficult to envisage circumstances where a husband would incur continuing debts against his wife's income without her consent; if the husband and wife have a joint bank or building society account, they the wife can end this arrangement to stop the husband using her income.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what the procedures are for ensuring that when action is taken by the courts to recover debts all the parties involved are made aware of impending action; and what remedy is available to individuals when the court fails to notify them.

Mr. John M. Taylor: It is the responsibility of the plaintiff in a court action to provide the information necessary to ensure that proceedings are taken against the correct person and that the proceedings are served on all interested parties. If a party to an action is not notified, they may apply for the judgment or order to be set aside so that the papers can be re-served. Anyone who is not named in proceedings but who has an interest may apply to be joined as a party.

Sun Alliance v. Shah-Shah Court

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will investigate the processing by Coventry county court of the case Sun Alliance *v.* Shah-Shah Court, case number 9003741.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I have already put in hand an investigation into the way in which the administrative arrangements connected to this case were handled in Coventry county court and will set out my findings in a letter to the hon. Member.

Recorders

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department (1) in how many instances the formalities for the review of the contracts of recorders under the Courts Act 1971 failed to be completed before the due date over the last three appointment periods;

(2) how many recorders were required to stop sitting due to administrative errors or delay in the formalities of their appointment over the last three appointment periods;

(3) what steps have been taken *(a)* to remedy the consequences of any errors of procedural failures in respect of the reappointment of recorders under the Courts Act 1971 and *(b)* to prevent their recurrence;

(4) how much has been paid to recorders by way of renumeration in respect of days during which the authorisation of their continuing appointment had not been obtained;

(5) what has been the cost of any failures and errors in the administrative procedures for the reappointment of recorders under the Courts Act 1971.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Extensions of existing recorder appointments under the Courts Act 1971 are generally made for terms of three years, with approximately one third of recorders' appointments accordingly falling to be re-considered each year. Of the appointments expiring at the end of 1991, 1992 and 1993—and excluding appointments which it had been decided not to extend—there were seven instances in which the formal extension was not completed by 31 December of the relevant year. In the light of legal advice received earlier this year to the effect that the extensions purportedly made after the relevant 31 December were ineffective, four recorders whose appointments had been purportedly extended, and two recorders in respect of whose extensions steps had not been completed, were warned not to sit until they could be formally reappointed. One purported extension was for a period of 12 months, which has now elapsed. In two other cases recorders were also warned not to sit because, in the light of the legal advice, the extension of their appointment was now seen to be ineffective in purportedly extending their appointments to the 31 December following their 72nd birthday, rather than to the annniversary of their initial appointment. The recorders so advised have now been formally reappointed and so informed, except in one case where in the interim the individual ceased on age grounds to be eligible for a further appointment.

Standing instructions in the Department have been amended to make it clear that where a recorder's appointment cannot be extended before its expiry, further service as a recorder can only be effected by a formal reappointment. During the material time in the early part of 1994 only one of the recorders concerned sat, for a total of two days. On one day he dealt with two cases involving one defendant who pleaded guilty in both instances; on the other the matter was adjourned as the parties were not ready to proceed. The fee for recorder sittings at the time was £315 a day. The cost of the action taken as a result of the legal advice in relation to the procedures for the extension of recorder appointments forms part of the overall costs of the headquarters expenditure of the Lord Chancellor's Department and cannot readily be isolated.

Civil Business (Fees)

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is his forecast of fee income for civil business for the current financial year; and how far this forecast differs from the amount needed to meet his spending plans.

Mr. John M. Taylor: We presently forecast that, with imminent fee increases, we should this year receive £234 million income from civil business, £52 million less than the Department's published appropriations in aid figure.

Courts (Wales)

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many clerks in magistrates courts there were in Wales in *(a)* 1974, *(b)* 1984 *(c)* at the latest available date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: No reliable records of this information exist prior to 1990. In the magistrates courts in Wales, as at the end of December 1993 there were 21 justices' clerks and 127 court clerks, including trainees.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what was the cost of administering county courts and Crown courts in Wales in each year since 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The table sets out the approximate cost of administering county and Crown courts since 1990. The division between Crown and county courts cannot be exact due to shared costs. The figures are in respect of the Wales and Chester circuit which includes areas of Cheshire.

£ million

Year	*Crown*	*County*	*Total*
1990-91	6·225	10·133	16·358
1991-92	8·525	12·158	20·683
1992-93	10·321	14·219	24·540
1993-94	10·093	15·160	25·253

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many magistrates courts there were in Wales in *(a)* 1964, *(b)* 1974, *(c)* 1984 and *(d)* at the latest available date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: This information is not collected centrally. The provision of magistrates courthouse accommodation in Wales is a local matter for the eight individual magistrates' courts committees in consultation with their respective county councils, the paying authorities.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what measures are currently under consideration to improve the administration of Crown and county courts in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: A number of national initiatives will help to improve the administration of county courts in Wales. These initiatives are concerned with streamlining procedures, and with the introduction of computer support for court functions. From 1995 it is planned that the LOCCS—local office county courts system—computer system will provide support across the range of county court functions which must be done locally. Other, centralised systems, such as the county court bulk centre, will improve the service offered in all county courts by removing routine and repetitive work which need not be handled locally and which can be handled more efficiently and effectively in a central, computer-supported location. A business management system for measuring work in the county court was implemented in September 1993. A similar system will be introduced into the Crown court in 1997. The Wales and Chester circuit administrator has published a policy document with a view to extending the use of the Welsh language in court proceedings in the Principality.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Family Income

Sir David Knox: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will update to the latest year for which the figures are available his reply to the right hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham, Sir Ian Gilmour, of 29 November 1991, *Official Report*, columns 666-70, showing the numbers of working and out-of-work families with children at different levels of income, according to family size, distinguishing between one-parent and two-parent families and between one-earner and two-earner families showing *(a)* gross weekly incomes excluding state benefits for the working families, with gross weekly income ranges as before to £280 to £299, but finishing with bands of £300 to £350, £350 to £400 and £400 and over and *(b)* the benefits and benefit incomes on which the out-of-work families depended.

Mr. Burt: The information requested is in the tables. Some of the estimates in the tables are based on small sample sizes and are therefore subject to a wide margin of error.

The figures are based on estimates taken from 1991 and 1992 family expenditure surveys, using the income reported in the survey year. They are not adjusted to a common price base and therefore should not be used for comparison over time.

Table 1
Number of working families with children at various income levels
Great Britain
1991-92

Thousands

	Total	One-parent family	Two-parent family	One-wage family	Two-wage family	Number of dependent children: One	Two	Three	Four or more
Gross weekly income excluding state benefits									
Under £80	140	10	130	120	20	50	70	20	0
£80 to £99	50	10	40	50	[1]—	30	20	10	[1]—
£100 to £119	60	10	50	50	[1]—	40	20	[1]—	0
£120 to £139	70	20	50	50	10	40	20	10	[1]—
£140 to £159	110	20	90	100	10	40	40	20	10
£160 to £179	130	20	100	100	30	60	50	20	10
£180 to £199	110	20	90	80	30	60	40	10	10
£200 to £219	170	30	140	120	50	80	60	20	10
£220 to £239	190	20	170	120	60	70	90	10	10
£240 to £259	180	20	160	110	70	80	80	20	[1]—
£260 to £279	230	20	210	120	100	80	110	30	10
£280 to £299	220	20	200	100	120	100	80	30	10
£300 to £349	510	20	480	190	320	210	220	50	20
£350 to £399	570	20	550	180	400	220	270	60	10
£400 to £449	460	10	440	130	330	210	190	40	10
£450 to £499	340	[1]—	340	100	250	150	140	50	10
£500 and over	1,450	10	1,430	390	1,060	560	650	190	50
TOTAL	4,980	300	4,680	2,110	2,870	2,080	2,140	590	170

[1] Denotes less than 5 thousand.

Notes:

1. The figures are estimates derived from the 1991 and 1992 Family Expenditure Surveys combined. All figures have been rounded to the nearest 10 thousand and because of this rows and columns may not exactly sum to totals. All estimates are subject to sampling error.
2. Gross weekly income is the income reported in the year of the survey, either 1991 or 1992, with no adjustment for inflation.
3. A 'working family' is one where at least one parent/partner is in full-time employment or self-employment and working 30 hours or more.
4. A 'two-wage family' is where the second wage exceeds £5 per week.
5. The figures include only families in private households.

Table 2
Number of non-working families of working age with children at various income levels
Great Britain
1991-92

Thousands

	Gross weekly income including state benefits: Under £50	£50 to £69	£70 to £89	£90 to £109	£110 to £129	£130 to £149	£150 to £169	£170 to £189	£190 to £209	£210 to £229	£230 to £249	£250 and over	Total
TOTAL	40	60	140	300	330	260	220	150	90	70	40	180	1,880
One-parent family	10	50	100	240	210	130	110	50	30	30	20	40	1,020
Two-parent family	30	20	30	60	110	120	100	100	50	40	20	150	860
Number of dependent children													
One	30	50	110	200	160	70	60	40	20	20	10	80	850
Two	10	10	20	80	130	120	60	50	30	30	10	70	610
Three	[1]—	[1]—	10	10	40	70	60	30	10	20	[1]—	30	270
Four or more	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	10	[1]—	10	30	30	20	10	10	10	140

	Gross weekly income including state benefits												
	Under £50	£50 to £69	£70 to £89	£90 to £109	£110 to £129	£130 to £149	£150 to £169	£170 to £189	£190 to £209	£210 to £229	£230 to £249	£250 and over	Total
Contributory benefits being received													
None[2]	40	20	30	30	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	110	370
None[3]	[1]—	40	100	240	270	200	150	80	40	40	20	30	1,210
Unemployment benefit[2]	0	[1]—	10	10	10	[1]—	10	10	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	10	60
Unemployment benefit[3]	0	0	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	10	[1]—	0	[1]—	0	[1]—	30
SB/SSP[2]	0	[1]—	0	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	0	[1]—	10	30
SB/SSP[3]	0	0	0	0	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	10	0	0	0	20
Invalidity benefit[2]	0	0	[1]—	10	10	20	10	20	10	0	[1]—	10	100
Invalidity benefit[3]	0	0	0	[1]—	0	0	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	10	[1]—	[1]—	20
Other[2]	0	[1]—	0	0	[1]—	0	10	[1]—	0	[1]—	[1]—	10	30
Other[3]	0	0	[1]—	[1]—	10	0	0	0	0	[1]—	0	0	10

[1] Denotes less than 5,000.
[2] Denotes without income support.
[3] Denotes with income support.

Notes:
1. The figures are estimates derived from the 1991 and 1992 Family Expenditure Surveys combined. All figures have been rounded to the nearest 10 thousand and because of this rows and columns may not exactly sum to totals. All estimates are subject to sampling error.
2. Gross weekly income is the income reported in the year of the survey, either 1991 or 1992 with no adjustment for inflation.
3. A 'non-working family' is one where neither parent/partner is in full-time employment or self-employment.
4. The figures include only families in private households.
5. Other contributory benefits include widows benefit, maternity allowance and statutory maternity pay.
6. It is known that receipt of income support is under reported in the Family Expenditure Surveys.
7. SB is sickness benefit and SSP is statutory sick pay.

Child Support

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of those fathers being asked for maintenance for their own children are also caring for stepchildren for whom no maintenance is being received.

Mr. Burt: I understand from Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive of the Child Support Agency, that this information is not available.

Lesbian Parents

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make it his policy, where lesbian couples are awarded parental rights over a child, that they do not receive more benefits than a heterosexual couple; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: The law contains no recognition of the possibility of a contract of marriage between people of the same sex. Social security legislation reflects this.

In the income-related benefits only an unmarried man and woman living together as husband and wife can be treated in the same way as a married couple—that is, as a single unit.

In the contributory benefits, adult dependency increases are paid in prescribed circumstances, which can include the situation where an adult dependant is caring for a child for whom the claimant is entitled, or treated as entitled, to child benefit. In this situation no reference is made to the sex of the claimant or the adult dependant.

Market Testing

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the plans for market testing of *(a)* social security commissioners, *(b)* social security appeal tribunals, *(c)* medical appeal tribunals and *(d)* disability appeal tribunals.

Mr. Hague: None.

Habitual Residence Test

Mr. Streeter: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security further to his oral answer of 4 July, *Official Report*, column 4, when the regulations to curb benefit tourism will be laid.

Mr. Lilley: I have laid regulations today to prevent benefit tourism. From 1 August people claiming income support, housing benefit or council tax benefit will have to be habitually resident of the United Kingdom, the Channel Islands, the Republic of Ireland or the Isle of Man. European Economic Area nationals who have acquired worker's rights under EC directives by working in the United Kingdom on a regular basis, asylum seekers, refugees and those given exceptional leave to remain in the United Kingdom will be unaffected.

War Pensions

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a list of all those district councils who do not disregard the first £20 of war widows' and war disabled pensions in calculating council tax and housing benefit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hague: There is a £10 per week statutory disregard of war widows' pensions and war disablement pensions in all of the income-related benefits. In addition, local authorities have the discretion to disregard up to the full amount of these pensions when calculating entitlement to housing benefit and council tax benefit. We have no plans to change these arrangements.

As the hon. Member originally asked this question of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales, I have limited the information in the table to Welsh district councils. Housing benefit information has been compiled from the latest available information from local authorities for the financial year 1990-91. No details are available for council tax benefit.

District councils in Wales who do not disregard a further £10 of war widows' pensions[1] and war disablement pensions[2], in addition to the £10 statutory disregard, when entitlement to housing benefit is calculated

Alyn and Deeside
Brecknock
Carmarthen
Cynon Valley
Dinefwr
Llliw Valley
Merthyr Tydfil
Monmouth[2]
Newport[1]
Port Talbot
Rhymney Valley
South Pembrokeshire[3]
Taff-Ely
Torfaen[1]
Wrexham Maelor
Ynys Mon

[1] Applies to war widows' pensions only.
[2] Applies to war disablement pensions only.
[3] Denotes a district council which disregards 50 per cent. of a war widow's or war disablement pension, including the £10 statutory disregard.

Civil Service

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will order an inquiry into the work of members of his Department *(a)* in drafting the detailed regulations relating to child support, *(b)* setting up and establishing the Child Support Agency and *(c)* managing and controlling the Child Support Agency; if he will discipline those whose performance has been in error or inadequate; and if he will give his assessment of the effect of the setting up of the Child Support Agency on public perception of the civil service.

Mr. Burt: No. Ministers are responsible for decisions on policy embodied in legislation, which it is for Parliament to approve, amend or reject. They are also accountable to Parliament for the conduct of the operations of their Department, including its agencies. Civil servants are responsible for advising Ministers on policy and for ensuring that their decisions are implemented effectively and efficiently.

We keep the policies, management and performance of the Department under regular review and, like other Government bodies, it is also open to scrutiny by the National Audit Office and the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration.

Managers, including agency chief executives, have the duty of ensuring that any necessary action, including where appropriate disciplinary action, is taken to correct any errors or inadequacies.

Running Costs

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide a table showing the running costs of his Department in each region for each year since 1987-88.

Mr. Hague: The information is not available as running costs are not recorded on a regional basis.

Income Support

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to amend the regulations requiring carers premium allowances and invalid care allowance to be taken into account when considering applications for income support.

Mr. Burt: Invalid care allowance, like income support, is an income maintenance benefit. It is therefore taken into account when calculating entitlement to income support. The carer premium is an additional amount included in income support for people entitled to invalid care allowance, and increases the amount of benefit payable. We have no plans to change the current rules.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many recipients of income support in each region and as a percentage of the total had deductions made from their benefit for *(a)* poll tax arrears, *(b)* fuel bills and *(c)* social fund loan repayments in each year since 1990.

Mr. Burt: The information is in the table. Information is not available for the May 1993 "Annual Statistical Enquiry".

Source:
Income Support Statistics Annual Enquiries, May 1990-1992.
Income Support Statistics Quarterly Enquiry, August 1993.

Income Support Recipients with Deductions from Benefit

Region	*Total Claimants*	*(a) Community Charge Arrears*		*(b) Fuel Bills*		*(c) Social Fund Repayments*	
		Cases	*Per cent. of Region*	*Cases*	*Per cent. of Region*	*Cases*	*Per cent. of Region*
August 1993							
North Eastern	839,000	97,000	11·6	58,000	7·0	110,000	13·2
London North	1,018,000	66,000	6·5	36,000	3·6	85,000	8·4
South Western	411,000	38,000	9·2	10,000	2·4	37,000	9·1
Wales	312,000	27,000	8·8	15,000	4·9	36,000	11·4
Midlands	912,000	83,000	9·1	35,000	3·8	96,000	10·5
North Western	812,000	107,000	13·1	43,000	5·3	108,000	13·4
Scotland	553,000	44,000	7·9	41,000	7·3	96,000	17·4
London South	915,000	45,000	5·0	29,000	3·2	74,000	8·1
Great Britain	5,771,000	507,000	8·8	268,000	4·6	643,000	11·1
May 1992							
North Eastern	753,000	50,000	6·7	57,000	7·6	103,000	13·7
London North	891,000	25,000	2·8	31,000	3·5	73,000	8·2
South Western	357,000	16,000	4·4	10,000	2·7	32,000	9·0
Wales	287,000	17,000	5·9	17,000	5·9	34,000	11·9
Midlands	800,000	36,000	4·5	23,000	2·9	90,000	11·2
North Western	731,000	44,000	6·0	39,000	5·3	100,000	13·7
Scotland	519,000	42,000	8·0	42,000	8·1	94,000	18·1
London South	749,000	14,000	1·8	24,000	3·3	59,000	7·9
Great Britain	5,088,000	243,000	4·8	243,000	4·8	586,000	11·5

Region	Total Claimants	(a) Community Charge Arrears		(b) Fuel Bills		(c) Social Fund Repayments	
		Cases	Per cent. of Region	Cases	Per cent. of Region	Cases	Per cent. of Region
May 1991							
North Eastern	688,000	7,000	0·9	47,000	6·9	78,000	11·3
London North	735,000	2,000	0·2	21,000	2·8	44,000	6·0
South Western	310,000	1,000	0·2	7,000	2·3	20,000	6·4
Wales	257,000	3,000	1·1	13,000	5·0	26,000	10·2
Midlands	699,000	2,000	0·2	17,000	2·4	70,000	10·1
North Western	669,000	6,000	1·0	33,000	4·9	79,000	11·8
Scotland	487,000	13,000	2·7	43,000	8·8	84,000	17·2
London South	641,000	1,000	0·1	20,000	3·1	42,000	6·6
Great Britain	4,487,000	34,000	0·8	200,000	4·5	443,000	9·9
May 1990							
North Eastern	674,000	—	—	41,000	6·1	72,000	10·8
London North	638,000	—	—	22,000	3·4	40,000	6·3
South Western	274,000	—	—	7,000	2·7	17,000	6·1
Wales	248,000	—	—	10,000	4·1	24,000	9·6
Midlands	665,000	—	—	13,000	2·0	54,000	8·1
North Western	643,000	—	—	25,000	3·9	65,000	10·1
Scotland	481,000	—	—	47,000	9·8	75,000	15·7
London South	558,000	—	—	17,000	3·0	36,000	6·5
Great Britain	4,180,000	—	—	183,000	4·4	383,000	9·2

Notes:

1. The figures have been rounded to the nearest thousand. Percentages are correct to one decimal place.
2. The regions given are the social security administrative regions, as used by the Department prior to 1988.
3. Information on deductions to cover direct payment of community charge arrears was not collected in 1990. (The community charge was introduced in April 1989 in Scotland and April 1990 in the rest of Great Britain).
4. Deductions to cover direct payment of fuel bills include current charges and arrears for gas and electricity. An Income Support recipient may have deductions for more than one of these. Such cases are only counted once in the tables.

Rugby Injuries (Benefits)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the current annual expenditure on paying sickness, invalidity or other benefits to persons injured playing rugby union football and their dependents.

Mr. Scott: The information is not available.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Kenya

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what aid the European Union has cancelled to Kenya; and for what reason.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: No EC aid under the Lomé convention has been cancelled recently. However, differences between the Government of Kenya and the European Commission on sectoral policy issues have resulted in proposals to reallocate 25 MECU of Lomé III funds and 65 MECU of Lomé IV funds—a total equivalent to approximately £70·3 million—from the cereals sector reform programme to other projects. This reallocation and the new projects are expected to be agreed formally later this year as part of a revised national indicative programme.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what were the reasons for cancelling a grant for forestry conservation to Kenya in February.

Mr. Lennox Boyd: We were unable to reach agreement with the Government of Kenya on a number of issues, including financial sustainability and management mechanisms in the pilot forests and consultation procedures over excisions, which would have enabled us to proceed with a planned further phase of the Kenya indigenous forestry conservation project. The project has now formally closed. We remain ready to discuss further the possibility of resuming our involvement provided a mutually acceptable basis can be found.

Tanzania

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement detailing the value of all types of aid and support for economic and social development in Tanzania in each of the last five years, providing information separately for the different aid and support programmes.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Our support for economic and social development in Tanzania has been, and remains, substantial. The main elements comprise programme aid, in support of economic reform, and project assistance, consisting of both technical cooperation and financial inputs, focusing particularly on natural resources, health and population, and transport and infrastructure. We have also provided considerable assistance through non-governmental organisations. The value of our aid has been as follows:

United Kingdom Financial Year £'000	PROJECT Financial Aid	AID Technical Cooperation	Programme Aid	Disaster Relief	Debt Relief	Other	Total
1988-89	4,154	7,102	19,559	—	13	1,061	31,888
1989-90	3,269	9,445	4,840	—	8	937	18,500
1990-91	719	9,425	20,851	45	3	881	31,925
1991-92	796	12,754	10,652	16	—	849	25,066
1992-93	3,728	12,517	6,497	36	—	956	23,734

Aid Budget

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of the United Kingdom's aid budget was *(a)* given as bilateral aid, *(b)* multilateral aid and *(c)* administered by the European Community in 1979, 1983, 1987, 1992 and currently.

Mr. Hurd *[pursuant to his reply, 27 June 1994, column 411]:* The answer should read as follows: "In 1979-80, 72 per cent. was bilateral aid, 12 per cent. was chanelled through multilateral institutions other than the EC, and 16 per cent. was administered by the EC.

In 1983-84 the figures were 55 per cent., 30 per cent., 15 per cent.; in 1987-88 the figures were 60 per cent., 24 per cent., 16 per cent.; and in 1992-93 the most recent year for which figures are available, the figures were 54 per cent., 25 per cent., and 21 per cent. respectively."

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Research

Dr. Michael Clark: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when the report of the multi-departmental scrutiny of public sector research establishments will be published; and what arrangements have been made for public consultation on the report's findings.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am pleased to announce that the report on the efficiency scrutiny of civil public sector research establishments is being published today. Copies have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses. The scrutiny was foreshadowed in the White Paper "Realising our potential: a strategy for science, engineering and technology". I announced its terms of reference on 2 February and the bodies to be covered on 3 March, *Official Report,* columns *809-11.*

As Minister for Science, I am determined to ensure that Government resources are spent to the maximum extent possible on science rather than on administrative overheads. The scrutiny team's report proposes a range of options. I and my colleagues in other Departments will be examining these proposals carefully before deciding on the Government's response.

The Government wish to ensure that all interested parties have an opportunity to contribute to the decision-making process on the report. There will accordingly be a four-month public consultation period, beginning today and ending on 11 November, during which all individuals and organisations who wish to comment are invited to forward views to the Office of Science and Technology, head of trans-departmental science and technology group. The Government will take these views into account in reaching their decisions on the way forward.

Civil Servants

Mr. Byers: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on what occasions in the last 10 years he or a Minister in his Department has given a direction to civil servants to award a contract against the advice of the civil service; what was the subject matter of the contract and its value; and when it was awarded.

Mr. Waldegrave: There have been no occasions in the last 10 years when Ministers in the Office of Public Service and Science or any of its predecessors have given any such directions.

Management Training

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many staff in his Department have attended management training seminars run by Paget and Thompson in the last 12 months.

Mr. Waldegrave: According to available information, three members of Central Office of Information staff, and one from the Office of Public Service and Science, Chessington computer centre, attended management training seminars by Padgett Thompson during the period. None has attended seminars by Paget and Thompson.

Market Testing

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in how many cases in each of the last two years where market testing of public services took place an in-house bid was prohibited; in how many cases it was allowed; in the latter case, how many times the in-house bid won; what percentage of the total for each year was represented by each of these categories; and what was the total value of the contracts in each category.

Mr. Waldegrave: Comprehensive information on the reasons for contract being let without an in-house bid is not available centrally. The rest of the information requested for the period from April 1992 to December 1993 can be found in table 2 on page 101 of the citizens charter second report which is in the Library.

Comparable information for 1994 is not yet available.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the basis of his calculation that market testing of central Government public services has saved £135 million; if he will give a precise breakdown of each main component of this total; and what period is covered by these savings.

Mr. Waldegrave: £135 million is the total annual saving for the period from April 1992 to December 1993, calculated by taking into consideration all those costs which are directly attributable to individual tests. The calculation is set out in the table.

		£ million
	Annual cost of activities before testing	1,119·2
Less	Annual cost of activities after testing	980·0
Less	Annualised redundancy costs	2·0
Less	Other one-off costs attributable to tests, including consultancy support to in-house teams, annualised	1·5
Equals	Annual savings attributable to tests	[1]135·6

[1] The figures do not sum exactly to the total because of rounding.

Open Government

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he intends to introduce legislation to enable a statutory right of access to personal information as described in the White Paper on open government; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: Legislation will be introduced as soon as the parliamentary timetable permits.

Disabled People

Mr. Alan Howarth: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what role will be played by his Department in the forthcoming consultation on disability; and what plans he has to publish a consultation paper on making public services accessible to disabled people.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend the Minister for Disabled People will be co-ordinating action on the forthcoming consultation on disability and will involve other Departments as necessary. The principles underlying the citizens charter apply to everyone, including people with disabilities. I am hoping shortly to publish jointly, with the Minister for State for Social Security, a checklist to help service providers and those responsible for drawing up and publishing charters or statements of charter standards to consider in more detail the standard of service they offer to people with disabilities.

EMPLOYMENT

Work Permits

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many work permits have been issued to foreign nationals in each of the last three years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The total number of work permits issued by the Department in each of the last three years is shown in the following table:

Year	*Number of work permits issued*
1991	37,989
1992	37,917
1993	37,761

Training

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of training providers funded by training and enterprise councils are specifically Asian, African or Caribbean organisations.

Miss Widdecombe: The Department does not require training and enterprise councils to supply information about the ethnic background of their training providers.

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of directors of training and enterprise councils are of Asian, African or Caribbean origin.

Miss Widdecombe: I am unable to give the information the hon. Member is asking for as it is not held centrally.

Academic Appointments

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment by what authority non-EU citizens cannot take up British academic appointments when their qualifications and abilities are considered by the academic institutions to be superior.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Department grants work permits under the Immigration Act 1971 to enable United Kingdom employers, including academic institutions, where necessary, to recruit highly skilled personnel from outside the European Economic Area. It does so for overseas nationals who have unique qualifications or experience, or where there are no suitable qualified resident workers available.

Running Costs

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will provide a table showing the running costs of his Department in each region for each year since 1987-88.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information in the form requested is not available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Equal Opportunities Commission

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the ratio of male to female employees at the Equal Opportunities Commission.

Miss Widdecombe: From the latest figures available the ratio is one male employee to every four female employees.

Unemployment

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the most recent figures for unemployment in the 12 European Union member states.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 7 July 1994]:* Internationally comparable unemployment figures based on the internationally standardised ILO definition of unemployment are published by EUROSTAT in its monthly "Unemployment Bulletin", copies of which are available in the Library. These figures, which show that the United Kingdom ILO unemployment rate is below the EC average, are shown in the table.

Seasonally adjusted unemployment rates in EC countries

	Percentage	*Latest month*
Belgium	10·0	April
Denmark	10·5	April
Germany[1]	6·3	April

	Percentage	Latest month
Greece	n/a	—
Spain	23·1	April
France	11·3	April
Ireland	17·9	April
Italy	11·5	April
Luxembourg	3·3	April
Netherlands	10·0	March
Protugal	6·2	April
United Kingdom	9·9	April
EC average	11·0	April

[1] This figures only relates to the former West Germany.
n/a Not available.

Muscular Dystrophy

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what measure his Department plans to ensure employment opportunities to young people suffering from muscular dystrophy.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 8 July 1994]:* The Department has a wide range of initiatives and services which help enhance employment opportunities for people with disabilities, including those with muscular dystrophy. To improve the situation further, the Government announced on 6 May that they will be consulting on proposals to prevent unjustifiable discrimination against disabled people in employment, within the next six months.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Sasea

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what approaches have been made to him from Europe in relation to the affairs of the Swiss company Sasea and related companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I have been asked to reply.

I understand that two Sasea companies are subject to insolvency proceedings in this country. These are Sasea Finance Ltd., which went into voluntary liquidation on 18 November 1992, and Sasea Intertrade Company Ltd., which went into voluntary liquidation on 16 June 1994. I am not aware that any approaches have been made to Her Majesty's Government regarding the affairs of these or any other Sasea group companies.

Gender Identity Disorder

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what evidence he has as to the validity of chromosomal evidence as a means of determining a person's sex.

Mr. Charles Wardle: A reliable diagnostic sex text that examines a segment of chromosomal DNA has been developed by the forensic science service, an agency of the Home Office. This should be available for use in forensic science casework in due course.

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what provisions he has made within his Department to ensure that persons suffering from gender identity disorder are described in this way.

Mr. Charles Wardle: None.

Electoral Law (Disabled People)

Mr. Alan Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to publish a response to the proposals put forward by his departmental working parties on electoral law and processes affecting disabled people.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer my hon. Friend to a question from the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Mrs. Roche) on 8 July at column *331*.

Immigration Rules

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration he has given to treating the application of a foreign national in a same-sex relationship with a person settled in the United Kingdom or a United Kingdom citizen on an equal basis with that of a foreign national in a common law heterosexual relationship with a person settled in the United Kingdom with no intent to marry or to have children; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: There is nothing to add to what I said during the debate on the Adjournment on 4 May at columns 820-26.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what external legal advice he has sought on the conformity of all immigration rules, guidelines and concessions with English law; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: None.

Asylum Seekers

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people from Sri Lanka have applied for asylum in each of the past five years; and how their applications have been dealt with.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Information covering the years 1989-1993, for applications for asylum from Sri Lankan nationals and on decisions made is given in the table.

Decisions[1] and applications received for asylum in the United Kingdom from Sri Lankan nationals, excluding dependants, by type, 1989 to 1993
Number of principal applicants

Year	Total applications received	Decisions[2]						
		Total decisions	Recognised as refugee and granted asylum	Not recognised as refugee but granted exceptional leave[3]	Total refused	Refusals		
						Refused asylum and exceptional leave after full consideration	Refused on safe third country grounds[4]	Refused under para. 180F of Immigration Rules[5]
1989[6]	1,790	880	10	840	30	30	—	—
1990[6]	3,330	475	15	455	5	5	—	—
1991[6]	3,765	765	20	730	20	15	5	—
1992[6,7]	2,085	4,520	40	4,265	215	10	50	150
1993[6,7]	1,965	2,690	10	2,420	260	95	120	45

[1] Decisions do not necessarily relate to applications made in the same period.
[2] Information is of initial determination decisions, excluding the outcome of appeals or other subsequent decisions.
[3] Where it would have been unreasonable or impracticable to seek to enforce return to country of origin. Usually granted for a year in the first instance, subject then to further review.
[4] Figures from 1 January 1991 only. Prior to this, these refusals are included in the column "Refused asylum and exceptional leave after full consideration".
[5] Paragraph 101 prior to 26 July 1993. For failure to provide evidence to support the asylum claim within a reasonable period, including failure to respond to invitation to interview to establish identity.
Figures from 1 December 1991 only. Prior to this, these refusals are included in the column "Refused asylum and exceptional leave after full consideration".
[6] Figures rounded to the nearest five.
[7] Provisional figures.

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what the average length of time has been between the refusal of an application for asylum on the basis that there is a safe third country to which the applicant may be sent and the removal of the applicant from the United Kingdom;

(2) what has been the average length of time for the consideration of an asylum application which has been refused on the basis that the applicant travelled through a safe third country where the application could have been made since the coming into force of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993;

(3) what have been the average lengths of time for a substantive consideration of an asylum application in respect of all decisions reached after the coming into force of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The estimated average length of time between the receipt of an asylum application and the decision, for cases decided on applications for asylum received since the introduction of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993—26 July 1993 to 30 June 1994—was 3·6 months. Of this, the estimated average length of time for refusals on safe third country grounds was nearly half a month. The figure of 3·6 months reflects the priority that has been given to cases received after the implementation of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993 on 26 July 1993, with the aim of resolving the majority of cases within three months.

Information on the average length of time between the refusal of an application on safe third country grounds and the applicants' subsequent removal would be available only at disproportionate costs.

Naturalisation

Mr. Keith Hill: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 28 June, *Official Report*, column *455*, how long on average it takes to process applications for naturalisation in cases where the applicant has not been free of immigration conditions for 12 months and there are compelling reasons of a business or compassionate nature.

Mr. Charles Wardle: This information is not recorded.

Refugees

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the recent Home Office report on refugees; and if he will make a statement on the reasons for his decision.

Mr. Howard: The report is currently being revised and will be published in due course.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place in the Library a copy of the newsletter published in April 1993 which gave an outline of the refugee study being undertaken by the Home Office research unit in collaboration with Salford university.

Mr. Howard: I am placing a copy of this newsletter in the Library.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the outcome of his inquiries, in relation to the methodology of the Home Office research unit's refugee study, undertaken in collaboration with Salford university, as to how the interpreters were selected; what training they received; and what were their qualifications for the job.

Mr. Howard: Concerns about the methodology of this study, including the selection, training and qualifications of interpreters, are currently being reviewed with the authors. No conclusions have yet been reached.

Police Officer (Moscow)

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to appoint a senior police officer to be posted permanently in Moscow.

Mr. Charles Wardle: There are no immediate plans for a permanent post, but there are good contacts between Russian and United Kingdom police forces.

Murder Sentences

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent discussions he has had with the Lord Chief Justice concerning sentences for murder.

Mr. Maclean: My right hon. and learned Friend sees the Lord Chief Justice from time to time to discuss matters of common interest. These include the sentence for the crime of murder.

Coroners Courts

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to assess the competency of coroners courts.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Coroners are independent judicial officers who carry out their duties in accordance with statutory rules and procedures. The principal relevant legislation is the Coroners Act 1988 and the Coroners Rules 1984. Coroners' decisions are subject to judicial review. Additionally, under section 3(4) of the 1988 Act, the Lord Chancellor may, if he thinks fit, remove any coroner from office for inability or misbehaviour in the discharge of his duty.

Fire Precautions

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what plans he has to alter the requirements for elderly persons homes;

(2) what plans he has for fire brigades' statutory powers for inspection of hotels and business premises; and if fire brigades will continue to impose safety measures.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given on 27 June to the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) at column *424*.

Fire Deaths

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the death rates per million from fire *(a)* in the United Kingdom and *(b)* in each other European Union country.

Mr. Charles Wardle: There were 14 fire deaths per million population in the United Kingdom in 1992, the latest year for which figures are available. Data are not available for other EU countries.

Fire Authorities

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* whole-time firefighters, *(b)* retained firefighters, *(c)* fire stations and *(d)* fire engines were available in each English fire authority area in each year since 1979.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Information on number of firefighters in each fire authority is published annually in the reports of Her Majesty's chief inspector of fire services for England and Wales—the latest report, for 1992, Cm 2275, contains on page 14 a table giving establishments and strengths as at 1.1.1993. The Home Department has not collated figures for fire stations or fire appliances, but information has been published annually on these on a fiscal year basis by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. The figures for 1979-80 to 1989-90 are published in the annual series "Fire Service Statistics, Actuals" and the figures for 1990-91 to 1993-94 are published in "Fire Service Statistics, 1992" and "Fire Service Statistics, 1993".

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will urgently review funding arrangements for non-fire and special services provided by fire authorities.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on what basis fire authorities can refuse to assist persons trapped in a car.

Mr. Charles Wardle: In practice fire brigades attend road accidents where there is a risk of loss of life or injury and would always assist persons trapped in a car.

Running Costs

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide a table showing the running costs of his Department in each region for each year since 1987-88.

Mr. Howard: Information by region is not available. Details of running costs for each year from 1987-88 to 1993-94 are published in Home Office annual reports. Annex E of the report for 1994, Cm 2508, gives information for 1988-89 onwards. The figures for 1987-88 are to be found in table 2.iii of the report for 1993, Cm 2208.

Blakenhurst Prison

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many locks and keys had to be replaced at Blakenhurst prison following the publication of a photograph of a bunch of prison keys in *The Birmingham Post*;

(2) what was the cost of replacing the locks and keys at Blakenhurst prison following the publication of a photograph of a bunch of prison keys in *The Birmingham Post*.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 11 July 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Questions about replacing the keys and locks at Blakenhurst prison.

84 Class 1 locks were replaced together with keys and nib nuts as a result of the photograph in *The Birmingham Post*. 570 Class 3 A levers were relevered across the prison requiring 500 new keys.

There was no cost to the Prison Service as the total cost of this replacement was met by United Kingdom Detention Services Limited.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many occasions United Kingdom Detention Services Ltd. has notified his Department of behaviour by a member of staff at Blakenhurst prison which casts doubt on their fitness to perform the functions of a prison custody officer; what were the circumstances; and what action was taken in each case.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 4 July 1994]:* Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 11 July 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about how many occasions United Kingdom Detention Services Limited has notified his Department of behaviour by a member of staff at Blakenhurst prison which casts doubt on their fitness to perform the functions of a Prisoner Custody Officer (PCO); what were the circumstances; and what action was taken in each case.

There have been six occasions where the behaviour of members of UKDS staff has led to their fitness as Prisoner Custody Officers being considered.

The circumstances and action taken in each case is set out below:

(1) Assault against a prisoner. The officer was dismissed and the PCO certificate revoked.
(2) Criminal conviction for theft. The officer was dismissed and the PCO certificate revoked.
(3) Collusion with prisoners to allow an assault on another prisoner. The officer was dismissed and the PCO certificate suspended. The Prison Service is considering representations from the officer.
(4) Police investigation into criminal offence against prisoners. The officer has been suspended. The PCO certificate has also been suspended, the decision concerning revocation will not be taken until the outcome of the court action is known.
(5) Insubordination to a senior officer. The officer was dismissed. The status of the PCO certificate is under consideration.
(6) Resigned and the status of the PCO certificate is under consideration.

Extradition

Sir Roger Moate: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many occasions in the last 30 years *(a)* the United States Government have applied for the extradition of individuals from the United Kingdom and *(b)* the United Kingdom has applied to the United States for the extradition of individuals to face charges in the United Kingdom; and how many of these were refused in each case.

Mr. Maclean: In the last 30 years the United States Government have made 301 such requests to the United Kingdom, of which 37 have been refused. Over the same period, the United Kingdom has made 108 requests to the United States, of which four have been refused.

Recycled Paper

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of his Department's *(a)* press releases and *(b)* written answers are printed on recycled paper.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 4 July 1994]:* In accordance with Government policy, all the Department's press releases and written answers are printed on environmentally friendly paper from managed forests and bleached using a chlorine-free process. Where possible, press releases are sent electronically.

Private Prisons

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people whose certification as prison custody officer has been suspended or revoked *(a)* applied to work at and *(b)* have been employed at (i) Blakenhurst, (ii) the Wolds and (iii) Doncaster prison.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 4 July 1994]:* Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 11 July 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about how many people whose certification as Prisoner Custody Officer (PCO) has been suspended or revoked *(a)* applied to work and *(b)* have been employed at (i) Blakenhurst, (ii) The Wolds and (iii) Doncaster Prison.

Prisoner Custody Officer certificates are only issued after a person has successfully completed the required training and obtained security clearance. There are therefore no known instances of people having had their certification suspended or revoked applying for employment. It would not be possible for the Prison Service to know if a person had applied and not been offered employment by one company, having previously had their certification suspended or revoked in relation to employment by another company.

There have been no revocations at Wolds or Doncaster. At Blakenhurst there have been four suspensions: two of these resulted in revocations and two are currently under consideration.

HEALTH

Physiotherapy

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will undertake a review of the Professions Supplementary to Medicine Act 1960 to introduce a proper regulatory system within the physiotherapy profession.

Mr. Sackville: The profession is already regulated under that Act. We have at present no plans to change these arrangements.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to prevent people with no relevant qualifications from describing themselves as physiotherapists and treating patients.

Mr. Sackville: The title of state registered physiotherapist is already protected by law.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received about unqualified physiotherapists in the private sector.

Mr. Sackville: We have received letters on this subject from 18 right hon. and hon. Members since 1 April.

Mental Hospitals (Survey)

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the survey of English mental hospitals, initiated by the mental health task force in 1993, is to be repeated annually.

Mr. Bowis: The survey has been repeated for 1994, drawing together information on the hospitals as at 31 March. A decision has not yet been taken about whether the survey will be repeated in future years.

Private Patients

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of NHS doctors and consultants also accept private patients.

Dr. Mawhinney: The private work of national health service doctors and consultants is a matter for the individuals concerned. Consultants contracted to the NHS are required to devote substantially the whole of their professional time to NHS duties so that NHS patients are not adversely affected by private work.

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is *(a)* the average and *(b)* the maximum level of remuneration of NHS consultants from (i) their NHS work and (ii) private patients.

Dr. Mawhinney: The average and maximum level of remuneration of national health service consultants for their NHS work is shown.

average £53,450 (September 1993)
maximum £99,770 (April 1994)

NHS consultants may have their pay negotiated locally if they work for a NHS trust. Information on the level of remuneration for private practice work is not available. Whole-time consultants may not earn more than 10 per cent. of their gross NHS earnings from private work.

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average percentage and time allocated to *(a)* NHS responsibilties and *(b)* private patients by those NHS consultants who do private work; and what percentage of their remuneration is derived from these respective sources.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available centrally.

Breastfeeding

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice she gives to employers about arrangements for encouraging mothers to continue breastfeeding on their return to work after maternity leave.

Mr. Sackville: None.

Mixed Wards

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what arrangements are made for patients in district general hospitals to have their privacy and dignity protected while sharing a room or bay with members of the opposite sex.

Mr. Sackville: That is a matter for the individual hospital. The patients charter emphasises the patient's right to be treated with respect for their dignity, privacy and cultural beliefs.

Asthma

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received concerning the link between asthma and rising levels of pollution from motor vehicles.

Mr. Sackville: Since the beginning of the 1993-94 Session we have received:

25 parliamentary questions from hon. Members;
15 letters from hon. Members and Peers; and
44 letters from members of the public

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures she has put into effect to provide for the increase in the number of asthma sufferers; and what further measures she has considered to provide for any further increase.

Mr. Sackville: Approximately 90 per cent. of general practitioners have been approved to run a continuing programme of chronic disease management for asthma. In 1992-93 the Medical Research Council, which receives its grant-in-aid from my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, spent over £1·5 million on research into asthma and areas which may be relevant to the condition. The Department's centrally commissioned research programme is undertaking four studies on asthma. In 1992 the Department set up the Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants—COMEAP—which has since set up a sub-committee to advise on the link between exposure to low levels of air pollution and asthma. As part of "The Health of the Nation" programme the Government are promoting a smoke-free environment.

Ethnic Monitoring

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 15 April, *Official Report,* column *314,* on the ethnic origin of nursing, midwifery and health visiting staff, if the results of the survey are yet available.

Dr. Mawhinney: No.

Mental Health Care (Management)

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how the leadership programme for top managers in mental health will be delivered, so as to develop inspirational leadership, creative thinking, and enhancement of the personal abilities of senior staff; and what contribution carers of severely mentally ill people will make to this programme.

Mr. Bowis: The programme will be delivered by means of three, three-day residential workshops held over a period of nine months; and by the pursuit of individual goals and objectives within each participant's organisation; supported by networking activities between participants. The programme, which commenced in May, will evolve in response to the needs of the individual participants. It is probable that, in due course, it will include a contribution from both users of mental health services and their carers.

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance she has issued regarding the post-registration experience and training appropriate in the management and care of mentally disordered persons with behaviours that may challenge for *(a)* nurses with a learning disability mental health registration and *(b)* doctors with a registration in psychiatry.

Mr. Bowis: The United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting has statutory responsibility for determining the kind, standard and

content of training courses leading to registration, and further courses for those already registered, as nurses, midwives and health visitors. Statutory responsibility for validating and approving courses and institutions rests with the four national boards. Standards of education and training for psychiatrists are the responsibility of the Royal College of Psychiatrists.

Health Visitors

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the compatibility between "The Health of the Nation" targets, the Children Act 1989 and a reduction in the number of health visitors.

Mr. Sackville: Whole-time equivalent nursing and midwifery staff in the community have increased by 14·8 per cent. between 1988 and 1992 and by 1·4 per cent. between 1991 and 1992. Responsibility for meeting targets set out in "The Health of the Nation" and the requirements of the Children Act 1989 are not the sole responsibility of health visitors although their contribution is valued.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many health visitors were employed in each district health authority area in September 1988, expressed as whole time equivalents.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 4 July 1994]:* The information will be placed in the Library.

Redundant Hospitals

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the compatibility with her policy of open government of the refusal of health authorities to disclose the selling price of redundant hospitals.

Mr. Sackville: Details of individual land and property sales are commercially sensitive and exempt from disclosure. It is for the regional health authority managing the transaction to determine with their professional advisers if the sale price can be released after completion of the sale.

Hospital Treatment

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will estimate the average number of hospitals available for treatment of a patient in respect of a single episode of illness under the national health service.

Mr. Sackville: All acute hospitals provide a wide range of services for acute and chronic illness. Some hospitals provide specialist services for wider populations which would not be viable if they were duplicated in every hospital.

Nurse to Patient Ratio

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 25 February, *Official Report*, column *514*, if she will give the qualified nurse to patient ratios for which the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 18 April at column *401*.

Regional Health Authorities

Mr Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give the latest figures and list the number of staff employed by the regional health authorities in the last three years.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish a table showing for each of the 14 former English regional health authorities *(a)* the number of core regional health authorities staff, *(b)* the number of other regional health authority-employed staff and *(c)* total regional health authority staff for each year since 1990.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information available is shown in the tables.

Numbers of regional health authority headquarters staff by function (WTE) March 1994; March 1993; July 1992 (core staff only); September 1990 (total staff only)

	Core Staff	*Other*	*Total*
1994			
Northern	159	1,328	1,487
Yorkshire	179	1,311	1,490
Trent	231	572	803
East Anglian	141	392	533
North West Thames	134	292	426
North East Thames	139	546	685
South East Thames	237	333	570
South West Thames	161	292	453
Wessex	242	335	577
Oxford	167	651	818
South Western	183	1,165	1,348
West Midlands	196	1,029	1,226
Mersey	179	907	1,086
North Western	265	1,165	1,431
TOTAL	2,613	10,318	12,930
1993			
Northern	318	1,410	1,728
Yorkshire	343	2,731	3,074
Trent	299	566	865
East Anglian	163	413	576
North West Thames	220	316	536
North East Thames	211	622	834
South East Thames	338	323	660
South West Thames	262	527	789
Wessex	308	285	593
Oxford	184	606	790
South Western	228	1,147	1,375
West Midlands	428	2,347	2,775
Mersey	194	931	1,125
North Western	410	1,148	1,558
TOTAL	3,905	13,371	17,276

1992

	Core staff
Northern	656
Yorkshire	518
Trent	509
East Anglian	292
North West Thames	361
North East Thames	580
South East Thames	604
South West Thames	611
Wessex	331
Oxford	567
South Western	559
West Midlands	1,168
Mersey	313
North Western	785
TOTAL	7,854

1990

	Total
Northern	2,740
Yorkshire	3,050
Trent	3,340
East Anglian	1,330
North West Thames	1,750
North East Thames	2,710
South East Thames	2,210
South West Thames	2,080
Wessex	1,430
Oxford	1,670
South Western	1,800
West Midlands	4,640
Mersey	1,740
North Western	3,130
TOTAL	33,620

Notes:

1. Data separated into 'core' and 'other' functions were not collected before 1992.
2. 1992 RHA total staffing is not available.
3. 1990 figures are from the September census data and cannot be disaggregated into 'core' and 'other' staff.
4. Figures in the 'Total' column include consultants, senior registrars and ambulance staff on RHA payrolls.
5. No RHA staffing figures are available for 1991.

Palliative Care

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance she has issued regarding the funding of dedicated social work services in *(a)* hospice units and *(b)* within palliative care services generally; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: Local authorities are responsible for the cost of social work support to the national health service.

Domiciliary Care

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the legal powers of local authorities to run voluntary registration schemes for providers of independent domiciliary care; whether they are able to levy charges to cover the cost of such schemes; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: Whether legal powers exist will depend on the purpose for which the scheme is established and how it is used. Local authorities should seek their own legal advice based on the terms of each scheme.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the turnover of each trust in each year since its inception.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested, for years 1991-92 and 1992-93, has been placed in the Library. Information for 1993-94 will not be available until the annual accounts have been audited.

Cost Improvement Programmes

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will provide a table showing the annual cost improvement programmes of provider units in each region in each of the last four years.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not audited and used for management purposes only.

Running Costs

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will provide a table showing the running costs of her Department in each region for each year since 1987-88.

Mr. Sackville: Information about departmental running costs by region is not available. Details of the Department's gross running costs are provided in the Department's annual reports for 1993-94, Cm 2212 and 1994-95, Cm 2512, copies of which are available in the Library.

Extra-contractual Referrals

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information her Department maintains on extra-contractual referral numbers in each region.

Mr. Sackville: The national health service executive quarterly monitoring system collects information by region on their actual spend on extra-contractual referrals compared with their planned levels of spend. Figures on the number of extra-contractual referral numbers in each region are not collected.

NHS Review Costs

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the total cost to date of carrying out the NHS functions and manpower review and of any changes made in the light of the review's findings.

Dr. Mawhinney: No estimate has been made of costs incurred to date as a result of changes in the light of the review findings.

Life-threatening Pregnancies

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the availability of hospital beds in south Manchester hospitals for women with life-threatening pregnancies.

Mr. Sackville: It is the responsibility of district health authorities to ensure that comprehensive health services are available for all their residents, within available resources. The right hon. Member may wish to contact Professor Robert Boyd, chairman of Manchester health authority, for further information.

Ambulances

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will instruct *(a)* West Yorkshire, *(b)* North Yorkshire, *(c)* Nottinghamshire, *(d)* South Yorkshire, *(e)* East Sussex, *(f)* Berkshire, *(g)* Avon and *(h)* West Country and Hampshire NHS ambulance trusts immediately to remove bull bars from all vehicles, and instruct all ambulance services that the fitting of bull bars to emergency vehicles is prohibited on the grounds of safety.

Mr. Sackville: I will be consulting the Ambulance Service on this issue.

Community Care

Mr. Tracey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she will bring forward regulations under the powers provided under section 49 of the National Health Service

and Community Care Act 1990 to enable staff to transfer from health authority to local authority employment in connection with care in the community.

Mr. Bowis: The regulations as described will not now be made. This is because they would not have helped secure the outcome envisaged.

A more detailed explanation of the reasons for this decision has been placed in the Library.

Health Service Administration

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Darlington of 25 November, *Official Report*, column *136*, what were the total salary costs for *(a)* managerial staff, *(b)* clerical and administrative staff and *(c)* nursing and midwifery staff in (i) 1992-93 and (ii) 1993-94.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 12 May 1994]:* Analyses of salaries and wages costs for hospital and community health services in England are shown in the table. The figures for 1992-93 remain provisional. The information for 1993-94 is not yet available.

Hospital and community health services salary costs for 1992-93[1]

£ thousands

Region	*General and senior managers costs*	*Administrative and clerical staff costs*	*Nursing and midwifery staff costs*
Northern	22,651	66,316	310,239
Yorkshire	27,774	56,606	263,872
Trent	26,396	96,330	411,226
East Anglia	17,082	46,580	205,326
North West Thames	23,251	72,170	222,335
North East Thames	33,957	91,814	338,310
South East Thames	30,011	95,480	339,045
South West Thames	30,514	75,583	281,358
Wessex	23,209	56,258	243,234
Oxford	18,677	60,063	228,857
South Western	10,006	34,065	118,118
West Midlands	42,224	139,484	548,150
Mersey	11,094	29,209	115,032
North Western	30,247	96,395	415,600
SHAs	7,993	29,805	98,219
NHS trusts	143,145	459,743	2,091,859
TOTAL	498,171	1,505,901	6,230,780

Source:
Annual accounts and financial returns 1992-93 of regional and district health authorities in England, national health service trusts and special health authorities.

Note: Figures vary from those supplied in the earlier answer to the hon. Member for Darlington, of 25 November 1993, *Official Report*, column *136*, due to the latest validated data being used. Salaries and wages costs incurred by family health services authorities are excluded as corresponding costs are not identified on the same basis. Salary costs are the gross pay costs of directly employed staff including employers' national insurance and superannuation contributions except for nursing and midwifery staff where the costs of agency nurses are also included.

Asset Sales

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 24 June, *Official Report*, columns *364-65*, if she will make it her policy to require the total income from NHS asset sales as shown in regional health authorities accounts to be itemised, showing the income from individual large disposals.

Mr. Sackville: No. Income from the sale of individual assets is commercially confidential and the release of price-sensitive information could disadvantage future asset sales.

Press and Public Relations

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 2 March 1994, *Official Report*, column *763*, what was the total expenditure on press and public relations by *(a)* her Department, *(b)* The national health service management executive and its outposts and *(c)* health authorities in 1993-94; what was the estimated expenditure on press and public relations in 1993-94; and how much is projected to be spent in 1994-95 and 1995-96.

Mr. Sackville: Functions which are commonly associated with press and public relations for the Department of Health including the national health service executive are carried out by the Department's information division. Expenditure on manpower and running costs for 1993-94 was £1·897 million. This information is not yet available for health authorites.

Projections of expenditure for 1994-95 and 1995-96 are not available.

Advertising

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 6 December 1993, *Official Report*, column *61*, how much *(a)* her Department, *(b)* the NHSME, *(c)* trusts and *(d)* health authorities spent on (i) television advertising, (ii) radio advertising and (iii) press advertising in each year since 1987; and how much is projected to be spent in 1994-95.

Mr. Sackville: Information for the Department of Health, including the national health service executive, is as follows:

Year	*£ million*
1987-88	
Television	1·874
Radio	0·540
Press	1·900
1988-89	
Television	1·662
Radio	0·205
Press	1·196
1989-90	
Television	3·549
Radio	0·127
Press	2·739
1990-91	
Television	1·900
Radio	0·005
Press	2·258
1991-92	
Television	4·489
Radio	0·015
Press	3·104
1992-93	
Television	2·773
Radio	0·020
Press	1·976

Year	£ million
1993-94 (estimated expenditure)	
Television	2·548
Radio	0·818
Press	1·475

Decisions have not yet been made on the use of advertising for 1994-95. Information for health authorities and trusts is not available centrally.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what financial or other support his Department gives to voluntary organisations promoting energy efficiency for low-income households; what is the value of such assistance in the current financial year; what advice on energy efficiency and reducing fuel bills is available to householders from his Department; what additional funds have been made available in 1994-95 to low income householders to improve efficiency following the introduction of VAT on domestic fuel; if there is a target for the number of households to benefit from such assistance; what progress has been made towards achieving these targets; what health and safety considerations are made when installing draughtproofing in households to ensure adequate ventilation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tim Smith: My Department provides financial support to eight energy projects engaged in the delivery of draughtproofing to low income households under the action for community employment programme. This assistance will amount to some £440,000 in 1994-95.

Advice on energy efficiency and reducing fuel bills in the home is available through targeted publicity campaigns and the distribution of a wide range of publications on energy saving measures.

Following the introduction of VAT on domestic fuel an additional £1 million is available for energy efficiency measures in low-income homes in 1994-95, effectively doubling the budget for these measures. It is planned that an estimated 12,000 households will benefit from such assistance in the current year. Some 3,100 households have benefited to date.

The ACE energy projects follow a mandatory set of instructions designed to ensure that combustion ventilation within the household will be adequate after draughtproofing. These instructions were drawn up in conjunction with the Building Research Establishment. In addition, each householder receives a safety leaflet giving advice on how to maintain an adequate supply of air to the heating appliance.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Hong Kong

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 14 June, *Official Report*, columns *397-98*, if he will list each account of the meeting or of matters arising at the meeting which were transmitted to *(a)* the Foreign Office in London, *(b)* the United Kingdom high commissioner in Malaysia and *(c)* other Government Departments.

Mr. Goodlad: A single account of the meeting was transmitted from Hong Kong to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and to the British high commissioner in Malaysia on 17 January 1985. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office was sent a copy of the minutes of the meeting in 1992.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 14 June, *Official Report*, columns *397-98*, what is the present relationship between Mr. Chooi Mun Sou and the Hong Kong Government; when and by which officials this relationship was commenced; and how much money has been paid to him and his company by the Hong Kong Government.

Mr. Goodlad: Mr. Chooi Mun Sou is the senior partner of a firm of solicitors instructed by the Attorney-General of the Hong Kong Government in December 1985 to act in proceedings in the Malaysian courts. It is not the practice of the Hong Kong Government to disclose the fees that they pay to individual professionals engaged to act on their behalf.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 14 June, *Official Report*, columns *397-98*, who was the person from the Attorney-General's Department who attended the meeting; and in what capacity and on what basis each of the persons at the meeting were present.

Mr. Goodlad: The name of the person from the Attorney-General's chambers was not recorded. The names of the other people who attended the meeting, and the capacity in which they attended, were given in my answer of 14 June, *Official Report*, column *398*.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the name of the Hong Kong Government official who authorised the addifavit sworn by C. M. Adkins and filed with the High Court in London on 15 June 1990.

Mr. Goodlad: Ms Adkins was employed by solicitors acting for the Hong Kong Government and as such was authorised to swear affidavits on behalf of the Hong Kong Government.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 14 June, *Official Report*, column *397-98*, if he will list each occasion on which the minutes of the meeting on 17 January 1985 as recorded by the Hong Kong side have been made subject to a public interest immunity certificate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: The document in question was the subject of a certificate claiming public interest immunity in the course of Lorrain Osman's seventh application for habeas corpus.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 14 June, *Official Report*, column *397-98*, if he will list the files taken to the meeting on 17 January 1985 by the late Sir John Brembridge.

Mr. Goodlad: I understand that no files or papers were taken to the meeting by the late Sir John Brembridge.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 14 June, *Official Report*, column *398*, what is the practice of his Law Officers and the Law Officers of Hong Kong, relating to the circulation of information contained in a witness's or defendant's statement to parties not connected to an investigation.

Mr. Goodlad: It is not the practice of the Attorney-General in Hong Kong to supply copies of statements of witnesses or defendants to third parties but, exceptionally, he may do so, in the interests of law enforcement, to other law enforcement Departments.

Macedonia

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the European Court of Justice decision on the Greek sanctions on Macedonia.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We continue to regard the Greek action against Macedonia as unjustified and to support the Commission's decision to take the case to the European Court of Justice. The Court's decision not to indicate interim measures does not address the main case before the court, or the legality of the Greek action under Community law.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if there has been a recent withdrawal of Serbian forces along the Macedonian border near Straza.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Yes. Under an agreement brokered by UNPROFOR on 1 July, the Serbian forces occupying Straza Peak, and the Macedonian forces observing them, withdrew. UNPROFOR has set up an observation post on the hill.

Caspian Sea

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 22 June, *Official Report*, column *181*, if he will make a statement on the view submitted by the Government of the Russian Federation to Her Majesty's embassy in Moscow about the legal status of the Caspian sea and the implications of those Russian views on the British-Azerbaijani memorandum signed in February on oil and gas projects in the Caspian sea.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The note from the Russian Foreign Ministry set out the Russian views on the status of the Caspian sea—namely, that this is a single eco-system to be used jointly by all Caspian states. It also stated that steps taken by any Caspian state to obtain any advantages as regards the area and resources of the Caspian sea are contrary to the interests of other Caspian states and cannot be recognised.

The memorandum on co-operation between the United Kingdom and Azerbaijan in the field of energy indicates the intention of the two Governments actively to encourage increased co-operation in areas of oil and gas exploration and development. This work continues.

Bangladesh

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the practice in Bangladesh of issuing fatwas against dissidents, with particular reference to Tushma Nasreen; and what representations he has made about this.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The EU presidency has raised with the Bangladesh authorities our concerns for Ms Nasreen's safety. It has called on extremists to refrain from making illegal threats and announced that it will take action against those who ignore the warning.

Middle East

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the visits undertaken by members of the royal family to *(a)* Bahrain, *(b)* Egypt, *(c)* Iran, *(d)* Iraq, *(e)* Israel, *(f)* Jordan, *(g)* Kuwait, *(h)* Lebanon, *(i)* Oman, *(j)* Qatar, *(k)* Saudi Arabia, *(l)* Syria, *(m)* the United Arab Emirates and *(n)* the Yemen since 1979.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Members of the royal family have paid official visits to these countries during this period as follows:

(a) Bahrain—The Queen (1979), The Duke of Edinburgh (1989), The Prince of Wales (1986), The Princess Royal (1991), The Duke of Gloucester (1984, 1989), The Duke of Kent (1981);
(b) Egypt—The Prince of Wales (1981), The Princess of Wales (1982), The Duke of Gloucester (1992), The Duke of Kent (1992);
(c) Iran—none;
(d) Iraq—none;
(e) Israel—none;
(f) Jordan—The Queen (1984); The Duke of Kent (1993);
(g) Kuwait—The Queen (1979), The Prince of Wales (1989, 1993), The Princess Royal (1987, 1991), The Duke of Gloucester (1984), The Duke of Kent (1981);
(h) Lebanon—The Princess Royal (1982);
(i) Oman—The Queen (1979), The Duke of Edinburgh (1990, 1991), The Prince of Wales (1986, 1992), The Duke of Gloucester (1980), The Duke of Kent (1985, 1989);
(j) Qatar—The Queen (1979), The Prince of Wales (1986), The Princess Royal (1991), The Duke of Gloucester (1984, 1989), The Duke of Kent (1981);
(k) Saudi Arabia—The Queen (1979), The Prince of Wales (1986, 1989, 1990, 1993), The Duke of Kent (1993);
(l) Syria—none;
(m) United Arab Emirates—The Queen (1979), The Duke of Edinburgh (1991), The Prince of Wales (1989, 1993), The Princess Royal (1984, 1987, 1991), The Duke of Gloucester (1991), The Duke of Kent (1981);
(n) Yemen—The Princess Royal (1982).

Nuclear Power Stations

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list all Chernobyl-type nuclear power stations still in existence, indicating whether they are still in active operation; what measures have been taken to *(a)* make them safe, *(b)* convert them or *(c)* close them in due course; and how many such stations have been closed since the Chernobyl disaster.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The nuclear reactor destroyed in the 1986 Chernobyl accident was an RBMK 1000. Eleven reactors of the same type remain in operation in Russia —four at Sosnovy Bor, Leningrad; four at Kursk; and three at Smolensk. Two 1000s remain in operation at

Chernobyl, Ukraine where a third unit has been closed following a fire in 1991. Two RBK 1500s are currently operating at Ignalina, Lithuania. Extensive safety improvement programmes have been carried out on RBMK reactors since the Chernobyl accident. Full details could be provided only by the countries concerned, which are responsible for all safety decisions, including whether or not their nuclear power plants should continue to operate.

Rwanda

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been established by the United Nations investigator about the origins of the massacre in Rwanda.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The initial report by the special rapporteur, Mr. Rene Degni-Segui, found that the massacres were planned in advance, citing as evidence a systematic campaign of incitement to racial hatred by the interim-Government-controlled media, military training and equipping of the Hutu militias from November 1993, the erection of barriers within 45 minutes of the air crash and lists of targets which correspond with those killed.

A copy of the report has been placed in the Library of the House.

South Yemen

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has about the adequacy of water supplies in South Yemen; and what initiatives there are by the international community to alleviate suffering from water shortage caused by military activity.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The water supply in Aden has been insufficient to meet the daily needs of the inhabitants. International Committee of the Red Cross, to which we donated £250,000 and the European Union approximately £1·03 million, have done an excellent job in maintaining the supply of some water in difficult circumstances. Now that the fighting is over in Aden we hope that the necessary repairs can be carried out to allow the restoration of normal water supplies.

We are unaware of any problems with the water supply in other areas of Yemen.

Gibraltar

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how Gibraltar's interests will be represented in the European Parliament.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Gibraltar does not have an MEP because annexe II of the 1976 EC Act on Direct Elections limits the franchise in European Parliament elections to the United Kingdom. Her Majesty's Government are responsible for representing Gibraltar within the European Union.

Nuclear Terrorism

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans there are for the foreign security services to collaborate with the new office of the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation established in Moscow to combat nuclear materials smuggling and nuclear terrorism.

Mr. Hurd: Our security and intelligence agencies work with the intelligence and law enforcement agencies of a large number of countries where we have common interests and concerns. However, for reasons which were explained during the debates on the Intelligence Services Act 1994, it is not the Government's practice to comment on such operational activities.

Indonesia

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government will declare its support for the proposals in United Nations General Assembly resolutions 36/50 (1981) and 37/30 (1982); and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: The hon. Member will know that the United Kingdom abstained on the two UN resolutions that he cites. We did so, in the company of our European Community partners and many other countries, in the belief that by so doing, we would help the process of reconciliation and the search for a diplomatic solution between Portugal and Indonesia. We therefore welcome the current dialogue between Portugal and Indonesia on East Timor's future, which is taking place under the auspices of the United Nations Secretary-General.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy on sales of military aircraft and armaments to Indonesia.

Mr. Goodlad: Our policy on defence sales to Indonesia is based on the principle that all sovereign states enjoy the right, under article 51 of the United Nations charter, to defend themselves. This is a right that we claim for ourselves and it would be inconsistent and discriminatory to deny it to others. All applications for export licences are, none the less, subject to strict controls and scrutinised on a case by case basis. For example, if we believe a prospective purchase is likely to be used for repressive puorposes against a civilian population, the application is rejected.

Vatican (Diplomats)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on which countries exclude their Roman Catholic diplomats from the position of their representative to the Holy See.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We have no such information.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the reasons for his Department's policy of excluding Roman Catholic diplomats from appointment as Her Majesty's ambassador to the Holy See.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: There is no such policy.

EU Accession

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps were taken to ensure the people and Government of Gibraltar will enjoy the same or comparable citizenship, rights, liabilities and other opportunities that are extended to the people of

the Aland Islands under the provisions of the treaty of accession to the European Union and which are consequent upon Finland acceding to be European Union; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The EC treaty applies to Gibraltar by virtue of article 227.4 of the treaty. It enjoys a special status within the Community negotiated at the time of United Kingdom accession. The common agricultural and fisheries policies do not apply to Gibraltar. Nor is Gibraltar obliged to levy VAT. In addition, Gibraltar is outside the Community customs territory and is a third country for the purpose of the common regime for imports. Community rules on the free movement of goods do not apply to Gibraltar.

Article 28 of the Act of Accession provides that the EC treaties shall not apply to the Aland Islands unless the Finnish Government so declare, in which case their relationship to the Community will be governed by protocol 2 to the Act of Accession. The differences between the position of the Aland Islands and that of Gibraltar would reflect their different interests within the Community and the different nature of their relationship with the member state.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the people of the Aland Islands and of Svalbard will be represented in the European Parliament upon the accession of Finland and Norway to the European Union.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: This is a matter for the Governments of Finland and Norway respectively. We understand that arrangements for the representation of Norwegian residents on Svalbard and of the people of the Aland Islands in the European Parliament have yet to be decided.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the people of Svalbard will become citizens of the European Union consequent upon Norway acceding to the European Union; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Norwegian citizens who live on Svalbard will become citizens of the European Union on Norway's accession to the European Union. Svalbard itself will be excluded from the scope of the European Union treaties in accordance with protocol No. 7 of the accession treaty.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the expected cost and consequences to *(a)* the Commission, *(b)* the Parliament, *(c)* the Court of Justice and *(d)* other European Union institutions of both Bokmal and Nynorsk being given equal status as official languages of the institutions of the European Union's communities and institutions consequent upon the accession of Norway to the European Union.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: There are no proposals to make Bokmal or Nynorsk official languages of the Union. Section XVIII of annex I of the Act of Accession, annexed to the accession treaty, will amend Council regulation 1 to include only Finnish, Norwegian and Swedish as new official languages subsequent to the entry into force of the treaty. The Kingdom of Norway has made a unilateral declaration—No. 38—stating that

"in the written use of Norwegian as an official language . . . equal status must be given to Bokmal and Nynorsk".

This declaration has no budgetary implications.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the consequences to *(a)* the European Union and *(b)* the United Kingdom of the declaration by the King of Sweden on open government and which are incorporated in the treaty of accession to the European Union and consequent upon Sweden acceding to the European Union.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Sweden's declaration in the Final Act attached to the accession treaty welcomes the development now taking place in the European Union towards greater openness and transparency. The declaration notes that open government is a fundamental part of Sweden's constitutional, political and cultural heritage. The Union's declaration in response takes note of the Swedish declaration and adds that the member states of the European Union take it for granted that, as a member, Sweden will fully comply with Community law.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the consequences for *(a)* The European Union and *(b)* the United Kingdom of the exchange of letters between the Kingdom of Sweden and the European Commission together with the assurances given, with regard to Swedish practices in the labour market and collective agreements, which are incorporated in the treaty of accession to the European Union.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The exchange of letters between the Kingdom of Sweden and the Commission are mentioned in a declaration by Sweden annexed to the Final Act. The Final Act does not form part of the treaty of accession and the declarations annexed to it do not create binding legal obligations. There are no consequences either for the European Union or for the United Kingdom of the assurances given in the exchange of letters, which simply confirm that Swedish practices in labour market matters are compatible with the agreement of the Eleven.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the citizenship rights of the Sami people consequent upon the accession of Norway, Sweden and Finland to the European Union; and what special provisions have been made for their interests to be represented in the European Parliament and promoted in other European Union institutions.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: As citizens of Norway, Sweden and Finland, the Sami people will become citizens of the European Union on the accession of these states to the European Union. No special provisions have been made for their representation in the European Parliament, but their interests are recognised in protocol No. 3 of the accession treaty. Norway also made a declaration on the subject.

Iran

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations has been made by Her Majesty's Government and the EU

to the Government of Iran regarding the recent murders in Iran of the Reverend Medhi Dibaj and the Reverend Tateos Michaelian; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: With our full support, the EU is asking the Iranian authorities for an immediate and complete investigation into these deplorable murders. We await further information and Tehran's response before considering how to follow up. We are also urgently seeking information about at least two other Christian pastors who are reportedly detained in Iran.

Kenya

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations have been made by the European Union to the Government of Kenya about the importance of democratisation in Kenya; and what has been the response of the Kenyan Government.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Members of the EU have continued to work together in monitoring developments in Kenya. With our partners, we stress the importance of democracy at every suitable opportunity.

Angola

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the outcome of the United Nations Security Council meeting on Angola on 30 June.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The United Nations Security Council meeting on 30 June adopted a further resolution, UNSCR 932, on Angola. This called on UNITA to accept immediately and unreservedly the compromise proposals for a settlement put forward by the United Nations mediators, and already accepted by the Angolan Government. If, by 31 July, UNITA has not complied, the Security Council has declared its readiness to impose additional sanctions against UNITA as indicated in UNSCR 864. The resolution also extended the mandate of UNAVEM II for three months until 30 September.

TRANSPORT

Motorway Use

Sir Geoffrey Pattie: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to introduce high occupancy vehicle lanes on the motorway system, with particular reference to the M3, M4 and M25.

Mr. Key: I am keeping in touch with experience in the Netherlands where a high-occupancy vehicle lane has recently been introduced, and I am considering whether there is scope to introduce a trial here. I have no current proposals for high-occupancy vehicle lanes on the M3, M4, or M25.

Departmental Costs

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 14 June, *Official Report*, column *513*, if he will provide a detailed breakdown into component parts and costs of the £147·496 million listed under "Other".

Mr. MacGregor: The detailed breakdown of the item described as "Other" running costs of my Department for 1993-94 is as follows:

Activity	*£'000s*
Travel and Subsistence and other Personnel costs	20,038
Training	3,330
Estate Running Costs	254
Office Services, Postage and Carriage	32,955
Telecommunications	8,042
Office Machinery/Computer Hardware and Software maintenance	5,224
Vehicle Running Costs	989
Consultants and Agency Costs	7,417
Vehicle Licensing Inspection and Testing Costs	2,082
Publicity and Advertising	1,215
Payments to Auxiliary Coastguard and Merchant Navy Reserve	1,689
Medical Services	1,862
Bank Charges	319
DVLA Post Office Costs	59,195
Sale of Vehicle Registration Marks	1,970
Refund of Driver Testing Fees	915
Total	147,496

Charing Cross (Train Departures)

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many trains left Charing Cross station on schedule between 4.30 pm and 7.30 pm on Monday 6, Tuesday 7, Wednesday 8, Thursday 9 and Friday 10 June; how many were late or cancelled; what was the length of lateness in each case on each day; and what was the cause of lateness or cancellation in each case;

(2) how many trains left Charing Cross station on schedule between 4.30 pm and 7.30 pm on Tuesday 31 May, Wednesday 1 June, Thursday 2 June and Friday 4 June; how many trains were late or cancelled; what was the length of lateness in each case on each day; and what was the cause of lateness or cancellation in each case.

Mr. Freeman: I have written to the hon. Member with the information requested and placed a copy of the information in the Library.

Birmingham North Relief Road

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list those who have seen the report of the public inquiry into the Birmingham north relief road in 1988.

Mr. Key: A small number of civil servants involved in the 1988 public sector scheme.

West Coast Main Line

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made on the west coast main line reinvestment project under the private finance initiative.

Mr. Freeman: Railtrack, together with a private sector consortium—West Coast Main Line Development Company Ltd.—have, since April, been carrying out a study aimed at producing design standards for the line and recommending funding options for the project, consistent with the objectives of the private finance initiative. The study is expected to be completed by the end of the year. A further competition will then be held for the contract to undertake the upgrading work. That contract is expected to be let in mid-1995 and the works will start as soon as possible thereafter.

Rail Privatisation

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the cost, up to 31 March, of setting up the offices of the Director of Passenger Rail Franchising and of the Rail Regulator.

Mr. Freeman: Total costs incurred before the formal appointments of the Franchising Director and the Rail Regulator, which include the main setting-up costs, were £1 million and £0·5 million respectively. Subsequent expenditure by OPRAF and ORR until 31 March 1994, a small proportion of which included setting up costs, was £2·4 million and £1·5 million respectively.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the cost to his Department of preparing for rail privatisation up to 31 March, identifying separately the costs of external advisers and consultants.

Mr. Freeman: The Department's costs on rail privatisation up to 31 March 1994 are £19·8 million, comprising £3·3 million running costs and £16·5 million external consultancy costs.

Sabrina Bridge

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what advice was sought from his Department by Worcester city council in connection with the new cycle and footbridge over the River Severn, now known as the Sabrina bridge.

Mr. Key: None. The new bridge is part of the local highway network and consultations with the Department would not have been required.

Transport of Children

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to seek to legislate at the earliest opportunity to prevent any public service vehicle available for hire from being used by school-age children without a seat belt each and in numbers greater than one person per fixed seat; and if he will do this without awaiting EU legislation.

Mr. Key: This is part of the wider review which is under active consideration.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his policy on the seating of school age children on buses to travel to and from school and to go on school outings, and on the wearing of seat belts, for each year group up to 16 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: The Public Service (Carrying Capacity) Regulations 1984 permit three seated children under the age of 14 to share a double seat and count as two passengers. This concession has been considered as part of the review of the technical and cost implications of fitting seat belts to all seats in minibuses and coaches recently undertaken by my officials, the report and conclusions of which we hope to publish before the summer recess.

Seat belts must be worn in minibuses with an unladen weight not exceeding 2,540 kg, and specified front seats in larger vehicles. We will be reviewing the position on wearing, but it raises complex issues of responsibility in the case of children on larger vehicles.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions his officials are having with their counterparts in the European Union with a view to legislating to fit seat belts and keep numbers to one person to each fixed seat on all public service vehicles available for hire for school-age children; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: Following the announcement of the European Commission's strategy for improving bus and coach safety, my officials are taking part in the discussions of the working group convened to consider the technical requirements for belts in vehicles which do not carry standing passengers.

The number of passengers who may be carried is a question for individual member states.

Highways Agency

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the Highways Agency was established; for what reasons it was established; what are its annual administrative costs, including salaries; what were the equivalent annual costs when the work was done within the Department of Transport; what are the annual salaries and emoluments of, respectively, the chief executive and other principal officers; and what were the annual salaries and comparable payments of those officials who carried out analogous and comparable duties when the work was done within his Department.

Mr. Key: The Highways Agency was established on 1 April 1994 as an executive agency of the Department of Transport, to manage and maintain the existing motorway and trunk road network in England and to deliver the Government's road programme. The agency was established as part of the Government's next steps programme, with the aim of improving the effectiveness and efficiency of this major executive business. Copies of the agency's framework document and 1994-95 business plan have been placed in the Library.

The total provision for administration cost in 1994-95 including pay is £87·8 million, compared to provision of £88·5 million in 1993-94. The chief executive was appointed for a five-year term following an open competition at a salary of £100,000 per annum. He is also eligible for performance pay. The chief executive has additional responsibilities to those of the grade 2 officer who headed the former Highways Safety and Traffic Command within the Department. Other principal officers who transferred to the Highways Agency did so on existing civil service terms and conditions.

Running Costs

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will provide a table showing the running costs of his Department in each region for each year since 1987-88.

Mr. MacGregor: The information is not available in the form requested.

Railway Lines (Vandalism)

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what recent discussions he has had with Railtrack concerning the educational programmes carried out by the safety and school liaison unit; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what recent discussions have taken place with Railtrack and other interested parties concerning the implementation of anti-vandalism programmes; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what proposals he has to combat and contain acts of vandalism on railway lines in *(a)* Strathclyde, *(b)* Scotland and *(c)* Great Britain; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answers 6 July 1994]:* My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I regularly meet the Railtrack chairman and board members to discuss a wide range of matters.

On 1 April Railtrack took over from British Rail responsibility for the trespass and vandalism campaign, including the related programme of school visits. It has made it clear that it is committed to continuing with, and indeed developing further, this activity, both to broaden its approach beyond schools, and to ensure that specific problems are targeted in the areas where they are most likely to occur.

Railtrack, working closely with British Rail and the British Transport police, is identifying what further action might be employed to deter the specific problem of vanalism, with particular focus on the known urban problem areas. It is in the course of consulting individuals and organisations to explore the potential for more effective measures.

In Scotland both ScotRail and the BTP are actively involved in promoting safety on the railways through the safety and schools liaison unit and their involvement in the crucial crew exercises which bring home to school children the dangers.

Rail Safety

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many reported cases of endangering safety or obstructions there were in each of the past five years in *(a)* Strathclyde, *(b)* Scotland and *(c)* Great Britain; how many of these led to criminal convictions; what was the range of sentences imposed upon those convicted; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 6 July 1994]:* Information for 1989 to 1991 is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. That which is available is as follows:

Endangering Safety

	1989	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
Number of reported offences					
Strathclyde	n/a	n/a	n/a	11	15
Scotland	n/a	21	8	19	30
Great Britain	1,067	848	783	642	754
Number of convictions					
Strathclyde	n/a	n/a	n/a	5	6
Scotland	n/a	n/a	n/a	5	6
Great Britain	n/a	n/a	n/a	26	71

Sentencing

Over the past two year period 1992 and 1993, the range of sentencing that has been implemented for the offence of Endangering Safety is as follows:

Fines	From £12 to £500.
Community Service	From 50 to 200 hours.
Imprisonment	From 28 days to 2 years.
Probation	From 6 months to 3 years.

Apart from the above, some cases have involved the accused being bound over, conditionally discharged or sent to an attendance centre.

Obstruction

	1989	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
Number of reported offences					
Strathclyde	N/a	N/a	N/a	134	135
Scotland	N/a	446	333	238	223
Great Britain	4,070	3,426	2,955	2,585	2,537
Number of convictions					
Strathclyde	N/a	N/a	N/a	1	5
Scotland	N/a	N/a	N/a	3	5
Great Britain	N/a	N/a	N/a	49	78

Sentencing

Over the two-year period 1992 and 1993, the range of sentencing implemented for the offence of obstruction was as follows:

Fines	From £10 to £350
Community Service	From 40 to 200 hours
Imprisonment	From one day to 12 months
Probation	From six months to 12 months

Apart from the above, some cases involved the accused being bound over, conditionally discharged or sent to an attendance centre.

Access to Environmental Information

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many requests for environmental information under the Access to Environmental Information Regulations 1992 have been received by his Department; how many were answered within two months; how many were refused; and on what grounds in each case.

Mr. MacGregor *[holding answer 6 July 1994]:* This Department does not keep central records of the number of individual requests for information it receives. We do, however, look very carefully at every case for refusal.

In the period up to 30 June 1994, the Department gave nine refusals on the grounds of confidentiality of the proceedings of a public authority.

DEFENCE

Gulf War (Pesticides)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what pesticide sprays were used to protect service men and women in Operation Granby prior to and during the Gulf war.

Mr. Hanley: One United Kingdom tented camp in Al Jubayl was sprayed with FICAM, a non-organophosphate residual insecticide. During the conflict itself spray cans of a standard NATO issue pyrethroid "knock-down" insecticide were available to United Kingdom troops, but were little used because the winter insect population was low. No organophosphate insecticide or pesticide sprays were used by British forces.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the uniforms of soldiers serving in Operation Granby in the Gulf war were impregnated with pesticides.

Mr. Hanley: During Operation Granby some desert issue combat clothing for British forces was impregnated with a commercially available, non-organophosphate, insecticide. The impregnation, which has Health and Safety Executive approval, was performed in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and supervised by service environmental health staff.

Nuclear Non-proliferation

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 26 May, *Official Report*, column *231*, when he obtained a copy of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament blueprint report; and what conclusions he has reached following the examination of its proposals.

Mr. Hanley: My Department received a copy of the report in early June. While complete and general nuclear disarmament is a desirable ultimate goal we do not believe that the proposals in the CND report represent a realistic approach.

Vacant Dwellings

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many vacant dwellings are owned by his Department in England and Wales; and how many have been empty *(a)* more than six months and *(b)* more than 12 months.

Mr. Hanley: Records are not maintained precisely in the form requested. However, the following information is available as at 31 March 1994:

	Number
Married quarters	
Total vacant	8,839
Vacant under 12 months	7,643
Vacant over 12 months	1,196
Civilian houses	
Total vacant	43
Vacant under six months	18
Vacant over six months	25

In addition, 1,407 vacant married quarters and 20 vacant civilian houses were in the process of being sold. Information on the length of time these properties have been vacant could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the number of vacant dwellings owned by his Department by constituency.

Mr. Hanley: The information is not held in the form requested and to provide it for the area requested could be done only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the amount of capital receipts his Department has received from vacant dwellings in each of the past five financial years.

Mr. Hanley: Capital receipts from the sale of surplus dwellings in each of the past five financial years was as follows:

Year	*£*
1989-90	48,000,000
1990-91	46,000,000
1991-92	54,000,000
1992-93	42,000,000
1993-94	29,300,000

Not all these properties were vacant as some were sold to tenants. Figures for vacant dwellings alone could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many vacant dwellings owned by his Department in each parliamentary constituency in Devon and Cornwall have been vacant for *(a)* more than six months and *(b)* more than 12 months.

Mr. Hanley: Records are not maintained precisely in the form requested. However, the following information is available as at 31 March 1994.

Married quarters

	Vacant under 1 year	*Vacant over 1 year*
North Devon	27	—
Exeter	7	—
Honiton	12	2
Plymouth Devonport	180	2
Plymouth Drake	52	—
Plymouth Sutton	54	—
Torridge and West Devon	11	—
Falmouth and Camborne	—	—
North Cornwall	89	84
St. Ives	72	11
South East Cornwall	6	—

Civilian houses

	Vacant under six months	*Vacant over six months*
Plymouth Devonport	—	6

Former married quarters in the process of being sold

	Vacant under one year	*Vacant over one year*
Honiton	1	2
Plymouth Devonport	—	17

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his estimate of the cost of providing security for empty MOD dwellings in each of the past five years.

Mr. Hanley: The cost of providing security for surplus MOD dwellings in the process of being sold, which is carried out under contract, was approximately £231,000 for financial year 1993-94. Such figures are not held centrally, however, and because of changes in numbers of surplus dwellings from year to year, figures for earlier years could be provided, if available, only at disproportionate cost. Security for empty dwellings which are not surplus to requirements is provided by the Ministry of Defence police and military patrols and costs are therefore not separately identifiable.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many unoccupied dwellings are held by his Department in Scotland; and what plans he has to find occupants for, or dispose of the properties.

Mr. Hanley: As at 31 March 1994 my Department owned 798 vacant dwellings in Scotland, of which 736 were married quarters and 62 were civilian houses. The majority of the vacant married quarters were either undergoing or awaiting major maintenance work, allocated to service families due to move in shortly, or held for unit deployments. The vacant civilian houses are leased from the local authority and we are negotiating their early return. In addition, a further 18 vacant civilian houses and 60 married quarters were in the process of being sold. Any properties which become surplus to our long-term requirements will be sold in line with our normal policy.

Irregular Tenancy Notices

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many irregular tenancy notices have been served on former service personnel who have left the armed services at the end of their tour of duty;

(2) how many irregular tenancy notices have been issued in relation to dwellings owned by his Department in each of the past five years.

Mr. Hanley: The services do not issue irregular tenancy notices as service personnel are not tenants in the normal sense, but hold a licence to occupy a married quarter. All occupants of service married quarters are given notice of the date when their entitlement to occupy the quarter ceases and that they will become irregular occupants and will be liable for a "damage for trespass" charge in lieu of rent if the quarter is not vacated on the given date.

In the last five-year period, numbers of personnel leaving the Army at the end of their tour of duty who were irregular occupants was as follows:

	Number
1989	858
1990	925
1991	740
1992	598
1993	630

This compares with the total number of irregular occupants of Army married quarters, which can include redundees, estranged families or civilians, in the last five-year period which was as follows:

	Number
1989	1,622
1990	1,748
1991	1,468
1992	1,525
1993	1,811

Figures detailing the status of Navy and RAF irregular occupants are not readily available, and total numbers are produced only quarterly. At the end of March in each of the last five years the total number of irregular occupants was as follows:

	Navy	*RAF*
1989	497	233
1990	507	214
1991	516	285
1992	394	228
1993	289	227

Racial Discrimination

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what disciplinary measures have been taken against those individuals responsible, following the verdict by the Army board of inquiry that Corporal Malcolm of the Royal Tank Regiment has been subject to racial discrimination.

Mr. Hanley: Disciplinary action was not considered appropriate on this occasion.

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what disciplinary measures were taken against the individuals responsible following the decision by the Army board that Private Stephen Anderson of the Devon and Dorset Regiment had been subject to racial abuse;

(2) what disciplinary measures were taken against the individuals responsible following the decision by the Army board of inquiry that Private Evans of the 1st battalion of the Royal Regiment of Wales had been subject to racial abuse.

Mr. Hanley: Those responsible were dealt with summarily by their commanding officer. It is not our practice to comment on the disciplinary action taken by commanding officers in such cases.

Running Costs

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will provide a table showing the running costs of his Department in each region for each year since 1987-88.

Mr. Hanley: Details of running cost expenditure since 1988-89 are set out in table 3 of the "Departmental Report by the Ministry of Defence—The Government's Expenditure Plans—1994/95 to 1996/97", Cm 2501. Running costs in 1987-88 are shown in the previous year's departmental report. It is not possible to provide a regional breakdown of these expenditure totals from financial management information available to the Department.

Lockheed

Mr. Eastham: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many people from his Department's Procurement Executive have visited the United States of America to see any of the Lockheed facilities since 1 January 1993; what was the duration of those visits; and what was the total cost to public funds.

Mr. Aitken: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Scottish Reserve Forces

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he is proposing to make cuts in the Scottish reserve forces.

Mr. Hanley: There are no current plans for reductions in the Scottish elements of the royal naval or royal marines

reserves, beyond the changes to the royal naval reserve announced to the House on 18 October, *Official Report*, column 39. A review of the royal marines reserve has recently been undertaken, however, although no decisions have been taken.

Following reductions in the number of maritime patrol aircraft, the establishments of the three Royal Auxiliary Air Force maritime headquarters units, including No. 2 (City of Edinburgh) marine headquarters unit, have been reviewed. The new establishment for No. 2 MHU exceeds the recruited strength, so there will be no loss of personnel.

An announcement is to be made shortly about proposals for the Territorial Army as a whole.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many members the Royal Auxiliary Air Force has in Scotland; and where the squadrons are based.

Mr. Hanley: As at 1 April 1994, 217 Royal Auxiliary Air Force personnel were serving with units based in Scotland. The two units are based at No. 2 (City of Edinburgh) maritime headquarters unit, Edinburgh—106 personnel—and 2622 Squadron Royal Auxiliary Air Force Regiment, at RAF Lossiemouth—111 personnel.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many members the Territorial Army has in Scotland; and where the regiments are based.

Mr. Hanley: There are currently 6,290 members of the TA serving in Scotland. The locations of the regiments are as follows:

SER	*Unit*		*Sub Unit/Detachment locations*
(a)	*Title (b)*	*Location (c)*	*(d)*
1	TA Elements of HQ 51 Highland Brigade	Perth	
2	TA Elements of HQ 52 Lowland Brigade	Edinburgh	
3	RHQ Scottish Yeomanry	Edinburgh	Ayr, East Kilbride, Cupar
4	BHQ 1/51 Highland	Perth	Kirkbaldy, Dundee, Forfar
5	BHQ 2/51 Highland	Elgin	Wick, Kirkwall, Dingwall, Peterhead, Keith, Turriff, Inverness, Stornoway, Fort William, Aberdeen, Lerwick, Laurencekirk
6	BHQ 3/51 Highland	Stirling	Cumbernauld, Falkirk, Dumbarton, Dunoon
7	BHQ 1/52 Lowland	Glasgow	Glasgow, Ayr
8	BHQ 2/52 Lowland	Edinburgh	Motherwell, Edinburgh, Galashiels, Dumfries
9	RHQ 105 Regiment Royal Artillery	Edinburgh	Glasgow, Arbroath, Glenrothes
10	RHQ 71 Engineer Regiment	Glasgow	Paisley, Irvine, Edinburgh, Coatbridge, Dundee
11	RHQ 76 Engineer Regiment	Pitreavie (Dunfermline)	Kinloss, Aberdeen, Lossiemouth, Leuchars
12	RHQ 32 Signal Regiment	Glasgow	Aberdeen, Glasgow, Edinburgh
13	2 Squadron 39 Signal Regiment	Dundee	
14	A Squadron 23 SAS	Hamilton	
15	D Squadron 23 SAS	Invergowrie	
16	3 Flight AAC	Turnhouse	
17	RHQ Scottish Transport Regiment	Dunfermline	Edinburgh, Dunfermline, Glenrothes, Glasgow, Irvine, Grangemouth
18	125 Ration Squadron	Glasgow	
19	205 Field Hospital	Glasgow	Edinburgh
20	225 Field Ambulance	Dundee	
21	252 Field Ambulance	Aberdeen	
22	243 Provost Company	Edinburgh	

SER	Unit Title	Location	Sub Unit/Detachment locations
(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)
23	23 Security Company	Livingston	
24	RHF(T) Band (West Lowland)	Glasgow	
25	51 Highland Band	Perth	
26	RS(T) Band (East Lowland)	Edinburgh	
27	Aberdeen University Officer Training Corps (UOTCs)	Aberdeen	
28	Edinburgh and Heriot-Watt UOTC	Edinburgh	
29	Glasgow and Strathclyde UOTC	Glasgow	
30	Tayforth UOTC	Dundee	St. Andrews, Stirling
31	4 Parachute Regiment	(RHQ in Leeds)	Irvine, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Glenrothes
32	23 Security Company	Livingston	

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what percentage of the annual budget for reserve forces is allocated to funding the Scottish reserves in total and per force; and how much that amount is.

Mr. Hanley: Planned expenditure on the reserve forces based in Scotland for 1994-95 is £16,874,000. This is 13 per cent. of the total for the reserve forces of £129,800,000. The breakdown by force is as follows:

Force	Planned expenditure in Scotland	
	£ million	As percentage of total for Force
Royal Naval Reserve	0·882	10
Royal Marines Reserve	0·422	19
Territorial Army	14·901	13
Royal Auxiliary Air Force and Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve	0·669	16

Notes:

1. The above figures are for pay, allowances, earnings related national insurance contributions and training bounties for Reserve personnel. They exclude such items as equipment development, fuel, ammunition, accommodation and utilities, food and transport, for which information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.
2. The total figures for the TA exclude the home service part-time element of the Royal Irish Regiment.
3. All figures for the TA exclude non-regular permanent staff.
4. Figures for the RAF Reserves in Scotland take account only of pay; other costs cannot be apportioned.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many members the royal naval reserve/royal marine reserve has in Scotland; and where they are based.

Mr. Hanley: As at 1 July the Royal naval Reserves had 530 members in Scotland based at HMS Dalriada, Greenock—167; HMS Scotia, Pitreavie—325; and HMS Claverhouse, Edinburgh—38. The Royal Marines Reserve have 199 members in Scotland based in Royal Marine detachments sited as follows: Glasgow—110; Dundee—37; Greenock—28; and Grangemouth—24. HMS Claverhouse is, however, due to close on 31 July as part of the changes to the Royal Naval Reserve announced to the House on 18 October, *Official Report*, column 39. Where possible, arrangements have been made for reservists at HMS Claverhouse to transfer to other units.

Atomic Weapons Establishment

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consultations he has had with the chief executive of the Atomic Weapons Establishment in relation to the announcement of 300 voluntary redundancies requested at Aldermaston, Burghfield and Cardiff; and what proposals he has to encourage diversification into civilian uses for AWE resources and skills.

Mr. Aitken: Staffing levels at AWE are a matter for the operating contractor—Hunting-BRAE. However, my Department was aware that the chief executive of AWE would be announcing the introduction of a voluntary redundancy scheme. Hunting-BRAE is fully conscious of the opportunities and benefits that future diversification can offer and these will be actively pursued when they do not conflict with my Department's primary requirement of maintaining the United Kingdom's nuclear weapons capability.

Project Horizon

Mr. Carrington: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the current progress of Project Horizon, the common new generation frigate.

Mr. Aitken: I am pleased to announce that, at a ceremony in Lancaster House today, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence and the Defence

Ministers of France and Italy—Mr. Francois Leotard and Mr. Cesare Previti, respectively—signed a memorandum of understanding, and its preliminary supplement, concerning the joint development of this project. The memorandum of understanding will govern the design, development and production of the frigate, including its combat system, with the exception of the anti-air warfare system which will be covered by a separate MOU. We have also set in hand important preliminary work, under the preliminary supplement to the MOU, to be completed during the course of the next year. The successful completion of this work will enable us to take the project forward to the next stage of commitment, which will be embodied in the AAW system MOU and an additional supplement to the frigate programme MOU. It remains our firm intention to achieve the best possible value for money for the British taxpayer.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what evaluation he has made of the reports by the right hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery), as chairman of the Scientific and Technical Committee of the North Atlantic Assembly, endorsed by the North Atlantic Assembly meeting in Copenhagen in October last year, on multinational control over, and reductions of, nuclear weapons.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Departmental comments on the draft report by my right hon. Friend the Member for Honiton on nuclear proliferation, and North Atlantic Assembly resolution 245 on the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, were produced at the time of the autumn session of the NAA. Copies have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Trees

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what sums have been expended on grants for planting of *(a)* broadleaf trees and *(b)* conifers in England in each of the last three years under the various incentive schemes in force; and what has been the average area of each planting on which grant was paid in those years.

Mr. Jack: The information is set out in the table.

Planting Grants Paid

£000

	1991-92	*1992-93*	*1993-94*
Conifer	2,400	1,300	1,300
Broadleaf	5,100	8,900	11,500
TOTAL	7,500	10,200	12,800
Average Area Approved (hectares)	2·4	3·4	3·7

Arable Land

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information she has sought as to whether Germany, France and Italy have complied with their requirement to set aside arable land; and if she will publish the outcome of her inquiries.

Mr. Jack: The arable area payments scheme does not impose any set-aside target at a national level. It is for individual farmers to decide whether or not to apply for payments under the main scheme, although if they do they must set aside part of the area on which they are claiming. The area set aside in individual member states each year will therefore depend entirely on the numbers of farmers who have eligible land and who apply under the main scheme. Provisional Commission figures for the 1992-93 scheme year indicate that 1,063,000 hectares of land were set aside under the scheme in the Federal Republic of Germany, 1,589,000 hectares in France and 207,000 hectares in Italy. This is the appropriate proportion of the total area on which farmers in those countries claimed area payments under the main scheme and the figures are close to earlier Commission estimates of the total areas likely to be set aside in each member state.

Live Sheep Imports

Mr. Burden: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations she has received from Birmingham city council about the import of live sheep, and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: My right hon. Friend has been in correspondence with Birmingham city council and encouraged it to take rigorous action over any infringements of the law. A report prepared by the council into the circumstances surrounding imports of sheep from Spain and Poland has been received. It describes the investigations made, and the prosecutions taken.

EC Intervention Stocks

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which organisations are in receipt of the canned stewed beef produced from the 6,840 tonnes of beef released by the EC from British intervention stocks.

Mr. Jack: A list of organisations designated to distribute beef under the EC surplus food scheme in 1993-94 is available in the Library of the House.

Forestry

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what conclusions she has drawn from the advice of the forestry review group; when she intends to publish proposals for the future management of the Forestry Commission estate in England; and how she intends to consult in England about these conclusions.

Mr. Jack: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on 19 May 1994 to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Dr. Strang), *Official Report*, column 552.

Running Costs

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will provide a table showing the running costs of her Department in each region for each year since 1987-88.

Mr. Jack: The information asked for can be obtained only at disproportionate cost to the Department.

German Pork

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will take steps to ban the import of pork and pork products from Germany in view of the outbreak of swine fever in German pig herds; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: Community rules to control classical swine fever and prevent the risk of spread of the disease via exports are already in place. Responsibility for enforcing those rules lies with the member state of origin. The situation in Germany, including any need for additional measures, is kept under close review by the EC standing veterinary committee. I shall myself continue to monitor the matter to ensure the disease does not spread to this country.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Conspiracy to Defraud

Mr. Bates: To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement about the validity of the guidance to Crown prosecutors about charging practice in relation to the offence of conspiracy to defraud contained in previous editions of the code for Crown prosecutors.

The Attorney-General: Following advice from the Criminal Law Revision Committee, guidance on the use of the offence of conspiracy to defraud was incorporated into the code for Crown prosecutors following enactment of section 12 of the Criminal Justice Act 1987.

The code for Crown prosecutors has recently been revised. It is intended primarily to provide guidance on the general principles which are applied in the conduct of prosecutions. Detailed guidance on particular offences is not appropriate to the revised code and the paragraphs relating to consiracy to defraud no longer appear. However, the policy and practice of the Crown Prosecution Service in relation to alleged offences of conspiracy to defraud remains unchanged.

SCOTLAND

Road Schemes

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many representations he has received in support of construction of a three-towns bypass in the area of Ardrossan, Saltcoats and Stevenston; and if he will make a statement on the current status of this project.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Within recent years the hon. Member and the hon. Member for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Donohoe) have made several representations in favour of a bypass for Ardrossan, Saltcoats and Stevenston. Support has also been expressed formally by five representative bodies and two individual correspondents.

The consulting engineer reviewing the alignment and standards for the new road is expected to report to my officials later this summer. Subject to a satisfactory proposal, the design and preparation of the preferred scheme will then be taken forward.

Bicycles

Mr. Robathan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what facilities his Department provides for the parking of the bicycles of visitors to its offices in Westminster.

Mr. Lang: There are no facilities for parking bicycles outside my office in Whitehall. We can, however, arrange for bicycles to be held for visitors by pre-arrangement.

A1

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on his proposals for the route of the new dual carriageway section of the A1 trunk road between Haddington and Dunbar.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The dualling of the A1 between Haddington and Dunbar was one of the major schemes which my right hon. Friend recently announced that he expected to start between April 1995 and March 1997 in his statement about progress on trunk road construction and proposed starts in Scotland in the next three years. My officials plan to publish draft road orders in August this year. A public exhibition will be held to explain the details of the proposals. Further progress will, of course, be dependent on the public reaction to the proposals and availability of finance.

Youssef Chaabane

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to the Prime Minister's answer of 5 July, *Official Report*, columns *127-28*, what further investigation the Lord Advocate plans into the case of Youssef Chaabane, accused in a Beirut court of murdering a Jordanian diplomat; and whether he is sending Crown Office lawyers to Beirut.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate does not announce publicly what investigative steps he may or may not take in any particular criminal investigation. Criminal investigations could not proceed on any proper basis if they were carried out in such a manner. My noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate has sent, and will send, Crown Office lawyers wherever it is necessary and appropriate to send them.

Public Appointments

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table updating the information provided by written answer to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall) on 30 April 1991, *Official Report*, columns *154-57*, relating to the paid appointments within his patronage and the annual remuneration paid to each one.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 4 July 1994]:* Information concerning the level of any salary or fee paid to a member of a nationalised industry, non-departmental public body or NHS bodies sponsored by my Department as at 1 September 1993 is listed in the Cabinet Office publication "Public Bodies 1993", copies of which are in the Libraries of the House. The next edition of "Public Bodies" with updated information will be published in December. Information regarding appointments made jointly with other Ministers is no longer held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Child Care

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what provision his Department makes for child care facilities for staff; what is the extent of subsidy to nursery places and holiday play schemes; if his Department *(a)* subscribes to Childcare Solutions and *(b)* makes child care vouchers available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 7 July 1994]:* The Scottish Office has its own on-site nursery at East Craigs, Edinburgh which is registered for 15 full-time places and operates on a mix of full and part-time attendance. Those using the facility meet its running costs with accommodation costs being met by my Department. The Scottish Office takes occupancy of a major new building at Victoria Quay, Leith in the autumn of 1995. Plans for this building include a 30-35 place nursery.

Staff in my Department can also place children in the central holiday playscheme in Edinburgh. The facilities are available to staff on a full repayment basis although my Department makes an annual contribution of around £500 to the playscheme to help with the cost of outings. Discussions are also taking place about access to a playscheme in the Glasgow area.

Additionally, my Department has several other ways in which it helps its staff with child care responsibilities, including special leave, paternity leave, flexible working patterns and career breaks. Although my Department does not subscribe to Childcare Solutions or make use of child care vouchers, it is shortly to introduce a scheme whereby staff can make claims for the reimbursement of reasonable and unavoidable child care costs incurred when the normal working pattern is disrupted.

Staff (Attitude Survey)

Mr. Radice: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what surveys of the views, opinions and attitudes of the staff of his Department have been carried out in the last two years; and if he will place copies of the findings in the Library.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 7 July 1994]:* As part of its commitment to achieving the Investors in People standard, the Scottish Office carried out an attitude survey of 20 per cent. of staff in August 1992.

Information on the key points emerging from the survey was distributed to all staff and a fuller executive summary was made available on request. I have arranged for copies of these documents to be placed in the Library of the House.

EDUCATION

Primary Schools (Inspections)

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many primary schools, by local education authority, have been informed that they will have Ofsted inspections in the autumn term; how many of them have been informed by Ofsted of the registered inspector appointed to carry out their inspection; how many of them have been told by Ofsted that their inspection is deferred until the spring term of 1995; and how many of them have neither been informed of their registered inspector nor been told of deferment.

Mr. Robin Squire: This is a matter for Her Majesty's chief inspector of schools, who heads the independent Office for Standards in Education. I have asked Professor Sutherland to write to the hon. Member.

Running Costs

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will provide a table showing the running costs of his Department in each region for each year since 1987-88.

Mr. Robin Squire: In the years prior to 1993-94 HM inspectorate maintained small local offices in each region, but the Department as currently constituted does not operate a regional structure; its headquarters functions are carried out in offices in London and Darlington. In 1993-94 the Department's running costs expenditure was split broadly 70:30 between the London and Darlington offices. Detailed information on the actual spend between each office for that and previous years could only be provided at disproportionate cost. The net administration costs for the Department in each year since 1987-88 were as follows:

	£'000s
1987-88	58,594
1988-89	67,402
1989-90	74,501
1990-91	85,067
1991-92	102,414
1992-93	108,370
1993-94	88,370

The 1993-94 figure is provisional and reflects changes in the machinery of Government.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what numbers and percentages of pupils attend grant-maintained secondary schools in England; and what are the figures for each local education authority;

(2) what numbers and percentages of pupils attend grant-maintained schools in England; and what are the figures for each local education authority;

(3) what numbers and percentages of secondary schools are grant-maintained in England; and what are the figures for each local education authority;

(4) what number and percentage of schools are grant-maintained in England; and what are the figures for each local education authority;

(5) what numbers and percentages of primary schools are grant-maintained in England; and what are the figures in each local education authority.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested is set out in the tables.

Table A: Number and percentage of pupils at grant-maintained schools

Lea area	Primary		Secondary		Primary and Secondary	
	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.
Corporation of London	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Camden	0	0·0	2,340	22·3	2,340	11·1
Greenwich	239	1·1	0	0·0	239	0·7
Hackney	87	0·5	0	0·0	87	0·4
Hammersmith	0	0·0	1,229	20·6	1,229	8·2
Islington	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Kensington and Chelsea	530	8·4	629	19·6	1,159	12·2
Lambeth	1,250	6·6	3,363	53·0	4,613	18·2
Lewisham	361	1·8	0	0·0	361	1·2
Southwark	1,265	6·0	2,765	30·3	4,030	13·3
Tower Hamlets	0	0·0	907	7·8	907	2·8
Wandsworth	515	3·0	6,487	72·8	7,002	26·8
Westminster	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Barking	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Barnet	776	3·3	9,836	53·4	10,612	25·1
Bexley	643	3·5	3,581	24·9	4,224	12·8
Brent	1,002	4·5	9,377	75·7	10,379	30·0
Bromley	1,151	5·6	11,342	68·0	12,493	33·6
Croydon	836	3·2	5,897	40·5	6,733	16·5
Ealing	1,217	4·4	4,905	44·6	6,122	15·9
Enfield	149	0·6	5,576	32·1	5,725	14·1
Haringey	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Harrow	0	0·0	483	6·1	483	1·8
Havering	0	0·0	3,813	25·7	3,813	11·1
Hillingdon	2,602	13·3	11,467	83·6	14,069	42·2
Hounslow	0	0·0	2,108	15·0	2,108	6·3
Kingston upon Thames	191	1·8	2,859	37·6	3,050	16·9
Merton	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Newham	0	0·0	556	4·1	556	1·4
Redbridge	0	0·0	1,113	7·4	1,113	3·3
Richmond upon Thames	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Sutton	799	6·2	6,591	59·6	7,390	30·9
Waltham Forest	0	0·0	1,915	17·3	1,915	6·2
Birmingham	1,717	1·6	14,621	23·0	16,338	9·6
Coventry	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Dudley	381	1·4	4,458	25·4	4,839	10·6
Sandwell	0	0·0	658	3·7	658	1·3
Solihull	454	2·3	0	0·0	454	1·4
Walsall	561	2·0	5,557	29·0	6,118	12·9
Wolverhampton	0	0·0	2,348	14·9	2,348	5·7
Knowsley	0	0·0	719	8·0	719	2·6
Liverpool	0	0·0	2,260	7·6	2,260	2·8
St. Helens	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Sefton	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Wirral	0	0·0	2,031	9·8	2,031	3·9
Bolton	364	1·3	2,755	16·6	3,119	7·1
Bury	223	1·3	0	0·0	223	0·8
Manchester	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Oldham	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Rochdale	1,115	5·2	1,053	8·3	2,168	6·4
Salford	0	0·0	413	3·6	413	1·2
Stockport	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Tameside	0	0·0	2,332	18·1	2,332	6·5
Trafford	0	0·0	2,892	25·4	2,892	9·2
Wigan	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Barnsley	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Doncaster	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Rotherham	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Sheffield	943	2·2	1,893	7·1	2,836	4·0
Bradford	539	1·3	5,080	11·1	5,619	6·5
Calderdale	660	3·3	6,337	48·3	6,997	21·3
Kirklees	0	0·0	1,266	5·1	1,266	2·1
Leeds	51	0·1	1,138	2·6	1,189	1·1
Wakefield	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Gateshead	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Newcastle upon Tyne	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
North Tyneside	0	0·0	212	1·5	212	0·7
South Tyneside	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Sunderland	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Isles of Scilly	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Avon	0	0·0	1,569	2·9	1,569	1·2
Bedfordshire	629	1·5	8,568	19·6	9,197	10·7
Berkshire	2,242	3·7	7,389	16·0	9,631	9·0
Buckinghamshire	2,126	3·5	9,844	27·3	11,970	12·3
Cambridgeshire	1,911	3·3	15,109	37·5	17,020	17·2
Cheshire	418	0·5	2,395	3·8	2,813	1·9

Lea area	Primary		Secondary		Primary and Secondary	
	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.
Cleveland	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Cornwall	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Cumbria	2,399	5·6	10,617	34·6	13,016	17·8
Derbyshire	1,671	2·0	15,275	26·8	16,946	12·0
Devon	285	0·4	4,571	8·0	4,856	3·5
Dorset	415	0·9	9,537	23·6	9,952	11·7
Durham	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
East Sussex	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Essex	18,774	15·4	66,322	70·1	85,096	39·3
Gloucestershire	2,820	6·6	21,584	66·2	24,404	32·3
Hampshire	3,911	3·0	15,780	20·7	19,691	9·6
Hereford and Worcester	0	0·0	3,558	7·6	3,558	3·8
Hertfordshire	1,564	1·9	20,565	30·7	22,129	14·8
Humberside	257	0·3	0	0·0	257	0·2
Isle of Wight	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Kent	4,877	3·9	51,187	50·8	56,064	24·7
Lancashire	578	0·4	6,593	8·0	7,171	3·4
Leicestershire	0	0·0	3,222	5·5	3,222	2·3
Lincolnshire	6,219	12·7	16,323	44·2	22,542	26·3
Norfolk	2,623	4·2	8,608	21·4	11,231	11·0
North Yorkshire	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Northamptonshire	3,072	6·1	9,197	20·7	12,269	13·0
Northumberland	0	0·0	632	2·2	632	1·2
Nottinghamshire	0	0·0	1,831	2·9	1,831	1·2
Oxfordshire	81	0·2	0	0·0	81	0·1
Shropshire	307	0·9	4,324	17·5	4,631	7·7
Somerset	374	1·1	398	1·4	772	1·2
Staffordshire	49	0·1	4,298	6·3	4,347	2·7
Suffolk	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Surrey	3,546	4·6	9,915	25·5	13,461	11·7
Warwickshire	0	0·0	4,669	18·9	4,669	6·6
West Sussex	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Wiltshire	2,915	6·2	13,216	39·2	16,131	20·0
Total England	84,684	2·0	504,258	17·6	588,942	8·4

Table B: Number and percentage of schools which are grant-maintained

LEA area	Primary		Secondary		Primary and Secondary	
	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.
Corporation of London	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Camden	0	0·0	2	18·2	2	3·8
Greenwich	1	1·3	0	0·0	1	1·1
Hackney	1	1·6	0	0·0	1	1·4
Hammersmith	0	0·0	1	10·0	1	2·1
Islington	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Kensington and Chelsea	2	7·4	1	25·0	3	9·7
Lambeth	5	6·5	5	50·0	10	11·5
Lewisham	1	1·4	0	0·0	1	1·2
Southwark	5	6·6	5	35·7	10	11·1
Tower Hamlets	0	0·0	1	6·7	1	1·1
Wandsworth	2	2·8	6	60·0	8	9·8
Westminster	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Barking	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Barnet	2	2·2	10	47·6	12	10·9
Bexley	3	4·6	5	29·4	8	9·8
Brent	3	4·7	10	76·9	13	16·9
Bromley	3	3·8	12	70·6	15	15·8
Croydon	2	2·0	7	35·0	9	7·6
Ealing	4	6·0	5	41·7	9	11·4
Enfield	1	1·4	5	29·4	6	6·9
Haringey	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Harrow	0	0·0	1	10·0	1	1·6
Havering	0	0·0	4	21·1	4	4·3
Hillingdon	11	15·3	12	80·0	23	26·4
Hounslow	0	0·0	2	14·3	2	2·6
Kingston upon Thames	1	2·8	4	40·0	5	10·9
Merton	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Newham	0	0·0	1	7·1	1	1·2
Redbridge	0	0·0	1	6·7	1	1·4
Richmond upon Thames	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Sutton	3	7·0	8	57·1	11	19·3
Waltham Forest	0	0·0	2	12·5	2	2·6
Birmingham	6	1·8	17	21·3	23	5·6
Coventry	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0

LEA area	Primary		Secondary		Primary and Secondary	
	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.
Dudley	1	1·2	6	27·3	7	6·7
Sandwell	0	0·0	1	5·0	1	0·8
Solihull	1	1·4	0	0·0	1	1·2
Walsall	2	1·9	6	28·6	8	6·4
Wolverhampton	0	0·0	3	15·0	3	2·5
Knowsley	0	0·0	1	9·1	1	1·3
Liverpool	0	0·0	3	8·3	3	1·3
St. Helens	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Sefton	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Wirral	0	0·0	2	9·5	2	1·6
Bolton	1	1·0	3	18·8	4	3·3
Bury	1	1·4	0	0·0	1	1·2
Manchester	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Oldham	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Rochdale	4	5·3	1	7·1	5	5·6
Salford	0	0·0	1	5·6	1	0·9
Stockport	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Tameside	0	0·0	3	16·7	3	3·0
Trafford	0	0·0	4	25·0	4	4·3
Wigan	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Barnsley	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Doncaster	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Rotherham	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Sheffield	6	3·6	2	6·5	8	4·1
Bradford	3	1·8	6	6·8	9	3·6
Calderdale	4	4·4	7	43·8	11	10·3
Kirklees	0	0·0	2	5·9	2	1·0
Leeds	1	0·4	1	2·2	2	0·7
Wakefield	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Gateshead	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Newcastle upon Tyne	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
North Tyneside	0	0·0	1	3·8	1	1·1
South Tyneside	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Sunderland	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Isles of Scilly	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Avon	0	0·0	2	3·3	2	0·5
Bedfordshire	3	1·4	10	14·1	13	4·5
Berkshire	7	2·5	10	16·9	17	5·1
Buckinghamshire	6	2·1	10	22·2	16	4·8
Cambridgeshire	6	2·2	16	37·2	22	7·1
Cheshire	3	0·7	3	4·4	6	1·1
Cleveland	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Cornwall	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Cumbria	18	5·8	14	33·3	32	9·2
Derbyshire	7	1·6	14	23·0	21	4·1
Devon	1	0·2	6	9·4	7	1·4
Dorset	1	0·5	10	17·9	11	4·3
Durham	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
East Sussex	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Essex	72	12·4	70	66·0	142	20·7
Gloucestershire	11	4·2	27	62·8	38	12·5
Hampshire	13	2·2	18	19·1	31	4·6
Hereford and Worcester	0	0·0	5	6·6	5	1·4
Hertfordshire	9	2·1	23	25·6	32	6·1
Humberside	2	0·6	0	0·0	2	0·5
Isle of Wight	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Kent	18	3·2	62	45·6	80	11·3
Lancashire	2	0·3	8	7·5	10	1·4
Leicestershire	0	0·0	5	6·3	5	1·2
Lincolnshire	23	7·8	24	38·1	47	13·2
Norfolk	13	3·3	12	23·1	25	5·6
North Yorkshire	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Northamptonshire	9	3·3	12	18·8	21	6·3
Northumberland	0	0·0	1	1·6	1	0·5
Nottinghamshire	0	0·0	3	3·7	3	0·6
Oxfordshire	1	0·4	0	0·0	1	0·4
Shropshire	1	0·5	6	16·2	7	2·8
Somerset	2	0·9	1	2·6	3	1·1
Staffordshire	2	0·5	5	5·9	7	1·4
Suffolk	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Surrey	14	3·8	13	25·5	27	6·4
Warwickshire	0	0·0	8	21·6	8	2·8
West Sussex	0	0·0	0	0·0	0	0·0
Wiltshire	12	4·1	16	36·4	28	8·3
TOTAL	336	1·8	594	16·2	930	4·1

Notes:

1. All figures for numbers of pupils are derived from the Department's January 1993 Schools Census. In calculating the percentage of primary schools part-time pupils in grant-maintained schools are excluded.
2. Figures for number of maintained schools are derived from the Department's January 1993 Schools Census. The number of grant-maintained schools is correct as of 1 July.
3. The percentages represent the number of pupils at grant-maintained schools as a proportion of the number of pupils at all maintained schools, and the number of grant-maintained schools as a proportion of the number of all maintained schools.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list by local education authority the number and percentage of children in each grant-maintained school with statements of special educational needs.

Mr. Forth: A table containing the latest available information has been placed in the Library.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list by local education authority those grant-maintained schools which had specific units or support services for children with special educational needs when they attained grant-maintained status; and whether those units or support services are still available.

Mr. Forth: The Department does not have a comprehensive central record of specific units and support services for children with special educational needs at grant-maintained schools.

Children (Chronic Allergies)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what guidance has been issued by his Department to representatives of the teaching profession, regarding the need to cater for school children with chronic allergic conditions who may require the immediate administration of adrenalin injections while at school; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: General guidance on health care in schools for children with medical conditions is given in the Department's circular 11/90 "Staffing for Pupils with Special Educational Needs". The code of practice on the identification and assessment of special educational needs offers guidance to schools on the circumstances in which they might have recourse to the child health services.

The statutory responsibility for securing health care for children in school rests with district health authorities. Teachers could not be required in law to administer medicines or to give injections. However, teachers have a general duty of care towards children in schools, and it is therefore reasonable to expect a teacher to react promptly if a child with a chronic allergy condition is suddenly taken ill. Such action could include assisting with the injection of adrenaline, if the teacher is competent and willing to do so and has been appropriately trained.

Education Costs

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the average cost to the Exchequer of 11 years of compulsory education in local authority-maintained schools.

Mr. Robin Squire: In 1992-93, local education authorities spent an average of £1,857 per pupil in maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools. LEA spending returns do not allow us to distinguish the amount spent on compulsory education from within that total.

Most central Government support for local authorities is in the form of unhypothecated revenue support grant. It is not therefore possible to identify the proportion of local authority education spending met by the Exchequer.

School Meals

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) if he will publish a table showing the number of children receiving free school meals in each local education authority area; what percentage that is of the total number of children receiving school meals in that area; and what are the national totals in each case;

(2) when he expects to publish the results of his Department's annual survey of school meals relating to 1993.

Mr. Forth: The results of the survey are contained in "Statistics of Education for Schools 1993" published on 30 June. A copy is available in the Library.

The table covers day pupils receiving free school meals in maintained schools in each local education authority in England in January 1993.

LEA	*Number*	*Percentage*[1]
Corporation of London	108	64
Camden	5,576	52
Greenwich	9,544	59
Hackney	10,210	64
Hammersmith	4,880	49
Islington	7,943	61
Kensington and Chelsea	2,960	47
Lambeth	9,820	57
Lewisham	9,312	53
Southwark	10,804	61
Tower Hamlets	15,113	71
Wandsworth	7,404	48
Westminster	5,327	56
Barking and Dagenham	3,877	41
Barnet	5,258	25
Bexley	3,705	30
Brent	7,892	52
Bromley	4,392	28
Croydon	7,192	35
Ealing	7,877	47
Enfield	5,912	36
Haringey	8,368	54
Harrow	2,212	46
Havering	3,015	27
Hillingdon	2,952	40
Hounslow	5,576	35
Kingston-upon-Thames	1,232	35
Merton	3,171	40
Newham	9,608	63
Redbridge	4,149	28
Richmond-upon-Thames	1,822	30
Sutton	2,128	22
Waltham Forest	7,626	47
Birmingham	51,990	53
Coventry	10,638	53
Dudley	6,498	37
Sandwell	10,656	53
Solihull	4,201	26
Walsall	10,146	41
Wolverhampton	8,830	54
Knowsley	10,329	73
Liverpool	25,071	60
St. Helens	5,379	37

LEA	Number	Percentage[1]
Sefton	7,683	43
Wirral	12,158	47
Bolton	7,480	33
Bury	3,809	27
Manchester	26,722	62
Oldham	9,041	39
Rochdale	7,600	41
Salford	9,558	47
Stockport	5,817	26
Tameside	7,067	38
Trafford	4,987	35
Wigan	8,148	35
Barnsley	6,496	39
Doncaster	10,465	34
Rotherham	7,224	43
Sheffield	14,489	45
Bradford	20,249	43
Calderdale	5,341	35
Kirklees	10,230	32
Leeds	17,281	33
Wakefield	7,708	31
Gateshead	6,193	45
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	11,109	51
North Tyneside	5,262	33
South Tyneside	6,691	45
Sunderland	10,292	44
Isles of Scilly	11	12
Avon	20,979	38
Bedfordshire	13,055	28
Berkshire	10,083	25
Buckinghamshire	6,325	41
Cambridgeshire	11,896	35
Cheshire	19,067	29
Cleveland	23,819	43
Cornwall	10,664	33
Cumbria	8,231	23
Derbyshire	18,994	20
Devon	20,494	34
Dorset	7,053	40
Durham	17,065	32
East Sussex	13,248	37
Essex	25,885	34
Gloucestershire	8,592	37
Hampshire	26,038	36
Hereford and Worcester	7,932	32
Hertfordshire	14,812	22
Humberside	23,091	30
Isle of Wight	3,215	41
Kent	29,238	33
Lancashire	37,774	37
Leicestershire	17,676	30
Lincolnshire	6,201	31
Norfolk	12,146	32
North Yorkshire	7,997	17
Northamptonshire	8,802	41
Northumberland	6,440	24
Nottinghamshire	26,539	38
Oxfordshire	7,172	28
Shropshire	8,305	26
Somerset	6,188	39
Staffordshire	22,188	31
Suffolk	9,327	27
Surrey	9,463	17
Warwickshire	7,560	28
West Sussex	9,249	27
Wiltshire	8,709	31
ENGLAND	1,141,326	37

Number of day pupils who received a free school meal as a proportion of all school meals taken.
Information on pupils is derived from the annual returns made to the Department in January each year (Form 7).
Includes self-governing (GM) state schools.
Includes full-time and part-time day pupils in maintained schools, including nursery and special schools, who had a school meal on the Census day.
Excludes boarding pupils and pupils in hospital schools.

Special Schools

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will publish the schemes he has approved for the local management of special schools submitted to him by local education authorities.

Mr. Forth: No. Section 42(1) of the Education Reform Act 1988 requires LEAs to publish their own LMS schemes. The manner in which they must do so is prescribed in the Education (Publication of Schemes for Financing Schools) Regulations 1993.

WALES

Labour Statistics

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many new full-time equivalent jobs have been created in Clwyd during the past 15 months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Comprehensive information is not collected on new jobs created. However, offers of regional selective assistance accepted during the 15 months ending on 31 May 1994 were forecast to create 2,032 jobs in Clwyd.

Hedgerows

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the percentage of hedgerows and total hedgerow stock in 1984 which has subsequently been lost; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: A survey carried out by the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology as part of the Department of the Environment's 1990 countryside survey found that in 1984 there was an estimated stock of 71,000 km of hedgerow in Wales, but, by 1990, there had been a net loss of 18,000 km or 25 per cent. of the total stock. The main reason for this loss was poor management and as a result the Countryside Council for Wales in 1992, at the request of the Welsh Office, established the hedgerow renovation scheme.

The most recent survey of hedgerows in England and Wales will shortly be completed, covering the years 1990-93. This will provide details of more recent changes in stock levels.

Snowdonia

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many times Snowdonia mountain rescue services were called into action in 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: In 1993, there were 174 incidents in Snowdonia involving mountain rescue services.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list all those hospitals and medical establishments that have national health service trust status in Wales.

Mr. Redwood: The information is not currently available in the form requested. Actual details on hospitals,

health centres and clinics, vehicles and other accommodation, assets and equipment that is either vested in, or leased by, national health service trusts in Wales are contained in the individual transfer of assets orders, not all of which have been finalised.

From 1 April 1994 there are 24 operational national health service trusts in Wales. The details are:

Pembrokeshire NHS Trust
Ceredigion and Mid Wales NHS Trust
Carmarthen and District NHS Trust
Llanelli Dinefwr NHS Trust
Swansea NHS Trust
Bridgend and District NHS Trust
Llandough Hospital NHS Trust
Glan Hafren NHS Trust
Gwent Community Health NHS Trust
Powys Healthcare NHS Trust
Wrexham Maelor Hospital NHS Trust
Glan Clwyd District Hospital NHS Trust
Clwydian Community Care NHS Trust
Gwynedd Hospitals NHS Trust
Gwynedd Community Health NHS Trust
Nevill Hall and District NHS Trust
Velindre NHS Trust
Rhondda Health Care NHS Trust
Derwen NHS Trust
Morriston Hospital NHS Trust
East Glamorgan NHS Trust
South and East Wales Ambulance NHS Trust
North Wales Ambulance NHS Trust
Mid Glamorgan Ambulance NHS Trust

Bicycles

Mr. Robathan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what facilities his Department provides for the parking of the bicycles of visitors to its offices in Westminster.

Mr. Redwood: There is no provision for any types of transport outside my Department. However, arrangements can usually be made with the Ministry of Defence to park bicycles in its car park close by.

Special Schools

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the schemes he has approved from the local management of special schools submitted to him by local education authorities.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so. The extension of the local management of schools arrangements to special schools was deemed a significant variation to a local education authority's LMS scheme and as such it is for the local authority to publish the changes in accordance with section 42 of the Education Reform Act 1988 and the Education (Publication of Schemes for Financing Schools) Regulations 1993.

Remploy Centres

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many Remploy centres he has visited since his appointment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: None. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment has responsibility for this organisation.

Road Improvement Schemes

Mr. Elfyn Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many road improvement schemes are currently being planned for *(a)* Gwynnedd, *(b)* Clwyd, *(c)* Dyfed, *(d)* Powyd, *(e)* Gwent, *(f)* South Glamorgan, *(g)* Mid Glamorgan, *(h)* West Glamorgan and (i) Wales as a whole; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: "Roads in Wales", to be published shortly by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales, will set out our priorities and plans for improvements to trunk roads.

Schools Statistics

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what numbers and percentages of pupils attend grant-maintained secondary schools in Wales; and what are the figures for each local eduction authority;

(2) what numbers and percentages of pupils attend grant-maintained primary schools in Wales; and what are the figures for each local education authority;

(3) what numbers and percentages of pupils attend grant-maintained schools in Wales; and what are the figures for each local education authority.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The numbers and percentages of pupils attending grant-maintained schools in Wales in each local education authority are shown in the table:

	Grant maintained				*All grant maintained primary and secondary schools*	
	Primary schools		*Secondary schools*			
	[1]Number	*[2]Per cent.*	*[1]Number*	*[2]Per cent.*	*[1]Number*	*[2]Per cent.*
Clwyd	442	1·1	3,349	12·3	3,791	5·6
Dyfed	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gwent	220	0·5	1,385	4·7	1,605	2·2
Gwynedd	218	1·1	0	0	218	0·6
Mid Glamorgan	0	0	0	0	0	0
Powys	36	0·3	0	0	36	0·2
South Glamorgan	0	0	2,971	10·9	2,971	4·4
West Glamorgan	0	0	933	4·0	933	1·5
Wales	916	0·3	8,638	4·5	9,554	2·0

[1]Pupil numbers as at January 1993 (which is the latest available date), and are for all schools which were grant maintained as at April 1994.
[2]Percentages are calculated as a proportion of the total number of full time and part time pupils in the same sector for the LEA.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what numbers and percentages of schools are grant-maintained in Wales; and what are the figures for each local education authority;

(2) what numbers and percentages of primary schools are grant-maintained in Wales; and what are the figures for each local education authority;

(3) what numbers and percentages of secondary schools are grant-maintained in Wales; and what are the figures for each local education authority.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The numbers and percentages of grant maintained schools in Wales in each local education authority are shown in the table.

	Grant maintained				*All grant maintained primary and secondary schools*	
	Primary schools		*Secondary schools*			
	Number[1]	*Per cent.*[2]	*Number*[1]	*Per cent.*[2]	*Number*[1]	*Per cent.*[2]
Clwyd	2	0·8	4	12·5	6	2·2
Dyfed	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gwent	1	0·5	3	9·1	4	1·6
Gwynedd	1	0·5	0	0	1	0
Mid Glamorgan	0	0	0	0	0	0
Powys	1	0·9	0	0	1	0·8
South Glamorgan	0	0	3	11·5	3	1·6
West Glamorgan	0	0	1	3·7	1	0·5
Wales	5	0·3	11	4·8	16	0·8

[1] As at April 1994.
[2] Percentages are calculated as a proportion of the total number of schools in the same sector for the local education authority.

Special Educational Needs

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list by local education authority the grant-maintained schools which had specific units or support services for children with special educational needs when they attained grant-maintained status and indicate whether these units or support services are still available.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Details of the grant-maintained schools in Wales were given in my reply of 9 December 1993 and my right hon. Friend's reply of 4 July 1994 to the hon. Members for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) and for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies). All GM schools had support services when they were approved for grant-maintained status, and Ysgol Bryn Elian and St. Cyres had designated special needs units attached to them. The schools' change of status has in no way affected their availability.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list by local education authority the number and percentage of children in each grant-maintained school with statements of special educational needs.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The numbers and percentages of children in grant-maintained schools with statements of special educational needs in Wales in each local education authority are shown in the following table. This information was not collected from individual schools in 1993.

	Number[1]	*Per cent.*[2]
Clwyd	0	0
Dyfed	0	0
Gwent	8	0·3
Gwynedd	0	0
Mid Glamorgan	0	0
Powys	0	0
South Glamorgan	0	0
West Glamorgan	31	1·3
Wales	39	0·2

Source: Form STATS2.
[1] As at January 1993.
[2] Percentages are calculated as a proportion of the total number of children with statements of special educational needs (including those being educated outside the local education authority area in which they are registered) in the local education authority.

NHS Trusts (Pay Awards)

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received from NHS trusts in Wales on the effect of the implementation of the current health service pay award on the numbers of staff the trusts employ.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Ainger) on 13 May, column 268.

Local Government Reform

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received from local authorities or their associations in relation to the execution of their duties to staff affected by staff transfer orders and other procedures occasioned by the reform of local government, particularly with respect to compliance with the duties of employees under the acquired rights directive and the collective redundancies directive of the European Union; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: I have received several such representations, which I will take into account in guidance to the Staff Commission for Wales. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State set out the Government's view on how the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations—which implement the acquired rights directive—apply to local government reorganisation in Standing Committee A on 17 May.

Welsh Language

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when final results of the 1992 Welsh social survey relating to the Welsh language will be published.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Preliminary results relating to the Welsh language were issued in a Welsh Office statistical press release on 29 July 1993. An article on Welsh language aspects of the survey was published in the autumn 1993 edition of "Statistical News", issue 102,

a copy of which is in the Library of the House. It is planned to produce a further report later this year. This timetable is later than that originally envisaged due to slower than expected progress with other work arising from the survey.

Training and Enterprise Councils.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on what date he expects that his Department's financial appraisal and monitoring team will complete *(a)* the review of the monitoring and sample checking systems of the Welsh training and enterprise councils in relation to operating agreement compliance and *(b)* the review of the non-vocational qualifications claims under output-related funding of training provided by JHP Training in Wales and their verification; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The Department's financial appraisal and monitoring team reviews the systems of training and enterprise councils to ensure compliance with the operating agreement and that standards are maintained.

The review of NVQ claims following training provided by JHP Training in Wales will be completed by the end of August.

Ambulances (Bull Bars)

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will instruct South and East Wales Ambulance trust to remove the bull bars fitted to their vehicles and instruct all ambulance services that the fitting of bull bars to emergency vehicles is prohibited on the grounds of safety.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The South and East Wales Ambulance NHS Trust has already made arrangements to remove bull bars from 10 ambulance vehicles. Elsewhere in Wales bull bars are not fitted to front-line ambulance vehicles.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

St. Ethelburga's Church

16. **Mr. Lidington:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans he has to fund the rebuilding of St. Ethelburga's church from the millennium fund or the proceeds of the national lottery.

Mr. Sproat: The responsibility for the allocation of lottery proceeds is a matter for independent distributing bodies accountable to Parliament. These bodies—the Sports Councils, the Arts Councils, the National Heritage Memorial Fund, the Millennium Commission and the National Lottery Charities Board—will issue full guidance notes for applicants in the autumn. Those interested in receiving grants from the national lottery will need to apply to the relevant distributing body.

Film Industry

17. **Mr. Clappison:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what consultations he has had with representatives of the film industry.

Mr. Brooke: Last year I held a series of 10 consultative meetings with all sectors of the film industry to consider the state of the industry and how the level of investment in British film production might be raised. I have subsequently had discussions with a number of key industry figures. I will announce the Government's conclusions in due course.

Arts Council

18. **Mr. Nicholls:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how he intends to improve the accountability of the Arts Council.

Mr. Brooke: I have explored with the chairman of the Arts Council ways in which the council's accountability can be improved. The council has agreed a programme to implement a number of proposals, including an annual Arts Council lecture, twice-yearly public meetings outside London and a series of meetings on each of the different art forms. I welcome these proposals, as a positive move to improve public understanding of the council's operations and decisions.

Cross-media Ownership

20. **Mr. Wicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement on Government policy towards cross-media ownership.

Mr. Brooke: I announced on 3 January that I would be reviewing the rules which restrict cross-media ownership. Ministers will be considering a report by officials during the summer. The timing of an announcement about the outcome will depend on a number of factors, including the nature of those recommendations and any legislative implications.

Science Museum

22. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what proposals he has to help fund the extension to the science museum.

Mr. Sproat: Any request for extra funds from the science museum will be considered when I decide the grant-in-aid allocations for the museums and galleries sponsored by my Department. These will be announced at the time of the Budget.

Competitive Sports

23. **Mr. Peter Ainsworth:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what discussions he has had with the Sports Council regarding the development of competitive sports.

Mr. Sproat: My right hon. Friend and I meet the chairman of the Sports Council regularly to discuss matters of mutual concern, including the development of competitive sports.

Anabolic Steroids

24. **Mr. Kilfoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what initiatives he intends to take to implement an effective United Kingdom ban on the availability and use of anabolic steroids in sports.

Mr. Sproat: In 1993-94, the four sports councils spent over £910,000 on their programmes to combat drug abuse in sport and carried out nearly 4,000 tests. The availability of anabolic steroids is already controlled under the Medicines Act 1968 and the Government are currently considering whether to introduce further controls.

Televised Sporting Events

25. **Sir Michael Neubert:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage whether he plans legislation to widen the list of those sporting events which are ensured a showing on a terrestrial television channel.

Mr. Brooke: I shall consider what the National Heritage Select Committee says in its report on sports sponsorship and television coverage which was published on 6 July.

Industrial Heritage Sites

26. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many sites of industrial national heritage he has visited in the last six months; and if he proposes to make additional funding available to such sites.

Mr. Brooke: Over the past six months I have visited two sites relating to our industrial heritage: the Quarry Bank Mill museum in Styal, Cheshire, and the Tiverton museum in Devon, with its lace machine gallery.

On the question of funding, my Department makes substantial resources available each year to English Heritage and the National Heritage Memorial Fund. Both organisations offer grants towards the preservation of our industrial heritage and in so doing have made significant contributions in Burnley, for example, towards the development of Queen Street Mill, as the hon. Member will be aware. The additional resources for the heritage expected from the national lottery will substantially increase the scope for preserving the best of our industrial past.

Arts (Disabled People)

27. **Mr. Keith Hill:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what steps his Department is taking, via its sponsored bodies, to improve access to the arts for disabled people.

Mr. Sproat: I refer the hon. Member to the oral answer I gave to the hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms Lynne) earlier today.

National Lottery

21. **Mr. Brandreth:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he expects the first distribution of funds generated by the national lottery to take place; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: I expect the bodies responsible for the distribution of national lottery proceeds to invite the first applications for funding from the beginning of 1995. The first funds should be distributed to successful applicants shortly thereafter.

28. **Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is his estimate of the benefits disability organisations will derive from the national lottery.

Mr. Brooke: Organisations for the disabled stand to gain considerably from the net proceeds of the national lottery. They will be able to apply for lottery funding for any project which is on or connected with the arts, sport or national heritage; is for a charitable purpose; or is to mark the year 2000 or beginning of the third millennium.

Television Licence Fee

29. **Mr. Nigel Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans he has to help senior citizens living alone with their television licence fee.

Mr. Brooke: As the Government have made clear on many occasions, we are sympathetic to pensioners who find difficulty in meeting the cost of the licence fee, but we do not consider the licence fee a suitable instrument of social policy.

Children's Play Organisations

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make it his policy to ensure that children's play organisations are able to receive directly funds from the national lottery.

Mr. Sproat: It is likely that the children's play projects will be eligible for funding from a number of the lottery distributing bodies. Guidance notes explaining the precise eligibility criteria will be published by these distributors later in the year.

Departmental Strategy Document

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will publish a strategy document for his Department's development and promotion of the nation's arts, culture, sport and heritage for the next five years.

Mr. Brooke: My Department's annual report for 1993-94 sets out the Government's overall aims for the national heritage and outline plans, subject to annual review, for the three years ahead. The Department has also issued a short booklet "Preserving the Past, Shaping the Future", which describes the Department's aims in greater detail.

Royal Palaces

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage, pursuant to his answer of 16 May, *Official Report*, column *346*, what are the capital conservation and improvement schemes which the historic royal palaces agency will fund in 1994-95; how much will be spent on each; and how much will be spent on *(a)* building maintenance and *(b)* running costs.

Mr. Sproat: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Historic Royal Palaces Agency under its chief executive, Mr. David Beeton. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from David Beeton to Ms Marjorie Mowlam, dated 11 July 1994:

The Secretary of State for National Heritage has asked me to reply to your Question about the capital conservation and improvement schemes which the Historic Royal Palaces Agency will fund in 1994-95; how much will be spent on each; and how much will be spent on *(a)* building maintenance and *(b)* running costs.

Planned expenditure by Historic Royal Palaces on capital schemes in 1994-95 is £9·1 million in total (excluding VAT). Of this, the agency plans to spend approximately the following amounts on individual schemes costing more than £0·25 million:

	£ million
Agency Fire Prevention Programme	
Tower of London	0·5
Hampton Court Palace	0·4
Kensington Palace	0·1
Banqueting House	0·2
Kew Palace	0·3
Tower of London	
Jewel House and Waterloo Barracks	3·2
Renewal of Electricity Supply	0·2
Re-presentation of the White Tower	0·2
Catering—New Armouries Building	0·1
Hampton Court Palace	
Privy Garden Parterre	0·7
Restoration of Georgian Rooms	0·6
Car Parking	0·1
Catering	0·1
Kensington Palace State Apartments	
Restoration of King's Gallery	0·3

Planned expenditure in 1994-95 on building maintenance is £1·5 million and on running costs is £11·1 million (excluding VAT).

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the advisory non-departmental public bodies sponsored by his Department which have a statutory basis.

Mr. Sproat: None of the advisory bodies sponsored by my Department has a statutory basis. However, some of the executive bodies which are established by statute do have an advisory role. Examples are the British Tourist Authority, set up under the Development of Tourism Act 1969, and English Heritage, set up under the National Heritage Act 1983.

Audio-described Television

Mr. Alan Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what research has been undertaken by his Department into the availability of audio-described television for visually impaired people in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Brooke: None. A consortium, which includes the Royal National Institute for the Blind, the Independent Television Commission, the BBC, and the ITV Association, is developing the AUDETEL project, which aims to provide an audio description commentary on television. I understand that the BBC and ITV hope to begin experimental transmissions within the next week.

Gaelic Radio Service

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what representations he has received regarding the development of a national Gaelic radio service in Scotland.

Mr. Brooke: Since the publication of the Government's consultation document on the future of the BBC in November 1992, I have received representations about the development of a national Gaelic radio service in Scotland from three bodies: An Comunn Gaidhealach, Commun na Ghaidhlig and Foram luchd-ionnsachaidh.

GM Vauxhall Conference

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what representations he has received from the GM Vauxhall conference about its case for parity.

Mr. Sproat: I met Mr. William King, chairman, and Mr. Peter Hunter, secretary, of the GM Vauxhall Conference on 1 November 1993 to discuss the funding of safety improvements at GMVC club grounds. During the meeting the GMVC representatives formally submitted their case for parity. On 11 March this year they provided me with additional information.

Sports Ground Safety

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) what representations he has received from the Rugby Football League about their ground safety plans; (2) when he last met representatives of the Rugby Football League; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Sproat: I met Mr. Rodney Walker, chairman, and Mr. Maurice Lindsay, chief executive, of the Rugby Football League on 22 November 1993 to discuss the funding of safety improvements at Rugby Football League grounds. I have received no further representations from the Rugby Football League since then, although I have had since further informal discussions.

Football Trust

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what discussions he has had with the Pools Promoters Association about widening the remit of the Football Trust to include other sports, with particular reference to rugby and cricket.

Mr. Sproat: My officials held a meeting with representatives from the Pools Promoters Association on 22 June. Negotiations are at an early stage.

British Library

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what areas will be covered by the most recent report he has commissioned on the British library project from Kennedy and Donkin; what will be the cost to the Exchequer; and if he will place the report in the public domain.

Mr. Brooke: The most recent report commissioned from Kennedy and Donkin Building Services Ltd. was for an independent survey of the mechanical and electrical services installed in the first phase of the new British Library building. The report investigated whether services as installed complied with statutory requirements and relevant British Standards and, including follow-up work, has cost £165,000. I do not plan to publish the report because it contains information which is potentially commercially sensitive.

Maastricht Treaty

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what assessment he has made of the impact upon the arts and heritage in the United Kingdom of article 128 of the Maastricht treaty.

Mr. Brooke: Article 128 of the Maastricht Treaty gives the Community a role in support of member states' own

action in specified areas of culture without enabling it to interfere in national cultural affairs. I am awaiting Commission proposals on what incentive measures should be provided under the new article. These will also suggest how the Community may take cultural aspects into account in its action under other aspects of the treaty.

Items in Lieu of Tax

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the allocations made to public institutions in the United Kingdom during the half-year ended 30 June of individual works of art and museum objects pre-eminent for national, scientific, historic or artistic interest which have been accepted in satisfaction of inheritance tax, together with information, where applicable, as to conditions or wishes expressed by testators or executors in the matter of allocation; and if he will list the works of art and museum objects which are still awaiting allocation, with the respective dates of their acceptance in satisfaction of inheritance tax.

Mr. Sproat *[holding answer 7 July 1994]:* The information is as follows:

Item	*To whom allocated*	*Condition/wishes*
Two Vuillard paintings	Fitzwilliam Museum (Femme Assisse Tasse de Cafe) Ashmolean Museum (Le Dejeuner)	Unconditional
Haydn Manuscripts	National Trust	Conditional
Constable painting	Bristol City Art Gallery	Conditional
Land at Sheringham Hall	National Trust	Conditional
Gainsborough portrait	National Gallery	Conditional

Unallocated items	*Date accepted*
Hilliard miniature portrait	15 December 1993
J. F. Herring painting	15 December 1993
Wrest Park papers and albums	15 December 1993
Gomm furniture	17 February 1994
Ardizzone sketchbooks	31 March 1994
Lawrence portrait	31 March 1994
Three works by Picasso and one work by Klee	27 April 1994
George I silver kettle and stand	24 May 1994

Museums and Galleries

Mr. Andrew Faulds: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will publish the attendance figures for the financial year ended 31 March reported by the national museums and galleries for which he is responsible, broken down into the individual institutions, but including their outstations, with figures in each case of the percentage increase or decrease on the attendance figures for the preceding year.

Mr. Sproat *[holding answer 7 July 1994]:* The information is as follows:

	Number of visitors in 1992-93 (millions)	*Number of visitors in 1993-94 (millions)*	*Percentage Increase/ Decrease over the previous year*
British Museum	6·914	6·027	−12·8
Imperial War Museum	1·148	1·191	+3·7
National Gallery	4·200	4·015	−4·4
National Maritime Museum	0·541	0·530	−2·0
National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside	1·207	1·340	+11·0
National Portrait Gallery	0·563	0·792	+41·0
Natural History Museum	1·729	1·744	+0·9
Science Museum	2·579	2·671	+3·6
Tate Gallery	2·185	2·747	+26·0
Victoria and Albert Museum	1·454	1·577	+8·5
Wallace Collection	0·198	0·154	−22·0
Total	22·718	22·788	+0·3

It is not possible to identify the number of visitors to the Royal Armouries which at present forms part of the Tower of London.

Export Licences

Mr. Andrew Faulds: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the items for which the issuing of export licences was withheld on the recommendation of the reviewing committee on the export of works of art during the half-year ended 30 June specifying in each case the valuation and whether an item was exported or retained, with particulars in the latter event of the acquiring institution; and if he will list any items for which licences have been withheld but the final disposal of which is not yet decided, specifying in each case *(a)* the valuation and *(b)* the relevant time limit.

Mr. Sproat *[holding answer 7 July 1994]:* The information is as follows:

Description of item	Valuation (£)	Outcome
A marble effigy of the Duchesse de Nemours, by Chapu, dated between 1881-1883	79,987·50	Purchased by the Walker Art Gallery which is part of the National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside
A pastel portrait of Caroline, 4th Duchess of Marlborough, by Gainsborough, c. 1767-72	236,919·00	Export licence granted
A painting, 'Saint Sebastian Succoured by Two Angels', by Guercino, 1617	400,000·00	Decision deferred until after 31 July 1994
A painting, 'The Miraculous Transportation of the Holy House of Loreto', by Tiepolo (1696-1770)	3,200,000·00	Export licence granted
A marble bust of Lady Harriet Pellew, by Thorwaldsen, 1817	170,404·00	Export licence granted
A drawing 'A Canephorous in profile to the left', by in Parmigianino (1503-1540)	90,000·00	Decision deferred until after 7 August 1994
An electroplated teapot, by James Dixon & Sons, designed by Dr. Christopher Dresser, 1879	68,812·50	Decision deferred until after 7 August 1994

Child Care

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what provision his Department makes for child care facilities for staff; what is the extent of subsidy to nursery places and holiday playschemes; if his Department *(a)* subscribes to "Childcare Solutions" and *(b)* makes child care vouchers available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sproat *[holding answer 7 July 1994]:* In the 1993-94 financial year, this Department spent £1,650, excluding running costs, on child care. This provides one day care place in a nursery which opened in November 1993. In this instance the place is subsidised as it can be justified in value for money terms.

ENVIRONMENT

Habitat and Species Directive

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library copies of the responses he has received following his consultation on the European habitat and species directive.

Mr. Atkins: Copies of the responses to my Department's consultation paper have already been placed in the Library.

Species at Risk

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many species of *(a)* animal and *(b)* plant, which are native to the United Kingdom, were considered to be at risk in *(a)* 1964, *(b)* 1973, *(c)* 1983 and *(d)* 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, 39 British species or families of animal and 62 species of plant were protected in 1983, reflecting the Government's concern for those species at risk. In 1993, 94 species of animals were protected, and 168 species of plant. All wild birds in Britain are protected under the Act.

In Northern Ireland, all wild birds are protected under the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985, with 17 vulnerable species of animal and 55 species of plant.

Data on species at risk for 1964 and 1973 are not readily available.

The lists of protected species may be reviewed and amended in responses to species' changing conservation status.

Water Pollution, Worcester

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations his Department has received from Kay and Co. on the Worcestershire Water pollution incident; and what assessment he has made of the representations.

Mr. Atkins: A report on the water pollution incident in Worcestershire has been received from Kay and Co. In its continuing investigation of this incident, the drinking water inspectorate will assess the points raised in the report. In investigating an incident of this nature, the inspectorate needs to check each piece of information at source and obtain independent expert advice including on toxicology.

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations his Department has received from Kay and Co. on the Worcestershire water pollution incident; and what assessment he has made of the representations.

Mr. Atkins: A report on the water pollution incident in Worcestershire has been received from Kay and Co. In its continuing investigation of this incident, the drinking water inspectorate will assess the points raised in the report. In investigating an incident of this nature, the inspectorate needs to check each piece of information at source and obtain independent expert advice including on toxicology.

Westminster Council

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the cost of the press conference held by Mr. Magill on 11 January; and who meets it.

Mr. Baldry: I have no information on this point.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the cost to date of the investigation into Westminster by Mr. Magill; and who will cover the costs.

Mr. Baldry: I understand from the Audit Commission that the cost of Mr. Magill's investigation into Westminster up to January 1994 was approximately £1¼ million. This has been paid by Westminster city council.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how often a district auditor has called a press conference to announce provisional findings of an investigation; and what guidance is given in respect of the propriety of holding such conferences.

Mr. Baldry: I am not aware of any press conferences being given to announce an auditor's provisional findings and views, although I understand that press statements in such circumstances are common practice. This is a matter for the auditor's discretion; it is always open to him or her to take legal advice.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the impartiality of Mr. Magill following the press conference on 11 January.

Mr. Baldry: This is not a matter for the Government. District auditors are appointed by the Audit Commission and are bound by the commission's code of audit practice, which imposes a duty of impartiality. However, I have no reason to believe that Mr. Magill is not acting impartially in his conduct of the investigation at Westminster city council.

Land Use

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many applications for a certificate of lawfulness of existing use or development have been refused by local authorities in England in each of the last five years;

(2) how many applications for a certificate of lawfulness of existing use or development have been accepted in England in each of the last five years.

Mr. Baldry: This information is not available. Although local authorities provide my Department with quarterly statistics of planning applications and decisions, these do not differentiate applications for certificates of lawfulness of existing use or development and other kinds of planning application. Moreover, the legislation providing for such applications did not come into force until July 1992.

Energy Saving Trust

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the level of funding currently avilable to the Energy Saving Trust for programmes of work in 1994-95; what is the source of these funds; and what further resources are expected to be made available during the current financial year.

Mr. Atkins: The Energy Saving Trust is an independent organisation, but I understand that its programmes for 1994-95 are as follows:

(a) The Trust's pilot scheme for local energy advice centres is expected to spend about £3m, derived from a variety of sources, including this Department;

(b) The Trust's pilot scheme to promote domestic combined heat and power is expected to spend about £1m. This is funded by British Gas out of a corresponding increase in gas tariff income approved by OFGAS. Similar funding for any further schemes developed by the Trust and put forward by British Gas will be subject to decision by OFGAS;

(c) Regional Electricity Companies (RECs) have been set energy efficiency targets by OFFER in consultation with the Trust, and may raise around £22m from electricity franchise customers in 1994-95 to fund energy efficiency schemes. The savings achieved by schemes will be calculated by a method proposed by the Trust, and the Trust are devising various national schemes which would help achieve those savings.

Single Regeneration Budget

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all the European Union's funds, programmes or grants available for local authorities or others to apply for in respect of the regeneration of deprived and depressed areas; how these link to the single regeneration budget; and where details of all these funds, programmes or grants, including the criteria for successful applications, are made publicly available.

Mr. Baldry: The principal sources of European funding available to local authorities and others in respect of the regeneration of deprived and depressed areas are two of the European Community structural funds. These are the European regional development fund and European social fund. As grants from the structural funds normally contribute part of the total cost of a project, the single regeneration budget will provide an important source of matching funding. Both programmes will be administered by Government offices in the regions.

Regional plans for the Merseyside objective 1 area, covering 1994-99; objective 2—areas in industrial decline —for 1994-96; and objective 5b—rural areas—for 1994-99, are currently being considered by the European Commission. Once these have been agreed, the formal arrangements for considering project applications, such as selection criteria, can be determined. Details of EC regulations and decisions relating to the funds are published in the *Official Journal* of the European Communities, and information about programmes and guidance for applicants, can be obtained from the Government offices in the regions.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent changes have been made to the composition and remit of the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee.

Mr. Atkins: All appointments to the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee, except three, end on 31 August 1994. An announcement about membership of the Committee will be made in due course.

Benefit Hostels

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the Government are yet in a position to say whether it will introduce a licensing system for benefit hostels.

Sir George Young: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) on Friday 8 July, *Official Report*, column *327*.

Dog Fouling

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to announce the recommendations of his Department's advisory group on litter on national legislation for dog fouling and the

definition of dog mess as litter together with his response on a day on which the House is sitting before the end of July.

Mr. Atkins: I intend to publish before the recess the report of the Department's advisory group on litter as a consultation document and I shall be encouraging all interested parties to let me have their views on its recommendations.

Multiple Occupation Houses

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many fire inspections of bed-sitters and houses in multiple occupation have taken place in each year since 1983.

Sir George Young: This information is not held centrally. Local housing authorities are responsible for inspecting houses in multiple occupation for fire safety and other purposes.

Captive Animals

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether it is his Department's policy to apply regulation 2(2) (a) of the Environmental Information Regulations 1992 in relation to the state of any flora or fauna in the definition of the environment to animals held in captivity for scientific purposes.

Mr. Atkins: Where information falls within the scope of the regulations my Department's policy is to make it available unless there are good reasons, related to the regulations, for not doing so.

Whether information about animals held in captivity for scientific purposes is environmental information is a mixed question of fact and law which would need to be determined on a case by case basis.

Ofwat

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is his policy on the spending by Ofwat of money on hiring Government relations consultants to communicate with hon. Members or others;

(2) what reasons he has been given by the Director General of Ofwat for hiring Ludgate Land Government Relations in order to write to hon. Members; what was the cost; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: These are matters for the Director General of Water Services.

Urban Development Corporations

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much grant in aid has been made available to each urban development corporation since 1981 as a cash sum *(a)* at current prices and *(b)* at 1981 prices.

Mr. Baldry: The amount of grant in aid made available to each urban development corporation between April 1981 and March 1994, *(a)* at current prices and *(b)* at 1981 prices, is set out in the table.

Grant in aid

£ millions

	[1]*At current prices*	[1]*At 1981 prices*
Birmingham Heartlands	14·9	29·5
Black Country	222·7	439·9
Bristol	64·1	126·6
Central Manchester	59·0	116·5
Leeds	44·7	88·3
London Docklands	1,280·2	2,528·2
Merseyside	229·6	453·5
Plymouth	7·4	14·6
Sheffield	65·1	128·6
Teesside	206·2	407·3
Trafford Park	133·7	263·9
Tyne and Wear	197·8	390·6

[1] Actual grant in aid paid to urban development corporations has been adjusted in line with Her Majesty's Treasury's GDP Deflator Indices. Current prices are 1994-95 prices.

Running Costs

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide a table showing the running costs of his Department in each region for each year since 1987-88.

Mr. Gummer: Information in the form requested is not available, but details of total running costs between 1987 and 1994 are published in the Department's annual reports.

Pollution Control

Mr. Gill: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide guidance to local planning authorities on the relationship between planning and pollution controls.

Mr. Curry: I have today published planning policy guidance note 23 "Planning and Pollution Control", which clarifies the roles of the planning and pollution control systems. This stresses the need to avoid duplication of controls while improving dialogue between the different regulatory bodies. It provides guidance on the relevant issues planning authorities should consider in drawing up their development plans and in determining planning applications for certain industrial development proposals.

It builds on the long-established policy that planning should not duplicate other legislative controls. We have significantly strengthened our pollution control systems in recent years. Planning authorities should therefore focus on the wider land-use implications of proposed development leaving the control of emissions to pollution control authorities.

Trees (Environmental Damage)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the damage to Britain's trees caused by *(a)* ozone smogs and *(b)* acid rain.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 28 June 1994]:* An assessment of the impact of air pollution on tree health in the United Kingdom was made in the terrestrial environment review group's second report, produced for my Department and published in April 1993. A copy of the report is available in the Library of the House. My

Department's critical loads advisory group and photochemical oxidants review group are currently engaged in a further assessment of the impacts of both acidic deposition and ozone on trees in the United Kingdom.

Contracts

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on what occasions in the last 10 years he or a Minister in his Department has given a direction to civil servants to award a contract against the advice of the civil service; what was the subject matter of the contract and its value; and when it was awarded.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 8 July 1994]:* To the best of my knowledge, there have been no occasions over the last 10 years on which Ministers of this Department have given a direction to award a contract against the advice of the civil service.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 12 July 1994

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Ten O'clock Rule

Mr. Walden: To ask the Lord President of the Council, pursuant to his answer of 29 June, *Official Report,* column *628,* if he will make an assessment of the suitability to current conditions of the Ten o'clock rule.

Mr. Newton: Although I am having discussions with the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) about the sittings of the House, I do not envisage putting forward proposals to change Ten o'clock as the normal end to the main parliamentary day. Nor was such a change envisaged in the report of the Select Committee on Sittings of the House, though it was an aim of that report's proposals that Members should more frequently be able to leave for their constituencies after about seven o'clock on Thursdays.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

BBC Television Archives

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what estimate he has made of the cost to the BBC of digitising its television archives.

Mr. Brooke: None. The format in which the BBC keeps its archives is a matter for the corporation.

Longford Hall

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage, pursuant to his answer of 31 March, *Official Report,* column *976,* if he will list the items of work which English Heritage indicated needed to be carried out within six months of its report on Longford hall, Stretford, to maintain the building in its then existing condition; which works were carried out; and which were not.

Mr. Brooke: Works carried out to Longford hall by Trafford metropolitan borough council in December 1993 to January 1994 comprised structural repairs to the Derby room and the south-east corner of the building, repairs to the roof, gutters and drainpipes, rot treatment of walls and floors within the basement to the rear of the original building and the ground floor above and the insertion of ventilation grilles and the removal of debris. Security works were also carried out last year. These were the only works of those in English Heritage's report dated 9 June 1993 which related to the original building and which were also necessary to preserve that part of the building pending a decision by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment on its future.

PRIME MINISTER

Mr. Gordon McNally

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Prime Minister on what occasion prior to November 1991 he was present at functions where Mr. Gordon McNally was present.

The Prime Minister: None, so far as I am aware.

Coastguard Service

Ms Walley: To ask the Prime Minister what discussions he has held about the Department of Transport's proposed efficiency savings for the Coastguard Service; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I have had no such discussions. However, as I stated on 7 July 1994, *Official Report,* column 446, in response to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood), my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport has discussed with the chief executive of the Coastguard Agency the proposals he put forward in response to my right hon. Friend's target, that the Department as a whole should achieve a 20 per cent. efficiency gain. My right hon. Friend has not yet taken any decisions on these proposals.

Engagements

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 12 July.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 12 July.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Privatisation

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Prime Minister which organisations, agencies and other bodies relating to his departmental area of responsibility have been privatised since 1990; and what plans he has for further privatisation.

The Prime Minister: None of the organisations, agencies or other bodies under my departmental responsibility have been privatised since 1990. Plans for privatisation involving my departments will be considered on their merits as part of a prior options exercise and the results will be announced as appropriate.

Ukraine

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to the answer of the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of 20 June, *Official Report,* column *11,* if he will make a statement on discussions at the G7 summit in relation to nuclear technical assistance to the Government of the Ukraine.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to my statement on the Group of Seven summit in Naples on 11 July 1994, *Official Report,* columns 667-69.

Former Members of Parliament

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list the former hon. Members who were defeated in the last two general elections who have since become members of

quangos and other organisations to which the Government nominates; and if he will state the organisation to which the former hon. Members were nominated, the duties undertaken and the salary.

The Prime Minister: This information is not held centrally.

Ministerial Visits

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Prime Minister how many overseas visits have been made in 1994 by Ministers; during how many of them Ministers participated in fund-raising activities for the Conservative party; who were those Ministers; and in which countries those activities took place.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 4 July 1994]:* As far as I am aware, Ministers made 287 overseas visits in their official capacity between 1 January and 30 June 1994. None of those was undertaken for purposes of fundraising for the Conservative party. No central record is kept of any occasions on which Ministers may have attended fundraising events which were incidental to their visit.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Judges

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what specific measures he is taking to improve the forecasting of numbers and particular expertise needed at different levels of the judiciary.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Circuits will be required to identify the number of vacancies which are expected to arise a year in advance of the financial year in which they will occur. Based on changes in work load, retirements and other factors they will be expected to identify the number and location of the likely vacancies. This will enable vacancies to be advertised well in advance and appropriate individuals to be identified to fill them quickly as and when they arise.

The Department is also developing an information system to determine the future number of High Court judges needed at any one time, having regard to the need to maintain the High Court bench as a compact collegiate body.

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many responses he has received to his consultation paper "Developments in Judicial Appointments Procedures".

Mr. John M. Taylor: Some 22 responses had been received as at 7 July 1994.

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what was the total number of judges serving at 31 March as *(a)* High Court judges, *(b)* circuit judges, *(c)* district judges, *(d)* masters and registrars of the Supreme Court and district judges of the principal registry of the family division, *(e)* metropolitan stipendiary magistrates, *(f)* provincial stipendiary magistrates, *(g)* recorder and *(h)* assistant recorders; and how many in each are (i) part-time appointments, (ii) women, (iii) black and (iv) Asian.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The number of office holders as at 31 March 1994 is set out in the table. All the posts listed are full time except recorders and assistant recorders. The figures for black or Asian office-holders are believed to be correct, but arrangements for the formal recording of the ethnic origin of applicants for judicial office only began on 1 October 1991, so such information may be incomplete. In any event, the figures do not include those of other ethnic minority origin.

	Total	*Women*	*Black*	*Asian*
High Court Judges	95	6	—	—
Circuit Judges (includes Official Referees)	510	29	—	3
District Judges (excludes District Judges of the Principal Registry of the Family Division)	290	25	—	1
Masters and Registrars of the Supreme Court and District Judges of the Principal Registry of the Family Division	49	6	—	—
Metropolitan Stipendiary Magistrates	46	6	—	—
Provincial Stipendiary Magistrates	34	2	—	1
Recorders	866	38	4	5
Assistant Recorders (excludes Assistant Recorders in Training)	385	58	6	2

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what percentage of *(a)* High Court judges, *(b)* circuit judges and *(c)* district judges in office on 31 March had served in the present posts at this level (i) for less than a year, (ii) for less than five years, (iii) for more than 10 years and (iv) for 20 years or more.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The information relating to 31 March is not readily available. However, the percentages for the different periods of service, together with, in brackets, the relevant number of judges, as at 6 July 1994 is set out in the table below. Column B includes the figures in column A. Similarly, column C includes the figures in column D. Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole figure.

	A *Less than 1 Year* *Per cent.*		*B* *Less than 5 Years* *Per cent.*		*C* *More than 10 Years* *Per cent.*		*D* *More than 20 Years* *Per cent.*	
High Court Judges	15	(14)	52	(49)	15	(14)	1	(1)
Circuit Judges	9	(46)	43	(220)	26	(132)	4	(21)
District Judges (including District Judges of Principal Registry of the Family Division)	12	(37)	44	(139)	34	(107)	6	(20)

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many judges have retired on health grounds since June 1979.

Mr. John M. Taylor: There have been 48 such retirements since June 1979.

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what consideration he is giving to the suggestion of the Royal Commission on Criminal Justice that judicial performance should be more closely monitored.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Royal Commission's recommendations numbered 249 and 251 remain under active consideration by the Lord Chancellor in consultation with the senior judiciary and the chairman of the Judicial Studies Board. The recommendations have to be set in the context of the essential constitutional principle of the independence of the judiciary from the Executive and from each other. Any measures taken must have full regard to this overriding principle. The Government will respond to these two recommendations when their consideration of these difficult issues is complete.

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is the expected number of working days per year for each category of judge in England and Wales.

Mr. John M. Taylor: District judges are expected to sit 215 or more days per year. Circuit judges are expected to sit 210 or more days per year. High Court judges and judges of the Court of Appeal usually sit throughout the legal terms, 189 days, but may well sit outside those times. There is no expected number of working days for the Lords of Appeal in Ordinary.

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what parallel category of civil servants is used by the Top Salaries Review Body as a relevant basis for considering salary scales for the judiciary.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Under the revised terms of reference which were introduced in July 1993 at its request, the Senior Salaries Review Body is required, when making recommendations, to have regard to the need to maintain broad linkages between the remuneration of the three main remit groups, while allowing sufficient flexibility to take account of the circumstance of each group.

The two linkages which presently exist between the judiciary and the senior civil service are between High Court judges and civil servants at grade 1 level, and between the Cabinet Secretary and the Lord Chief Justice.

In its 1994 report, the SSRB recommended that the practice of offering identical salaries across the remit groups should be discontinued in future years provided that, in accordance with its terms of reference, the review body ensures that a broad linkage is maintained. The Government have accepted that recommendation.

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department (1) under what circumstances a member of the judiciary can be dismissed;

(2) how many members of the judiciary have been dismissed *(a)* since June 1979 and *(b)* since May 1965 as of 31 March;

(3) what are the current disciplinary procedures for members of the judiciary.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The independence of the judiciary is a fundamental principle of the constitution and is protected by the provisions governing judicial tenure. Lords of Appeal in Ordinary and Supreme Court judges may be removed by Her Majesty only on an address presented by both Houses of Parliament. Circuit judges may be removed by the Lord Chancellor on the grounds of incapacity or misbehaviour. The statutory provisions governing the removal from office of other members of the judiciary vary, but in general relate similarly to incapacity or misbehaviour, or the equivalent. One circuit judge was removed from office on the ground of misbehaviour in 1983. No other instance of removal from full-time judicial office since 1965 is known.

Given the independence of the judiciary, it is not generally open to the Lord Chancellor to comment on, or intervene in, decisions or comments made, or the conduct of legal proceedings, by a judge in the exercise of his judicial functions. The appropriate recourse in relation to such matters lies in the available processes of appeal or review. Subject to this overriding principle, where a question about the conduct of a judicial office holder is raised with the Lord Chancellor, he may see fit to seek the comments of the office holder concerned before considering what, if any, course of action he should take within the powers available to him.

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department (1) what was the total number of judges serving in all categories as of 31 March;

(2) what was the total number of judges serving in all categories employed *(a)* full-time and *(b)* part-time as of 31 March.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The total number of full-time judges at 31 March 1994 is set out in the following table:

	Number
Lords of Appeal in Ordinary	10
Heads of Division (excluding Lord Chancellor)	4
Lords Justices of Appeal	29
High Court Judges	95
Circuit Judges	510
District Judges (including District Judges of the Principal Registry of the Family Division)	308
Total	956

At 31 March 1994, some 185 practitioners had been authorised to sit as deputy High Court judges, 43 retired judges had been appointed to sit as deputy circuit judges and 745 practitioners and retired district judges were authorised to sit as deputy district judges. Some 866 practitioners were authorised to sit as recorders and 385 as assistant recorders. In addition, certain retired Supreme Court judges and Lords of Appeal in Ordinary are also willing to sit from time to time. There are other part-time judicial office-holders.

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what information he has on the social class origins of current members of the judiciary.

Mr. John M. Taylor: No information is held on the social class origins of current members of the judiciary. Aggregated information relating to the educational

background of the judiciary is not readily available. The Lord Chancellor's policy is to appoint to judicial office, entirely on merit, those who satisfy the relevant statutory conditions for appointments and are considered best qualified to fill the posts.

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many judges currently serving would, if they retired at 70 years of age, leave after fewer than 20 years' service.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The table sets out the numbers of judges in office on 6 July 1994 who would have served in full-time judicial office in the United Kingdom for fewer than 20 years if they were to retire on their 70th birthday and, in the case of those already over 70, the numbers who had completed fewer than 20 years service by that date. The figures take into account previous service in other full-time judicial offices in this country, except in the case of serving circuit judges where information relating to earlier service is not readily available. The total numbers of judges in post on 6 July 1994 are shown in brackets.

	Number
Lords of Appeal in Ordinary	3 (10)
Supreme Court Judges	87 (128)
Circuit Judges	254 (510)
District Judges[1]	56 (313)

[1] Including District Judges of Principal Registry of the Family Division).

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what specific measures he is taking to increase the number of judges moving from the High Court family division to the Court of Appeal.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Appointments to the Court of Appeal are made by the Queen on the recommendation of the Prime Minister. Before making his recommendations, the Prime Minister receives advice from the Lord Chancellor. The Lord Chancellor's advice on appointments to the Court of Appeal is based on the operational needs of the Court of Appeal and the suitability of the available candidates. He does not envisage special measures to increase the number of judges promoted to the Court of Appeal from the family division of the High Court.

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what plans he has to abolish judicial tenure.

Mr. John M. Taylor: None. The role of the judiciary is to administer justice in accordance with the laws of England and Wales without fear or favour, affection or ill will. In order to do so, judges must be independent. Security of tenure for the judiciary as established by the Act of Settlement and subsequent statutory provisions is essential in maintaining and supporting the principle of judicial independence.

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department (1) if he will list the publications which will carry judicial advertisements; and on what basis those national publications will be chosen;

(2) when he expects to report on the results of his consultation on the judicial appointments system;

(3) in implementing the proposals in his consultation paper, in what circumstances he will disregard an interview panel's recommendations in favour of alternative information;

(4) if he will continue to take soundings regarding judicial appointments; and if these will be used to determine the short listing of applicants for posts.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to him on 4 July, *Official Report*, column *1*. The consultation paper "Developments in Judicial Appointments Procedures" proposes that the interview panel's recommendations will constitute only one element of the information which the Lord Chancellor will have at his disposal, but that it will be a valuable and important one to which he will attach appropriate weight. The consultation paper also emphasises the Lord Chancellor's commitment to the continuation of the systematic collection of views and opinions about candidates and their work from a wide spread of judges and senior practitioners who are in a position to assess them. No decision has yet been taken in respect of the publications in which any advertisements might appear.

The Lord Chancellor is now considering the responses received to the consultation paper and will make an announcement as soon as practicable.

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many *(a)* High Court judges, *(b)* circuit judges and *(c)* district judges in office on 31 March received university education at Oxford or Cambridge.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Aggregated information relating to the university background of judges is not readily available, but the results of a special exercise carried out last year showed that at 1st January 1993, 68—81 per cent. —of the then 84 High Court judges had attended Oxford or Cambridge universities. The special exercise showed that the equivalent figure for the then 482 circuit judges was 261—54 per cent. The survey did not extend to district judges.

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what considerations underlie his proposal that judges should serve 20 years to qualify for a pension.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The requirement that judges should serve 20 years to qualify for full pension benefits is contained in the new pensions scheme under the Judicial Pensions and Retirement Act 1993. This is to allow the judicial pension scheme to conform to the taxation requirements which now apply to all other private and public sector pension schemes as a result of the Finance Acts 1987 and 1989 and the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988.

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many judges have retired on health grounds with fewer than 20 years' service since *(a)* June 1979 and *(b)* April 1992.

Mr. John M. Taylor: There have been 47 such retirements since June 1979, of which four have taken place since April 1992. These figures refer to Lords of Appeal in Ordinary, judges of the Supreme Court, circuit judges and district judges.

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is the pay scale of each category of judge in England and Wales.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The salaries of the judges in England and Wales are as follows:

	£
Lord Chancellor	120,179
Lord Chief Justice	118,179
Lords of Appeal	—
Master of the Rolls	109,435
Lords Justices of Appeal	—
President of the Family Division	—
Vice-Chancellor	104,922
High Court Judges	95,051
Official Referees	—
Senior Circuit Judges	82,641
Circuit Judges	—
Senior District Judge	69,497
District Judges	56,974

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many barristers have declined to become High Court judges in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. John. M. Taylor: The numbers of barristers who have declined to allow their names to be recommended to Her Majesty the Queen for immediate appointment to the High Court bench in England and Wales in recent years are set out below. All those who declined, with one exception, have made it clear that they hope to be considered again for appointment to the High Court bench in the future. Numbers before 1988 are not readily available.

	Number
1988-89	—
1989-90	—
1990-91	—
1991-92	1
1992-93	6
1993-94	2
[1]1994-95	—

[1] To date.

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what legislative action would be necessary for the changes he announced on 7 July 1993 to the judicial appointment system to take effect.

Mr. John M. Taylor: None.

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what specific consideration he is giving to the establishment of a judicial appointments commission.

Mr. John M. Taylor: None. It remains the Government's view that the establishment of such a commission would impair direct ministerial accountability to Parliament for judicial appointments. Moreover, the Government have yet to hear any convincing argument that the quality of those appointed by a Commission would be likely to be any better than that of those appointed under present arrangements.

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many of each category of judge in office on 31 March were *(a)* under 50, *(b)* 50 to 60, *(c)* 60 to 70 and *(d)* over 70 years of age.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The information relating to 31 March is not readily available. The information as at 6 July 1994 is set out in the table below. The age bands have been adjusted in the table to prevent double counting.

	Under 50	*50-59*	*60-70*	*71 and over*
Lords of Appeal in Ordinary	0	0	8	2
Supreme Court Judges	8	55	63	2
Circuit Judges	66	233	201	10
District Judges (including District Judges of the Principal Registry of the Family Division)	118	123	72	0

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many *(a)* High Court judges, *(b)* circuit judges and *(c)* district judges in office at 31 March were appointed (i) as a result of promotion within the judiciary, (ii) as practising barristers, (iii) as practising solicitors and (iv) after serving on the High Court family division.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Thirteen of the 95 High Court judges in office on 31 March 1994 were appointed as a result of promotion within the full-time judiciary. One was previously an Advocate-General at the Court of Justice of the European Communities. The remaining 81 were appointed from the Bar, including two barristers who were not in private practice. One Chancery division judge and five Queen's bench division judges had previously served as judges in the family division of the High Court.

The complete information relating to circuit judges is not readily available. Of the 510 circuit judges in office on 31 March 1994, 450 had been barristers and 60 had been solicitors: these figures include those who were appointed to the circuit bench from other full-time judicial offices.

No district judges in office on 31 March 1994 were appointed as a result of promotion within the full-time judiciary. Of the 308 district judges then in office, including district judges of the principal registry of the family division, 296 were appointed from solicitors, including academic and employed solicitors, and 12 from the practising Bar.

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what representations he has received following his proposals that judges will have to serve 20 years to qualify for a pension.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The requirement that judges should serve 20 years to qualify for full pension benefits is introduced by the Judicial Pensions and Retirement Act 1993. Responses to the proposals in the consultation paper issued before the passing of the 1993 Act were received from the following groups or individuals, in order of receipt:

The President of the Pension Appeal Tribunal
The Judge Advocate General
The President of Social Security Appeal Tribunals and Medical Appeal Tribunals
The Council of Her Majesty's Circuit Judges
Sir Bryan Roberts KCMG
The Senior Master, Queen's Bench Division
The Chief Metropolitan Stipendiary Magistrate
The President of Industrial Tribunals
The Senior District Judge, Family Division
His Honour Judge Micklem
The Association of District Judges

The Provincial Stipendiary Magistrates
The Judges' Council
The Top Salaries Review Body
The Chief Taxing Master
The Chief Chancery Master
The Master of the Court of Protection
The Chief Social Security Commissioner
The Chief Immigration Adjudicator
The General Council of the Bar
The Law Society

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many copies of his consultation paper "Developments in Judicial Appointments Procedures" were sent to laypersons, as defined in the paper itself.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Approximately 700 copies of the consultation paper have been distributed to organisations and individuals including the National Consumer Council, the National Association of Citizens' Advice Bureaux, the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Commission for Racial Equality. Copies were also sent to any who requested them from my Department. It is not possible to determine how many of these are not lawyers.

High Court Bench (Solicitors)

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many solicitors have been appointed to the High Court bench since section 71 of the Courts and Legal Services Act 1990 came into force.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Since section 71 of the Courts and Legal Services Act 1990 came into force on 1 January 1991, one solicitor, who was a serving circuit judge, has been appointed to the High Court bench.

Legal Training

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what responsibilities he has relating to legal training.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor's role is governed by the Courts and Legal Services Act 1990. Under that Act, amendments made by authorised bodies to their rules and regulations require the approval of the Lord Chancellor and the four designated judges. The Lord Chancellor is also required to approve applications under section 55 of the 1990 Act—preparation of probate papers—and, in doing so, must be satisfied about the arrangements for training.

Judicial Posts (Election)

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what plans he has to hold elections for any judicial posts.

Mr. John M. Taylor: None. The Government do not believe that election would provide a suitable basis for appointment or be compatible with the principle of judicial independence. The Lord Chancellor's proposals for developments in the judicial appointments system were set out in a recent consultation paper. I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to him on 4 July, *Official Report*, column *1*.

Privatisation

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department which organisations, agencies and other bodies relating to his departmental area of responsibility have been privatised since 1990; and what plans he has for further privatisation.

Mr. John M. Taylor: None. A number of the functions of the departments, agencies and other bodies for which the Lord Chancellor is responsible are currently under review. Privatisation will be considered as one of a range of possible options. At present, no firm plans have been made concerning any of the functions under review.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Nigeria (Extradition)

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the immigration or residency status of Colonel Tony Nyiam and Great Ogboru, formerly of Nigeria; what requests he received in respect of the extradition of those individuals following the failed military coup in Nigeria in 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: It is not our normal policy to disclose information relating to a person's immigration status, but no extradition requests in respect of these two individuals have been received.

May Inquiry

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the cost of the May inquiry into the Guildford and Woolwich bombings.

Mr. Maclean: The total reported costs of this inquiry, as at 7 July, is £2,150,000.

Ms Emma Humphreys

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will ask the Parole Board to reconsider its position regarding a release date for Ms Humphreys;

(2) what representation he has received concerning the case of Ms Emma Humphreys who is currently serving a life sentence at Holloway prison;

(3) what consultations he has had with the Parole Board about its recent refusal to grant Ms Humphreys a date for release or to move her to an open prison.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: It is not the practice of the Secretary of State to consult the independent Parole Board when the board decides not to recommend the release or the transfer to open prison conditions of a prisoner serving the mandatory life sentence for murder. The Secretary of State has not consulted the Parole Board in the case of Ms Humphreys and sees no grounds for asking the Parole Board to reconsider its recent decision in her case. A further Parole Board review of her suitability for release will begin in May 1995.

From time to time, the Secretary of State has received representations about the safety of Ms Humphreys's conviction for murder. Those representations have not provided sufficient grounds for him to refer her case to the

Court of Appeal under section 17 of the Criminal Appeal Act 1968. Representations made by Ms Humphreys concerning her release on life licence were considered by the Parole Board when it last reviewed her case in May 1994.

Closed Circuit Television

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) in how many towns and cities there are known to be proposals to introduce closed circuit television for crime prevention;

(2) how many city centres now have closed circuit television for crime prevention; and what is his assessment of its effectiveness.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The most recent information available indicates that across the United Kingdom there are 220 CCTV schemes either in operation or planned. Local assessments show that CCTV systems have been extremely effective in reducing crime and the fear of crime in a number of areas, particularly when they have formed part of a package of crime prevention measures. A current Home Office study of the effectiveness of the Birmingham city centre system is being extended to include schemes in other areas.

Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to diminish waiting times for asylum seekers.

Mr. Charles Wardle: With the implementation of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993 last July, procedures have been streamlined and decision times reduced for applications received after implementation, which are being given priority. The new procedures and the level of applications are being closely monitored.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what plans he has made for the Vietnamese refugees in response to the Home Office report on refugees and asylum seekers;

(2) what plans he has made in response to the Home Office report on refugees and asylum seekers.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The report of the first stage of the research into refugee settlement, which is currently being revised, does not contain specific policy recommendations. The report on the second stage, which includes Vietnamese refugees within its scope, is being prepared and has not yet been seen by Ministers. When completed, any findings which might have policy implications will receive careful consideration.

Smoke Detectors

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many fires in *(a)* Wales, *(b)* Scotland, *(c)* Northern Ireland, *(d)* England and *(e)* the United Kingdom as a whole occurred in houses or buildings which did not have smoke detectors in the last year for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The year 1994 is the first year in which the Home Office has collected data on the presence or absence of a smoke alarm in a fire attended by a local authority fire brigade. Before 1994, the Home Office collected only whether or not the fire was discovered by a smoke alarm.

Uninsured Drivers

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of those convicted of driving without insurance received a fine of £5,000 last year.

Mr. Maclean: The information available to me shows that no fines of £5,000 were imposed during 1992 for driving without insurance. Figures for 1993 are not yet available.

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many drivers have been disqualified from driving after having been convicted of driving without insurance in each of the last five years.

Mr. Maclean: The following table gives the available information which relates to the number of convictions for driving without insurance in England and Wales, for which disqualification from driving was imposed. The number of persons involved is likely to be less because some may have been convicted for more than one of these offences.

Disqualifications imposed for the offence of driving without insurance

Year	*Number*
1988	18,045
1989	18,747
1990	17,569
1991	19,531
1992	20,727

Figures for 1993 are not yet available.

Prison Population

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* convicted and *(b)* remand prisoners are currently in custody from Wales (i) by county, (ii) by sex and (iii) in total.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewes to Mr. Allan Rogers, dated 12 July 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Questions asking how many (a) convicted and (b) remand prisoners are currently in custody from Wales (i) by county, (ii) by sex and (iii) in total.

The available provisional information is for 31 May 1994 and is given in the attached table. It relates to the population in Prison Service establishments in England and Wales who were recorded centrally as being first committed to custody by a Welsh court. Those persons for whom no court first committing was recorded accounted for five per cent. of the total population in custody, excluding those held in police cells and non-criminal prisoners.

Population in Prison Service establishments in England and Wales on 31 May 1994 committed by courts in Wales[1]

County of Welsh court first committing	*Numbers held in a Prison Service establishment in England and Wales*	
	Remand	*Sentenced*
Males		
Clwyd	77	228
Dyfed	70	108
Gwent	87	255
Gwynedd	41	134

County of Welsh court first committing	Numbers held in a Prison Service establishment in England and Wales	
	Remand	Sentenced
Mid Glamorgan	110	630
South Glamorgan	87	220
West Glamorgan	64	147
Powys	93	242
Total	629	1,964
Females		
Clwyd	—	8
Dyfed	5	4
Gwent	3	4
Gwynedd	1	4
Mid Glamorgan	3	17
South Glamorgan	1	10
West Glamorgan	4	6
Powys	1	10
Total	18	63

[1] Provisional figures.

Chief Superintendent Rank

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations he has received *(a)* in favour of and *(b)* against retaining the rank of chief superintendent within the police force; if he will make it his policy to retain the rank of chief superintendent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Government's decision to abolish the rank of chief superintendent and reallocate the range of current responsibilities of that rank within a restructured single superintendent rank is opposed by the superintendents' associations. Her Majesty's chief inspector of constabulary supports the reform of the superintending rank, and the Association of Chief Police Officers favours the retention of the rank of chief inspector rather than that of chief superintendent.

Privatisation

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which organisations, agencies and other bodies relating to his departmental area of responsibility have been privatised since 1990; and what plans he has for further privatisation.

Mr. Howard: DTELS—formerly the Directorate of Telecommunications—was sold to National Telecommunications Ltd. on 1 March 1994. Epsom, Kempton Park and Sandown Park racecourses were sold by the Horserace Betting Levy Board on 29 April 1994 to Racecourse Holdings Trust. There are no firm plans for further privatisations.

Young Offenders

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what provision he plans for the accommodation of young offenders in Wales following the decision to send offenders aged 12 years and over to secure units and to cease to send boys aged 15 and 16 years to prison; if he will make it his policy that such offenders will not be sent outside Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 11 July 1994]:* Five new secure training centres are to be established for the purpose of detaining those 12 to 14-year-old juveniles who may be sentenced to serve the new secure training order. The centres will hold offenders sentenced by the courts in England and Wales, but on present plans, none will be located in Wales.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales has already announced a grant amounting to £5·1 million to meet the capital cost of a new local authority secure unit at Neath in west Glamorgan. In due course, it is intended that the unit should accommodate inter alios most 15 and 16-year-old juveniles residing in Wales who may in future be remanded to local authority accommodation with a security requirement instead of to a Prison Service establishment, as well as those whose detention is ordered under section 53 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 and who it is decided should be held in child care establishments.

Police Training

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what additional resources the Government intend to make available to the police service to enable adequate training to be given to all police staff as a result of the enactments of the Police and Magistrates' Courts Bill and the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 11 July 1994]:* It is for individual chief officers to arrange, out of normal police funds, for the training of their officers, having regard to any relevant changes in legislation. Any requirements for centrally produced training material will be considered within the Police Training Council.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what were the amounts spent by the police on training in all areas in each of the last five years at 1990 constant prices.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 11 July 1994]:* I regret that this information is not available.

ENVIRONMENT

Council Homes

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 28 June, *Official Report*, column *492*, what has been *(a)* the total number of newly built council homes and *(b)* that number as a percentage of the stock, in each council area for the period since 1 April 1979.

Sir George Young: A table has been deposited in the Library showing the cumulative total of housebuilding completions for each local authority in England as reported by them for the period between 1 April 1979 and 31 March 1994. The table also shows this housebuilding as a percentage of the local authority dwelling stock reported as at 1 April 1993, and as estimated for 1 April 1979. Housing associations are now the main providers of new social housing.

Local Government Commission

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much has been spent by the Local Government Commission to date on opinion polling; and what assessment he has made of the usefulness of such polling.

Mr. Curry: The cost of opinion polling carried out for the Local Government Commission during the course of its reviews is a matter for the commission itself, within its overall budget. It is also for the commission itself to determine the value of those public opinion surveys.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much the Local Government Commission has spent on direct communication with the public where it invites replies via freepost.

Mr. Curry: This is a matter for the Local Government Commission.

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what formula the Local Government Commission uses to assess the intangible costs and benefits of local government reconstruction in North Yorkshire.

Mr. Baldry: Section 3 of the revised policy guidance which my Department issued to the Local Government Commission in November 1993 gives advice on the treatment of intangible costs and benefits. How the commission incorporates this advice into its recommendations on particular review areas is a matter for it.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many hours per week Sir John Banham devotes to the Local Government Commission.

Mr. Curry: The time commitment of the chairman varies from month to month, according to the demands of the review timetable. He works on average two days a week.

Cemfuel

Mr. Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy prior to the issue of any variation order to authorisation AI 2813 of 17 November 1993 made under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and issued for the burning of Cemfuel that he will engage in consultations with the cement company.

Mr. Atkins: I am advised by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution that the authorisation AI 2813 relates to the burning of Cemfuel at Castle Cement's Ribblesdale works. The HMIP is in consultation with the company over a variation to this authorisation. No variation has yet been issued.

Mr. Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment in what circumstances an existing authorisation for the burning of Cemfuel might be subject to a variation order from Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution such that the burning of the fuel would again be put on a trial basis.

Mr. Atkins: An existing authorisation for the burning of Cemfuel might be subject to a variation order from Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution to put the burning onto a trial basis if, in the light of up-to-date experience, the conditions attached to the authorisation were seen not to provide sufficient information to monitor the environmental effects of the burning.

Biological Diversity

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the outcome of the second session of the intergovernmental committee of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity held in Nairobi in June.

Mr. Atkins: The second meeting of the intergovernmental committee of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity took place in Nairobi from 20 June to 1 July 1994. Progress was made to prepare for the first meeting of the conference of the parties to be held in Nassau, the Bahamas from 28 November to 9 December 1994. The meeting reached consensus on important administrative and procedural issues for the conference of the parties, including most of the rules of procedure, a set of administrative financial rules and criteria for an open competition between organisations to host the permanent secretariat. Preliminary discussions took place on other substantive issues that the conference of the parties will consider, including the financial mechanism, biosafety, a clearing house mechanism and the scientific and technical subsidiary body.

Waste

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the proportionate contribution of each category of waste arising to the total waste generated in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Atkins: The table shows the best available estimates of waste arisings, by sector. Most of the estimates are very approximate, and relate to the period around 1990. It is not possible to update them on an annual basis.

Estimated total annual waste arisings by sector

United Kingdom

Sector	*Annual arisings (million tonnes)*	*Date of Estimate*	*Status*[1]	*Source*	*Percentage of total arisings*
Agriculture	[2]80	1991	NC	MAFF	21
Mining and quarrying					
colliery and slate	51	1990	NC	DOE	13
china clay	27	1990	NC	DOE	7
quarrying[3]	30	1989/90	NC	QI[4]	8
Sewage sludge[5]	35	1992	PC	MAFF/WSA[6]	9
Dredged spoils[7]	29	1992	PC	MAFF	7

Sector	Annual arisings (million tonnes)	Date of Estimate	Status[1]	Source	Percentage of total arisings
Household[2]	20	—	C	DOE	5
Commercial[9]	15	—	C	DOE	4
Demolition and construction[10]	32	190	C	DOE	8
Industrial					
blast furnace and steel slag	6	1990	C	DOE	2
power station ash	13	1990	C	DOE	3
other[11]	50	—	C	DOE	13
Total	388				

[1]NC=Not classed as a controlled waste under the terms of the Environmental Protection Act (Controlled Waste Regulations) 1992; PC=sewage sludge is classed as a controlled waste as defined in the Environmental Protection Act (Controlled Waste Regulations) 1992 except when disposed of on agricultural land or within the curtilage of sewage works at which it arises; dredged spoils are classed as a controlled waste when licensed for disposal under the Food and Environmental Protection Act. See Schedule 6 of the Collection and Disposal of Waste Regulation, 1988. C=controlled wastes under the terms of the Environmental Protection Act (Controlled Waste Regulations) 1992.

[2]Refers to wastes from housed livestock only. Wet weight.

[3]Excludes wastes from opencast coal mining. Includes wastes from primary aggregate extraction comprising the overburden and any contaminating materials found in the quarry, most of which is used as infill when the quarry is abandoned. Waste arisings are estimated at 10 per cent. of annual aggregate production.

[4]Quarries inspectorate.

[5]Wet weight arisings, estimated on the basis of 4 per cent. solid content on average.

[6]Water Services Association.

[7]The data are for all United Kingdom waters, ie, external and internal waters.

[8]Estimated maximum value of 20 million tonnes which includes up to 5 million tonnes from civic Amenity Sites.

[9]Rounded to nearest 5 million tonnes, of which approximately 5 million tonnes is wastes normally collected from retail shops and small commercial premises by Local Authorities.

[10]Refers only to hard materials from construction sites, eg, brick and concrete and road planings.

[11]Rounded to nearest 10 million tonnes.

Local Councillors

Mr. Benton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment under what circumstances it is possible for a person to be an employee of a local authority to which he is, or may consider becoming, an elected member.

Mr. Baldry: Under the provisions of section 80 of the Local Government Act 1972 a person who is employed by a local authority is disqualified from being elected to, or being a member of, that local authority. Under section 116, a person cannot be employed by an authority for 12 months after he or she ceases to be a member.

Sustainable Development

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the degree of influence which the United Nations Commission for Sustainable Development has on *(a)* the World bank and *(b)* The International Monetary Fund.

Mr. Atkins: At its meeting in May, the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development agreed to aim at a more fruitful co-operation with the Bretton Woods institutions to promote sustainable development through sound macro-economic policies and a favourable international economic environment.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will urge the World Trade Organisation to allow the United Nations Commission for Sustainable Development to be represented at meetings of its committee on trade and the environment.

Mr. Atkins: The United Kingdom fully supports the case for admitting the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development as an observer to the committee on trade and environment, to be established in the World Trade Organisation.

Housing Association Grants

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to amplify his advice to local planning authorities on sustainable development contained in PPG13; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: My right hon. Friend proposes to publish a good practice guide to PPG13 later this year. Together with the Department of Transport, my Department will also commission and publish research designed to improve our understanding of the relationship between transport and land use and will monitor the implementation of the policies contained in PPG13 through development plans, local transport policies and individual decisions.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what steps his Department will take to mitigate the effect on tenants on low incomes of changes in housing association grant rates for 1995-96;

(2) if he will make a statement regarding the changes in housing association grant rates for 1995-96.

Sir George Young: Decisions on the housing association grant rates that will apply in 1995-96 have not yet been taken. Before reaching a decision, I shall carefully consider the implications of lower grant rates on a range of issues, including the likely impact on the rents that tenants have to pay.

Mobile Homes

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many complaints he has received about the operation of the Mobile Homes Act 1983 through harassment by landlords.

Sir George Young: From time to time, this Department receives letters from mobile home residents alleging harassment by site owners. Although we do not keep a numerical record of such complaints, they do not form a significant proportion of the correspondence we receive on mobile home issues. Harassment of an occupier of a mobile home can constitute a criminal offence under the Protection from Eviction Act 1977.

Environmental Protection Group (Newsletter)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he published his Department's most recent environmental protection group research newsletter; how many copies were printed; at what cost; and to whom it has been distributed or made available.

Mr. Atkins: The 1994-95 environmental protection group research newsletter was first published in April 1994. To date, 800 copies have been printed, at a cost of £578·13. The newsletter is available on request and has been sent to organisations within both the public and private sector as well as to individual members of the public.

Council Tax

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will announce a decision regarding council tax liability for severely mentally impaired people.

Mr. Curry: We are still considering this matter.

National Forest Strategy

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how he proposes to implement the national forest strategy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The national forest is an ambitious and imaginative environmental project to create a new forest in the heart of the country, in an area where much of the land has been despoiled by mineral working. The consultation exercise carried out earlier this year by the Countryside Commission confirmed that there is overwhelming local support for the venture. I am now announcing my intention to set up a new lead body to take the project forward.

The establishment of this body marks a milestone towards achieving our manifesto commitment to development of the national forest. The forest will bring many benefits to the area through improved landscapes and other environmental benefits, economic and leisure opportunities. It is an excellent example of sustainable development—environmental improvement which will also bring economic regeneration. In the longer term the forest will provide a national asset of the same kind as the ancient forest of Dean or the New forest, to be enjoyed by future generations.

The Countryside Commission national forest development team has provided a firm foundation for the new body to build on. The creation of the forest will require the participation of several partners, including the Forestry Commission, the Countryside Commission, local authorities and private landowners. A new independent body will be able to co-ordinate and promote new partnerships and act as a catalyst for local and national initiatives in the forest area.

The body will be a company limited by guarantee. The members of the company will be myself and my right hon. Friend the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. We shall appoint a chairman and directors in due course. It is my intention to seek parliamentary approval, through an amendment to section 153 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, to provide financial support for the company's administration and special project initiatives.

Our long-term aim for the forest is to create new woodlands covering about one third of the 200 square mile area. All the planting in the forest will be voluntary. There is no question of compulsory land purchase. In addition to forest planting, the body will encourage the development of leisure and recreation, rural enterprise, habitat protection, restoration of mineral workings and community involvement. These ventures will be funded through the body's project funds and through existing forestry and other grant mechanisms.

Compulsory Purchase Order (Hastings)

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he hopes to announce his decision on the Hastings Central Cricket and Recreation Ground Compulsory Purchase Order 1993.

Mr. Baldry: My right hon. Friend announced today his decision to confirm the compulsory purchase order and to issue the associated certificate relating to exchange land.

Urban Development Corporations

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what levels of borrowing have been undertaken by each urban development corporation in each year since 1981.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 11 July 1994]:* The level of borrowing undertaken by each urban development corporation in each year since 1981 is as follows:

Urban development corporation	*Amount (£)*	*Year*
Birmingham Heartlands	Nil	—
Black Country	Nil	—
Bristol	Nil	—
Central Manchester	350,000	1992-93
Leeds	Nil	—
London Docklands	Nil	—
Merseyside	184,700	1982-83
Merseyside	130,000	1983-84
Merseyside	125,000	1984-85
Merseyside	605,000	1985-86
Merseyside	55,000	1986-87
Plymouth	Nil	—
Sheffield	Nil	—
Teesside	276,500	1987-88
Trafford Park	Nil	—
Tyne and Wear	Nil	—

Urban and Regeneration Expenditure

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the total amount of urban and regeneration expenditure listed for each separate urban programme area in each year since 1980-81 at *(a)* cash prices and *(b)* current prices.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 4 July 1994]:* Tables showing urban programme expenditure in cash and current price terms will be placed in the Library.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Contracting Out

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will report on the progress of the private sector advisory forum; and what further plans he has for strategic contracting out of civil service functions.

Mr. Waldegrave: The private sector forum met on 8 July to discuss issues emerging from the competing for quality programme. The forum provided an opportunity for the Government and the private sector to exchange experience on the progress of the competing for quality programme so far. No individual market tests were discussed, nor any specifics of Departments' future plans. We will be considering how to take these discussions forward with the private sector. I do not prejudge whether an activity should be contracted out strategically. For each activity which is examined in the competing for quality programme, a number of options, including abolition, privatisation, contracting out, market testing with an in-house bid, and securing in-house efficiencies are considered.

Efficiency Unit Scrutiny

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he has received the report of the efficiency unit scrutiny of Government research establishments; and if he will ensure its publication before the end of July.

Mr. Waldegrave: The report on the efficiency scrutiny of civil public sector research establishments was published yesterday, 11 July. Copies have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when the full report of the efficiency unit's scrutiny of the use of consultants in Government Departments will be published; and whether the unit intends to draw up good practice guidance for Departments along the lines of that issued recently by the Audit Commission to local authorities.

Mr. Waldegrave: The report of the efficiency unit's scrutiny on the Government's use of external consultants will be published shortly. It is a key task of the efficiency unit to disseminate "best practice" to Departments and agencies, and the scrutiny is likely to make recommendations which will assist in sharing and promoting good practice in the purchasing and managing of external consultancy.

Privatisation

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster which organisations, agencies and other bodies relating to his departmental area of responsibility have been privatised since 1990; and what plans he has for further privatisation.

Mr. Waldegrave: None of the organisations, agencies or other bodies under my departmental responsibility has been privatised since 1990. Plans for privatisation involving my departments will be considered on their merits as part of a prior options exercise and the results will be announced as appropriate.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Macedonia

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the next steps that he will propose to the European Union for a resolution of the crisis in Greek-Macedonian relationships.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Member states of the European Union regularly discuss the dispute between Greece and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. We support the European Commission's action in referring to the European Court of Justice the unjustified trade restrictions placed by Greece on the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. We were disappointed by the Court's decision not to indicate interim measures, although the main case continues. We support the United Nations mediation process under Mr. Vance, and urge both parties to re-engage constructively in negotiations with him.

UNESCO

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what the cost of rejoining UNESCO might be if *(a)* the United Kingdom rejoined without the United States of America and *(b)* the United Kingdom and the United States of America both rejoined; what the benefits of rejoining might be; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The annual cost of resumed United Kingdom membership of UNESCO would be around £8 million if the United States also rejoined, or £11 million if it did not. The principal benefit to the United Kingdom of rejoining UNESCO would be the enhancement of our ability to participate in the work of the organisation, but any benefit must be weighed against the financial costs. We keep the issue of resumption of membership under close review. No decision has yet been reached.

Hong Kong

Mr. MacShane: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to offer protection to critics of the Government of China currently resident in Hong Kong after 1997.

Mr. Goodlad: The Sino-British joint declaration, which is a legally binding international treaty, provides that the rights and freedoms provided for by Hong Kong's present laws shall be maintained after 1 July 1997. Freedom of speech, freedom of the press and the freedom to demonstrate will remain protected.

Mr. Han Dong Fan

Mr. MacShane: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will meet Mr. Han Dong Fan, chairman of the independent Chinese trade union movement, on his forthcoming visit to Britain.

Mr. Goodlad: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has no plans to do so.

Social Development Summit

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what will be the United Kingdom Government's objectives at the world summit on social development.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Our objectives for the world summit on social development are to strengthen effective international cooperation and co-ordination around the three core issues of the summit, which are:

(i) the enhancement of social integration
(ii) the alleviation and reduction of poverty
(iii) the expansion of productive employment

Falkland Islands

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Government of the Falkland Islands about the ratification of the non-proliferation treaty of Tlatelolco.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Kingdom ratified the two additional protocols to the treaty for the prohibition of nuclear weapons in Latin America, treaty of Tlatelolco, on 11 December 1969. Under article 1 of additional protocol 1, the United Kingdom agreed to apply various articles of the treaty, including article 1—denuclearisation in respect of warlike purposes—in those territories for which it is internationally responsible within the treaty zone. This includes the Falkland Islands.

Although there is no nuclear activity in the Falkland Islands, the Legislative Council of the islands, as required by the protocol, passed a Bill entitled "The Nuclear Safeguards Ordinance 1993" on 16 November 1993. This ordinance will give effect, in the Falklands, to an agreement between the United Kingdom, the IAEA and Euratom for the application of safeguards as envisaged in the treaty of Tlatelolco.

Privatisation

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which organisations, agencies and other bodies relating to his departmental area of responsibility have been privatised since 1990; and what plans he has for further privatisation.

Mr. Goodlad: We have decided to privatise the Crown Agents for Overseas Governments and Administrations as an independent foundation (Cm 2376) and to study options for the future ownership of the Natural Resources Institute. A "Prior Options" study of Wilton Park executive agency will commence in September 1994.

EU Enlargement

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list any provisions of the treaty for enlargement of the European Union signed in Corfu on 24 June which change the powers, constitution, or procedures of the institutions of the European Communities other than by changes of numbers.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The following provisions in the treaty of accession change the powers, constitution or procedures of the institutions of the European Communities other than by numerical change to allow for the representation of the new member states in these institutions:

Article 2(2) of the treaty gives the Council (acting unanimously) power to decide upon indispensable adjustments in the case that not all the applicant states deposit their instruments of ratification in due time.

Article 12 of the Act of Accession alters the second paragraph of the EC Treaty and the corresponding Articles of the other Community Treaties, to give the Council (acting unanimously) power to determine the order in which the office of the President shall be held by each member state.

Articles 154, 155, 156 and 157 of the Act of Accession give the European Parliament, the Council, the Commission and the Court of Justice respectively, powers to make such adaptations to their rules of procedure as are rendered necessary by accession.

Article 4 of Protocol 8 to the Act of Accession gives the European Parliament the power to verify the credentials of representatives elected to the Parliament in the Member States in the period between ratification of the Treaty and its entry into force.

Clayoquot Sound (Conservation)

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made on behalf of the United Kingdom Government to the Government of Canada, concerning conservation in Clayoquot sound.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 8 July 1994]:* The decision on land use in the Clayoquot sound area of Vancouver Island was for the Government of British Columbia to make. The Canadian Government and the British Columbia authorities are well aware of public concern in the United Kingdom about logging in the Clayoquot sound region.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Latin America

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretaryof State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what study Her Majesty's Government have been making with the European Commission of late to the expansion of waterways allowing Bolivia access to the Atlantic; and what help is being given through EC sources or directly.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Mercosur countries—Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay—and Bolivia are working together to design the Hidrovias project to re-condition the navigation and port facilities along a stretch of waterways between Caceres in Brazil and Nueva Palmira in Uruguay. They have approached the European Community for assistance in implementation. Following the agreement between the Hidrovia intergovernmental committee and the Inter-American Development bank, the Commission is considering a request to meet the costs of technical feasibility studies for development of ports, incluing Puerto Bush and Puerto Quijarro in Bolivia.

We have not been involved in these activities bilaterally, but will play an active role in discussions in Brussels of the proposals.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in what EC programmes to transfer technology to Latin America the United Kingdom is participating.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Latin America benefits from both DG XII's life science and technology for developing countries programme and the international scientific co-operation initiative. United Kingom laboratories, principally in universities and Govenrment centres, participate actively in both programmes. In both cases, the focus is on joint scientific research.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the value of EC aid to Latin America, earmarked for the relief of poverty in cities.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: For 1994, the total value of the European Community's budget lines for "Technical and Financial Assistance" and for food aid for Latin America is 232·5 mecu, about £182 million. Technical and financial assistance in Latin American developing countries includes operations concerning the environment, women, drug abuse control, democratisation, regional co-operation and disaster prevention and reconstruction measures.

The Commission does not earmark funds to specific sectors but high priority is given to aid projects designed to alleviate urban poverty. Projects of this kind are at present under preparation for Brazil, Colombia, Peru and Guatemala. Projects for Brazil and Guatemala have recently been approved.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the value of the Alpha programme, designed to update the curriculum of Latin American universities; and what is the value of the United Kingdom's contribution to the programme.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The ALFA programme is worth 40 mecu, about £31 million, over five years, of which 32 mecu, about £25 million, will come from the European Community economic co-operation programme with Latin America. The United Kingdom contributes to this by means of its contributions to the Community budget.

Brazil

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the value of (i) British and (ii) EC aid to anti-pollution projects on *(a)* the Sao Paulo river, *(b)* the Tieté river cleaning project and (iii) the Nitecoy bay cleaning project; what consideration has been given to the public health and environmental impact of both projects; and what encouragement has been given to private capital in Europe to invest in the projects.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: There is no British bilateral or European Community aid to any pollution projects on the Sao Paulo river, Tieté river or in Nitecoy bay. Several bodies encourage private investment in the region, including: the European Community investment partners scheme, the European Investment bank and the Commonwealth Development Corporation. Neither the Overseas Development Administration nor the European Commission is aware of any application to these schemes for financing projects in those areas.

Indo-British Forestry Initiative

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will place in the Library the papers to be presented from the United Kingdom to the Indo-British forestry initiative workshop to be held in New Delhi in July.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 8 July 1994]:* Copies will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses shortly. I will also include the papers being presented to the workshop by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation, which were prepared with British assistance.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Luxury Cars (Italian Tax)

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what representations he has made to the Italian Government on the subject of the taxation of luxury cars in Italy;

(2) what representations he has made to the European Commission on the subject of the taxation of luxury cars in Italy;

(3) what representations he has received on the effect of the Italian taxation system on exports of luxury cars to Italy.

Mr. Needham: Officials have made written and oral representations in Brussels in support of a formal complaint to the Commission by a British car manufacturer. The British embassy in Rome has raised the issue with the Italian Government. We have made clear our willingness to discuss further action to help British car manufacturers affected by the Italian tax.

Import Restrictions

Mr. Cohen: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what non-military products from eastern and central European countries are subject to restrictions on imports into the European Union in the form of *(a)* quotas, *(b)* tariffs, *(c)* certificates of quality or *(d)* other requirements.

Mr. Needham: Details of the trading arrangements between the Community and the eastern and central European countries are set out in the association agreements and their annexes and protocols concluded between the EC and Poland, Hungary, the Czech and Slovak Republics, Romania and Bulgaria. Copies of these agreements have been placed in the Library of the House.

In addition, anti-dumping remedies exist against certain imports of chemicals, pharmaceuticals, iron and steel products and polyester fibres. There are also Community-wide tariff quotas in place on imports of certain steel products from the Czech and Slovak Republics. Goods supplied to the Community market are subject, product for product, to common testing, certification, standardisation and safety requirements as appropriate and necessary whether imported or of domestic EC manufacture.

Free Trade

Mr. Cohen: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what progress is being made on the development of free trade between the European Union and *(a)* Russia, *(b)* other CIS states, *(c)* the Baltic republics, *(d)* the Visegrad group, *(e)* Romania, *(f)* Bulgaria, *(g)* Slovenia and *(h)* Albania.

Mr. Needham: The European Union recently signed partnership and co-operation agreements with Russia and Ukraine. Each of those agreements provides for the parties to examine in 1998 whether circumstances allow the beginning of negotiations on the establishment of a free trade area between the EU and Russia and Ukraine respectively. Similar agreements now under negotiation with other republics of the former Soviet Union are not so specific but allow for development of the trade provisions as circumstances permit. Negotiations for free trade agreements have recently been concluded with Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. These should enter into force on 1 January 1995.

The trade provisions of the association agreements signed between the EU and the Visegrad countries, Romania and Bulgaria envisage free trade with all those countries by 2002 at the latest. The EU is committed to opening its market first, and has put into effect a number of further concessions agreed at the European Council in Copenhagen in June 1993. From 1 January 1995, nearly all imports of industrial products from the Visegrad countries will enter the EU without restrictions.

The EU will shortly begin negotiations with Slovenia for a similar association agreement with free trade as one of its aims. The EU has a bilateral trade and co-operation agreement with Albania. There are no plans at present to go beyond this by entering into a free trade agreement.

Universal Postal Service

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 5 July, *Official Report*, column 116, which body at Community level will define the list of reserved services made available to the operators of the universal postal service under the proposed reserved services directive of the European Union.

Mr. McLoughlin: I understand that the European Commission has not yet reached a view on whether the legal basis for its proposed directive defining the set of services which may be reserved at national level should be article 90 or article 100A of the treaty of Rome. In either event, we would expect the European Council and the European Parliament to play a full part in the process.

Seville Expo '92

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the final cost to Her Majesty's Government of the Seville Expo '92; and if he will separately identify costs and contingent liabilities consequent upon the liquidation of Joanna Bickerton Associates.

Mr. Needham: The final costs have yet to be settled. As stated in my answer of 3 May 1994, *Official Report*, column *415*, I will write to the hon. Member when they are. The final costs will include the ex gratia payments of £220,307 made by the Department, without any admission of liability, to the liquidator of Joanne Bickerton Associates and certain suppliers of Joanna Bickerton Associates.

Chinese Silk and Silk Products (Imports)

Mr. Duncan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) when he expects to be able to renegotiate the size of the United Kingdom's EC quota for the import of silk and silk products from China;

(2) what representations he has received about the size of the United Kingdom's EC quota for the import of silk and silk products from China;

(3) what plans he has to increase the size of the United Kingdom's EC quota for the imports of silk and silk products from China;

(4) what percentage of the EC's imports of silk and silk products from China is allocated to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Needham: The silk quotas are set and allocated on an EC-wide basis: no member state has a pre-determined share. Traditional silk importers throughout the EC receive an allocation based on a percentage of their trade in 1992, while newcomers receive a small fixed amount. Following over 2,000 complaints about the quotas from United Kingdom traders, the Government have been pressing hard for an increase in the levels for this year and the Commission is expected to make a proposal to this effect shortly. For 1995, the Commission has already opened negotiations with China for a bilateral agreement on silk imports as part of which the Government will be looking for a significant increase in future access levels.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his policy on answering parliamentary questions which seek information previously published in the monthly review of external trade statistics.

Mr. Needham: The CSO is resuming publication of the monthly review of external trade statistics, this month, as "Business Monitor MM24". All the statistical series published in it are available from the Central Statistical Office's central shared database, access to which is available from the Library of the House. The policy on questions seeking information published in the monthly review will be consistent with that for other publications which are available in the Library of the House, or whose contents are available on the central shared database.

Fur Imports Ban

Mr. Morley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what documentation his Department has received from the Canadian Government in support of their application for a one-year suspension of the fur import ban provided for in EC Regulation No. 3254;

(2) if he will give details of the representations he has received during the last year from *(a)* the Canadian Government, *(b)* the Canadian fur trade and *(c)* the British fur trade regarding EC Regulation No. 3254 banning the import of certain furs;

(3) how many times he or his officials have met members of *(a)* the Canadian Government and *(b)* the Canadian fur trade during the past year to discuss the effects of EC Regulation No. 3254.

Mr. Needham: EC Regulation 3254/91, which was due to come into force on 1 January 1995, has been suspended for one year. Work is continuing in the international standards organisation on a trap standard. Ministers and officials in my Department regularly meet our Canadian opposite numbers. We have met the Canadian Government over the last year on a number of occasions to discuss trade issues, including the EC leghold trap regulation. In the course of those contacts, Canada provided information on the progress made in replacing leghold traps with alternative trapping methods. The Government took this information into account when preparing the United Kingdom position on the Commission proposal to suspend the regulation. Neither the Canadian nor the United Kingdom fur trade has made any representations to my Department during the last year.

Health Care Sector Group

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth, 4 July, *Official Report*, column *10*, who will serve on the health care sector group; and when he expects it to be operational.

Mr. Needham: I intend that membership should be drawn from a wide cross section of the health care sector. I hope to appoint a chairman in the near future and that the group will be operational in the autumn.

Nuclear Plants (Ukraine)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what examination his Department, consultants to his Department or the Atomic Energy Authority has re-conducted of the analysis conducted by the European bank for reconstruction and development for the G7 nations into the future visibility and capacity of Goskomatom, Ukraine's civil nuclear operator, safely to manage its nuclear plants; and if he will arrange for a copy of the EBRD study to be placed in the Library.

Mr. Eggar: At the request of the G7, the EBRD and the World bank carried out a joint fact-finding mission to Kiev to assess the options for, and cost of, improving nuclear safety in Ukraine. It would not be normal practice to place a report of such a mission in the Library of the House.

Clean Technology (South Africa)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to promote environmentally clean technology on his forthcoming visit to South Africa; and whether any representatives of the British Nuclear Industrial Forum will accompany him on his trip.

Mr. Needham: My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has no plans specifically to promote environmental clean technology on his forthcoming visit to South Africa. No representatives of the British nuclear industrial forum will accompany him on his trip, although two member companies will be represented.

Electrical Goods (Imports)

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the amount of electrical goods imported in each of the years 1989 to 1994 from *(a)* Japan, *(b)* Taiwan, *(c)* South Korea and *(d)* Singapore.

Mr. Needham: The information is in the following table.

Value of Electrical Goods Imported into the United Kingdom (£ millions, current prices)

	1989	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*	*January to April 1994*
Japan	2,983	2,801	2,897	3,058	3,358	1,176
Taiwan	498	429	460	565	751	289
South Korea	408	313	287	337	477	157
Singapore	510	583	686	662	1,109	357

Note:
Electrical goods are classified as heading 716 and divisions 75-77 of the Standard International Trade Classification.
Source: Her Majesty's Customs and Excise.

Futons (Safety)

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the risk to health of the continued use of boric acid powder as a fire retardant in futons.

Mr. McLoughlin: A review of the scientific literature has been undertaken by the Department of Health and no evidence has been found that suggests that boric acid used as a fire retardant in a futon presents a risk to the user.

Trade Statistics

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish a table showing imports and exports of finished consumer goods, intermediate goods and capital goods each quarter since the second quarter of 1992, distinguishing between EEC and non-EEC countries.

Mr. Needham: The information requested is stored in the Central Statistical Office's central shared database, access to which is available from the Library of the House.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he will publish a table showing imports and exports of semi-finished and finished manufactures from and to each EEC country for each quarter since the second quarter of 1992.

Mr. Needham: Information for 1992 is published in "Business Monitor MM20" whilst information for 1993 is published in "Business Monitor MQ20". Copies of these publications are available from the Library of the House.

Imported Retail Goods

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will undertake a survey to find out *(a)* the proportion of non-food, non-fuel, non-alcoholic goods sold retail which are imported and *(b)* the effect movements in the exchange rate have had on prices.

Mr. Sainsbury: No.

Privatisation

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the President of the Board of Trade which organisations, agencies and other bodies relating to his departmental area of responsibility have been privatised since 1990; and what plans he has for further privatisation.

Mr. Eggar: Since 1990, the following privatisations have been undertaken by the Department of Trade and Industry and the former Department of Energy:

1990 Sale of 12 Regional Electricity Companies
1991 Sale of National Power and PowerGen
1992 Sale of British Technology Group

Plans for future privatisations are as follows:

(i) On 17 February this year, I announced the Government's intention to privatise the commercial activities of the Atomic Energy Authority, *Official Report*, columns 922-924.

(ii) My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade announced plans for the future of the National Engineering Laboratory, Laboratory of the Government Chemist and National Physical Laboratory on 14 April this year, *Official Report*, columns *251-253*.

(iii) The Government expect to return the coal mining activities of British Coal Corporation to the private sector by the end of the year.

On 30 June, the Department published a Green Paper on "The Future Of Postal Services" (Cm 2614). The Green Paper set out a number of options for the future of the Post Office. The Government's preferred option is to allow Royal Mail and Parcelforce to operate as a private company owned by the public and employees, with the Government retaining 49 per cent. of the shares. This is subject to a consultation period, after which a decision will be made.

My right hon. Friend is reviewing the scope for privatisation or contractorisation of the Patent Office and Companies House as part of the required periodic agency review process, which considers a range of possibilities from abolition to maintenance of the status quo.

Latin America

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what help he gives to British companies in producing catalogues designed to promote British goods in Latin America.

Mr. Needham: A commercial publicity support package is available to companies participating in an overseas trade fair, exhibition or outward mission.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what discussions he had had with the Institute of Export about training people in Latin American studies.

Mr. Needham: My Department liaises with the Institute of Export on a number of matters. The institute, through its 21 regional centres and its magazine "Export Today", ensures that its members are fully informed of opportunities in Latin America and elsewhere, drawing on the support and advice of the Overseas Trade Services.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has had from the engineering industry and related consultants on the export of invisibles to Latin America and problems of credit cover.

Mr. Needham: There have been no representations to my Department from the engineering industry or related consultants on the export of invisibles to Latin America and the provision of export credit support for the same sector.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what help he is giving to British water companies to export expertise to Latin America.

Mr. Needham: I have established a water sector group of the Overseas Project Board under the chairmanship of my right hon. Friend the Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King). Its overall aim is to help the United Kingdom water industry to maximise its share of overseas markets for its products and skills. In addition, British water companies are given maximum support in exploiting opportunities in Latin American markets by Whitehall Departments and our embassies overseas.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement about the credit cover given to Latin American countries by *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* the United Kingdom's major industrial competitors.

Mr. Needham: The Government are committed to improving the competitiveness of United Kingdom exporters. We have capped the premium rates in certain markets where these may be out of line with the rates charged by our main competitors. We have restored export credit cover for markets emerging from the debt crisis earlier than would normally have been the case. We have recently revised the project financing and overseas investment insurance scheme to provide more flexible support for exporters. A summary of the official export credit support provided by the Government to United Kingdom companies exporting to Latin America is being sent to the hon. Member and to the House of Commons Library. The cover available from the United Kingdom is broadly comparable with that provided by our major industrial competitors.

Latin America
Summary of ECGD cover position as at July 1994

Market	*Medium term cover availability*	*Cover availability for cash SGs*	*Consensus category*	*ECGD underwriter*	*Telephone*	*Comments*
Argentina	3DX	R	2A	Martin Crane	071–512 7320	Cover available
Bolivia	0	R	3	Stan Rosenthal	071–512 7558	No cover available
Brazil	4DX	Y	2B	Stan Rosenthal	071–512 7558	Cover available for the private sector. Public sector cover on a case by case basis
Chile	4	Y	2B	Stan Rosenthal	071–512 7558	Cover available
Colombia	4	Y	2B	Stan Rosenthal	071–512 7558	All facilities available
Costa Rica	0	R	2B	Nick George	071–512 7557	No cover available
Cuba	0	R	2B	Nick George	071–512 7557	No cover available
Ecuador	0	R	2B	Stan Rosenthal	071–512 7558	No cover available
El Salvador	2DX	Y	3	Nick George	071–512 7557	Cover available
Guatemala	0	R	2B	Nick George	071–512 7557	No cover available
Honduras	0	R	3	Nick George	071–512 7557	No cover available
Mexico	3	Y	2B	Stan Rosenthal	071–512 7558	All facilities available
Nicaragua	0	R	3	Nick George	071–512 7557	No cover available
Panama	0	R	2A	Nick George	071–512 7557	No cover available

Market	Medium term cover availability	Cover availability for cash SGs	Consensus category	ECGD underwriter	Telephone	Comments
Paraguay	2	Y	2B	Stan Rosenthal	071–512 7558	All facilities available
Peru	0	R	2B	Stan Rosenthal	071–512 7558	No cover available
Uruguay	4	Y	2B	Stan Rosenthal	071–512 7558	All facilities available
Venezuela	4	Y	2A	Stan Rosenthal	071–512 7558	Cover available for the private sector and PDVSA. (Public sector cover on a case by case basis)

Key:

Medium term cover availability

4 = All facilities generally available. Cover may be limited, but at least £50 million is currently available, to be allocated on a first come, first served basis.

3 = All facilities generally available. Cover may be limited, but at least £50 million is currently available, to be allocated on a first come, first served basis, but also subject to portfolio controls, i.e. Amber Zone Budget.

2 = All facilities generally available. Cover may be limited, currently with less than £50 million available, to be allocated on a first come, first served basis.

1 = No cover available but under review.

0 = No cover available.

DX = Limited cover available and only for projects which aid recovery.

Cover availability for cash SGs (Specific Guarantees) for projects or one-off services contracts

Y = Yes.

N = No.

R = Refer to Underwriter.

Consensus category

1 = Relatively rich countries with officially supported finance at Commercial Interest Reference Rates (CIRRs). Maximum credit period 5 years (exceptionally 8·5 years).

2A = Intermediate countries, with officially supported finance at Commercial Interest Reference Rates (CIRRs). Maximum credit period 8·5 years.

2B = Intermediate countries, with officially supported finance at Commercial Interest Reference Rates (CIRRs). Maximum credit period 10 years.

3 = Relatively poor countries, with officially supported financing at SDR-based rate or CIRRs. Maximum credit period 10 years.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what encouragement he gives to British exporters to make contact with trading organisations and decision-making provincial Governments in the provinces of Argentina and with greater Buenos Aires.

Mr. Needham: The British embassy in Buenos Aires encourages individual United Kingdom companies and trade missions to visit the provinces of Argentina where many business opportunities can be found.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what discussion he has had with the incoming Government of Venezuela about trading with the Venezuelan utilities.

Mr. Needham: Discussions have taken place between officials, including the DTI export promoter, and representatives of the Venezuelan Government about the supply of United Kingdom goods and services to utilities in the gas, electricity and water sectors.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what progress he has made in the marketing plan process in relation to South America.

Mr. Needham: Market plans have been prepared for each of the United Kingdom's major markets in Latin America and are updated to reflect changes in the markets.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what information he has about the number of export promoters he has brought in from the private sector to his Department to promote trade to South America; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: Eight export promoters covering Latin America have been seconded from the private sector.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what are the results of the study undertaken by his Department between October 1992 and March 1993 on exports to Colombia, particularly in relation to railway rehabilitation.

Mr. Needham: The report of the United Kingdom-Colombia trade facilitation group was published and a copy has been placed in the House of Commons Library. Railways were identified as a sector offering good opportunities for United Kingdom companies.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade why he has raised the cost of ECGD cover to Argentina; and what estimate he has made of the effect on United Kingdom trade.

Mr. Needham: ECGD premium rates vary as a result of regular reviews of the risks associated with doing business in different markets.

It is difficult to assess in isolation the effect of ECGD premium rates on trade, but the impact of the recent increase for Argentina is likely to be negligible.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what contracts Her Majesty's Government have with chambers of commerce in major Latin American cities.

Mr. Needham: British embassies, visiting export promoters and officials from my Department have frequent contacts with chambers of commerce in the major cities of Latin America. Visiting United Kingdom business men are also encouraged to contact them as these chambers can offer valuable assistance.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade at what level in their companies were the business men who accompanied the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on his visit to Latin America; and what his policy is towards persuading British companies to send their most senior executives to Latin America.

Mr. Needham: It is a matter for individual Ministers to decide whether it is appropriate for a business team to accompany them, although this is now increasingly done. United Kingdom companies invited to join the business teams are encouraged to be represented at levels which will maximise the opportunities offered by the visits. This is generally at senior executive or board level which was the case, for example, with the recent visit to Brazil by my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury.

Unfair Consumer Contracts Directive

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 22 June, *Official Report*, column *231*, on what basis he has formed the view that the European directive on unfair consumer contracts does not apply to the sale of real property; what steps he has taken to ensure that this is the view of the European Commission and the European court; and what assistance and support is available to any British company required to defend an action in Europe seeking to apply the directive to real property.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 1 July 1994]:* The recitals to the directive make it clear that the intention is to prevent the use of unfair terms in contracts for the sale or supply of goods or services. Since real property is neither a good nor a service the presumption must be that the scope of the directive does not extend to transactions in real property, but it would be for the courts, if necessary, to rule on whether a particular contract term fell within the scope of the Directive. Any dispute must be settled by the parties to that dispute.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 22 June, *Official Report*, column *231*, if he will make a statement setting out precisely his understanding of the term "goods" in connection with the European directive on unfair consumer contracts.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 1 July 1994]:* The term goods is not defined in the Unfair Contract Terms Directive. In the United Kingdom goods are generally taken to mean moveable as opposed to fixed property. It would be for the courts, if necessary, to interpret the terms used in the directive.

Electricity Supply

Mr. Ainger: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what were the green ticket payments made to Electricité de France in 1991-92, 1992-93 and 1993-94 for electricity supplied through the interconnector;

(2) which regional electricity companies act as agents for Electricité de France in the distribution of green ticket payments for electricity supplied through the inter connector.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 11 July 1994]:* These are commercial matters for the parties concerned.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much electricity in megawatt hours and percentage terms was supplied to the English and Welsh electricity markets from *(a)* British fossil-fuelled power stations, *(b)* hydro-electric stations, *(c)* other British renewable sources, *(d)* Electricité de France from nuclear and or hydro-electric sources and *(e)* Electricité de France from fossil-fuelled power stations.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 11 July 1994]:* In 1993, the electricity supplied to the public distribution system in the United Kingdom—that is, excluding electricity generated by companies for their own use—was as follows:

	GWh	Per cent.
Fossil fuelled power stations	215,667	68·0
Nuclear stations	80,979	25·0
Hydro-electric stations	3,676	1·0
Other renewable sources	1,470	0·5
Net imports from France	16,716	5·0

The electricity imports from France are from Electricité de France. Those regional electricity companies with output contracts with EdF can show that the electricity that they import from France is supplied from designated nuclear stations.

Fossil Fuel Levy

Mr. Ainger: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much in cash and percentage terms of the fossil fuel levy paid by the electricity consumers was paid in each of the last three financial years to *(a)* Nuclear Electric, *(b)* British renewable energy electricity generators and *(c)* Electricité de France.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 11 July 1994]:* Electricité de France does not receive payments from the fossil fuel levy. Payments to Nuclear Electric and British renewable electricity generators, in cash terms and as a percentage of levy receipts in the relevant year, have been as follows:

	Nuclear Electric		Renewables	
Year	£ millions	per cent.	£ millions	per cent.
1991-92	1,281	97	12	1
1992-93	1,291	96	29	2
1993-94	1,139	92	68	6

Note: The balance of levy receipts is used to finance payments to British Nuclear Fuels plc in respect of nuclear electricity generated by its plant, and to cover certain other costs such as administration costs.

Regional Assistance

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will set out the total expenditure in 1993-94 on regional finance assistance to industry to the *(a)* Northern, *(b)* Yorkshire and Humberside, *(c)* east midlands, *(d)* south-west, *(e)* west midlands and *(f)* north-west regions.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 7 July 1994]:* Information on total expenditure on regional financial assistance in 1993-94 is not yet finalised. It will be published in the next edition of "Regional Trends" produced by Central Statistical Office.

Post Offices (Peckham)

Ms Harman: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement about the future of all branch and sub-post offices in Peckham in the event of any change in status of the Post Office.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 7 July 1994]:* The Government have set out their views on the future of the nationwide network of post offices in their Green Paper "The Future of Postal Services". I know of no reason why post offices in Peckham should be treated differently from those in other parts of the country.

Fire Safety Regulations

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to alter fire safety regulations on flame-proof material for children's night clothing and for furnishings.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 11 July 1994]:* The fire safety regulations that control the fire retardency of children's night clothing are the Nightwear (Safety) Regulations 1985. The regulations concerned with furnishings are the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988, as amended. Both those sets of regulations were considered as part of the overall review of legislation under the Deregulation initiative. To establish whether any changes to those regulations were necessary, my Department has taken account of the responses received during consultation with individual businesses, trade associations, local authorities, fire prevention, medical and consumer interests. After considering the results of the review, I have no plans to propose amendments to the nightwear regulations or the furniture and furnishings regulations.

Running Costs

Mr. Milburn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will provide a table showing the running costs of his Department in each region for each year since 1987-88.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 11 July 1994]:* Following is the running cost expenditure for each regional, now Government, office:

£'000

	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93	1993-94
North East	2,726	3,141	[1]3,385	4,247	4,396	4,696	5,256
North West	2,755	3,685	3,609	3,610	4,099	4,470	4,835
Yorkshire and Humberside	1,601	2,098	2,300	2,685	2,872	3,065	3,394
East Midlands	1,116	1,431	1,594	1,728	1,863	2,142	2,378
West Midlands	2,042	2,571	2,945	3,134	3,640	4,067	4,691
South West	1,011	1,390	1,459	1,616	1,706	1,924	2,245
South East	1,389	2,427	2,664	2,875	3,094	3,418	4,053
Eastern	—	—	[2]392	1,123	1,310	1,515	1,777

[1] Responsibility for import licensing transferred to North East Region during 1989-90.
[2] Separate office for Eastern region established in October 1989 (formerly part of South East Office).

WALES

Snowdonia

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people were killed or injured while walking or climbing in the Snowdonia national park in 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: This information is not held centrally.

Development Board for Rural Wales

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many legal actions were initiated by the Development Board for Rural Wales which were *(a)* discontinued and *(b)* settled out of court for each year in the period 1983 to 1993;

(2) if the legal fees incurred by the Development Board for Rural Wales form part of its management running costs;

(3) how much the Development Board for Rural Wales spent on legal fees in each year in the period 1983 to 1993.

Mr. Redwood: I have asked the chief executive of the Development Board for Rural Wales to write to the hon. Member and will arrange for a copy of his reply to be placed in the Library of the House.

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many legal actions were initiated by the Welsh Development Agency which were *(a)* discontinued and *(b)* settled out of court for each year in the period 1983 to 1993.

Mr. Redwood: I will arrange for the chief executive of the agency to write to the hon. Member and for a copy of his letter to be placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if the legal fees incurred by the Welsh Development Agency form part of its management running costs.

Mr. Redwood: Legal fees are charged to the relevant budget within the agency, including, where appropriate, management running costs.

South Glamorgan Health Authority

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if the legal fees incurred by the South Glamorgan health authority form part of its management running costs.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: South Glamorgan health authority's procurer management running costs for 1993-94 included legal fees.

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many legal actions were initiated by the South Glamorgan health authority which were *(a)* discontinued and *(b)* settled out of court for each year in the period 1983 to 1993.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much the South Glamorgan health authority spent on legal fees in each year in the period 1983 to 1993.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information requested is as follows:

South Glamorgan health authority's expenditure on legal fees

	£
1983-84	24,698
1984-85	0
1985-86	0
1986-87	0
1987-88	27,395
1988-89	26,283
1989-90	44,755
1990-91	142,532
1991-92	178,298
1992-93	128,202
1993-94	104,114

Source: South Glamorgan Health Authority Annual Accounts.

Dental Services

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish for the period January to March the statistics on the active registrations of capitation patients for dental treatment in each family health service authority area in Wales, disaggregating the figures by each category and, for each, giving the actual number of patients and the take-up rate for each age group per 100 local population.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information is given in the following table, showing patients according to the age groups used by the Dental Practice Board.

Active registrations of capitation patients by family health service authority and age group at end March 1994[1]

	0-2 year olds		3-5 year olds		6-9 year olds		10-14 year olds		15-17 year olds	
	Number	Rate[2]	Number	Rate[2]	Number	Rate[2]	Number	Rate[2]	Number	Rate[2]
Clwyd	2,670	16·7	9,644	60·5	15,621	74·7	18,768	71·8	9,732	63·2
Dyfed	2,134	17·1	6,923	53·7	11,651	66·6	15,088	68·2	7,817	63·5
Gwent	3,347	17·8	10,972	58·1	17,390	72·5	20,292	71·7	10,172	63·4
Gwynedd	1,275	14·5	4,578	50·9	7,249	63·8	9,532	64·6	4,868	57·4
Mid Glamorgan	3,583	15·9	12,360	52·7	19,806	65·9	23,481	66·6	11,229	57·4
Powys	626	14·7	2,554	58·6	4,002	69·1	4,874	65·2	2,572	59·3
South Glamorgan	4,141	23·5	11,366	64·8	17,190	78·5	19,811	78·7	9,192	66·5
West Glamorgan	4,304	30·8	9,901	69·7	15,367	80·1	18,271	79·0	8,892	68·4

[1] Excludes lapsed registrations (registrations lapse in December if no visit has been made in the previous calendar year).
[2] Per hundred resident population. 1992 mid year estimated population data has been used.

Fishing, River Dee

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received from nets fishermen on the River Dee; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Department has received a number of letters about the introduction in 1992 of National Rivers Authority byelaws for the protection of migratory fish stocks, and about National Rivers Authority proposals to reduce the commercial net fishing season to protect spring salmon runs.

Economic Planning Council

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to set up an economic planning council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: None. I announced on 16 March 1994 my intention to establish a Welsh Economic Council, an advisory body, which I have now done. The second meeting of the council is scheduled for later this month.

Community Care

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what extra moneys he intends to provide to assist local authorities in their delivery of community care; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) on 25 January 1994, *Official Report*, column 229.

GP Fundholders

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many general practitioner fundholding *(a)* practices and *(b)* applications there are in Clwyd; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: There are 18 GP fundholding practices in Clwyd covering 43 per cent. of the population. Another practice is preparing to become a fundholder from 1 April 1995, which will increase population coverage to 45 per cent.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the progress of general practitioner fundholding in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: There are 117 fundholding practices in Wales, covering one third of the population. A further 29 practices are preparing to become fundholders from 1 April 1995, at which time population coverage will increase to 40 per cent.

Patients Charter

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the cost of collecting and publishing the information contained in the patients charter comparative performance guide 1993-94.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The budget for the comparative performance tables exercise was £45,000.

Privatisation

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales which organisations, agencies and other bodies relating to his departmental area of responsibility have been privatised since 1990; and what plans he has for further privatisation.

Mr. Redwood: Since 1990, no decisions have been taken to privatise any organisations for which my Department has executive responsibility, but the possibilities are kept under continuing review.

Pollution

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what warnings he has issued in relation to tropospheric ozone levels, nitrogen oxide and other noxious gases concentrations in the atmosphere in *(a)* Cardiff and *(b)* elsewhere in Wales over the past three years; what provision he has made to inform asthmatics, bronchitics, children and pregnant women of smog risks during days of high concentrations of pollution; what arrangements he has made for requests to reduce the use of cars in cities at such times of high concentrations; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what consultations he has had with the South Glamorgan health authority in relation to the issuing of warnings to relevant vulnerable groups concerning concentrations of pollution above World Health Organisation maximum safety levels in Cardiff.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 11 January 1994]:* The Department of the Environment operates a United Kingdom-wide public information service on air quality. Under those arrangements, air pollution information is sent, free of charge, to the BBC, ITN, the Press Association and all national newspapers which receive the Met Office forecasts. A freephone air quality and health advice information line and bulletins for CEEFAX and TELETEXT forms part of this system. The information released includes, in times of poor air quality, advice on what individuals can do to help reduce pollution, for example by cutting down on car usage. Advice on what asthma sufferers and others can do to minimise any health effects is also provided.

When air quality is expected to be poor the Department of the Environment also issues warnings of this via specific press notices: this has happened on two occasions in the last three years, on 20 December 1991 and 1 July 1994. In view of those arrangements, no specific consultation has been considered necessary on this matter with South Glamorgan health authority.

HEALTH

General Whitley Council

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many staff are involved in servicing the general Whitley council and its committees; what is the annual cost of running the council; and how many NHS staff are covered by the Whitley council.

Dr. Mawhinney: There are currently four staff working in the General Whitley Council management side secretariat. It is not possible to provide information about the running of the full council except at disproportionate cost. All national health service staff employed on national terms and conditions are covered by the general Whitley council.

Health Authorities

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what pilot studies and other research have been conducted into the merging of family health services authorities and district health authorities; and whether she will make a statement;

(2) what consultancy or start-up costs have been expended to date in respect of the possible merging of family health service authorities and district health authorities.

Dr. Mawhinney: All district health authorities and family health services authorities are expected to develop effective joint working, and there have been many commentaries on the benefits of this well-established Government policy. There can be no research or pilot studies on merging authorities as no such merger can take place without a change in legislation, and consequently no costs have been expended in this area.

Perinatal and Neonatal Mortality

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was *(a)* the perinatal mortality rate and *(b)* the neonatal mortality rate in each district health authority in England and Wales for 1985, 1990 and 1993.

Mr. Sackville: The available information will be placed in the Library.

Mental Health Services

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the plans of the Social Services inspectorate to follow up a thematic study in relation to the mental health services in 1994-95.

Mr. Bowis: The social services inspectorate is planning to hold a workshop for staff of the local authorities who participated in the mental health thematic study.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if the 1993 report by the Social Services inspectorate and the NHS executive of the special study on the impact of new community care arrangements on mental health services has yet been published; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: The 1993 report by the social services inspectorate, together with the national health service executive, of the study on the impact of new community care arrangements on mental health services entitled "Monitoring and Development: Community Care Monitoring, Special Study, Mental Health Services" was published in April. Copies of the report have been placed in the Library.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when a report by the Social Services inspectorate on the inspection of local authorities' arrangements to support mentally ill patients discharged from hospital will be published.

Mr. Bowis: Later this year.

Children's Homes

Ms Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will give details of the further studies to be undertaken by the social services inspectorate into the placement of children in homes unregistrable under the Children Act 1989;

(2) if she will publish the results of the further studies to be undertaken by the social services inspectorate into the placement of children in homes unregistrable under the Children Act 1989.

Mr. Bowis: In the light of the social services inspectorate study of the provision of small unregistered children's homes in the north-west of England, published in February, a further study of a wider sample of local authority social services departments' practice is being undertaken. The aims of the study include the establishment of a national data base and a review of the application and understanding of the relevant regulations made under the Children Act.

Ms Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health for what period of time a child can be placed in a home registrable under the Children Act 1989, but whose application has not been granted; and what regulations govern the placement.

Mr. Bowis: An application for registration as a registered children's home which has not been granted or refused within 12 months is, under paragraph 1(9) of schedule 6 of the Children Act 1989, deemed to have been refused by the local authority. The placement of a child by a local authority in an establishment awaiting decision on an application for registration is governed by the Arrangements for Placement of Children (General) Regulations 1991, the Review of Children's Cases Regulations 1991, the Representations Procedures (Children) Regulations 1991, the Contact with Children Regulations 1991 and the Definition of Independent Visitors (Children) Regulations 1991.

Hospital Treatment

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in what circumstances a person needing hospital treatment must pay in order to receive treatment in a hospital of their own choice within the NHS.

Mr. Sackville: None. It is a fundamental principle of the national health service that NHS treatment is free of charge unless there is a specific statutory power to charge.

Elderly People (Continual Care)

Ms Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of elderly people in need of continual care were accommodated in *(a)* NHS beds, *(b)* private nursing homes, *(c)* local authority residential homes and *(d)* private residential homes in each district health authority in England for the years 1989-90, 1991-92 and the latest available figures.

Mr. Bowis: The information is not available in the form requested. The number of places in England available for people with long-term care needs are shown in the table. The figures include provision for elderly mentally ill people and people who need continuing specialised medical or nursing care in other age groups. Information by district health authority on local social services and private sector residential care could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

	Number of places as at 31 March:			
	1990	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
National Health Service beds[1]	73,000	68,300	62,700	59,600
Private nursing homes[2]	89,600	109,000	124,000	144,300
Local authority residential homes[3]	103,600	96,100	85,000	75,400
Private residential homes[3]	144,700	154,500	158,200	161,400

[1] Source KH03 returns, geriatric beds and beds for elderly mentally ill people.
[2] Source K036 returns, general specialty, elderly people.
[3] Source RAC5 returns, homes whose primary purpose is the care of elderly or elderly mentally ill people.

Foster Families

Ms Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health for what period of time a child can be placed on a fee-paying basis with a family who are not registered as foster carers; and what regulations govern the placement.

Mr. Bowis: Private fostering is governed by part IX of the Children Act 1989 and the regulations made under it. For children placed by a local authority with foster carers, this is, inter alia, governed by the Foster Placement (Children) Regulations 1991 which provide, in regulation 3(1), that, except in the case of an immediate placement, a child is not to be placed unless the foster parent is approved under that regulation.

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 27 June, *Official Report*, column *413*, what was the most recent report from her Department or the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food before the pending report of the July 1993 survey, showing how many children among any section of the population were in families with a nutritionally inadequate diet and had intakes which were, specifically, for any three or more of the nutrients measured for a necessary diet, below the levels recommended in any, or all, of the reference nutrient intake, estimated average requirement or the lower reference nutrient intake, or any of their immediate predecessors.

Mr. Sackville: The most recent relevant report is the report from the Committee on Medical Aspects of Food Policy on the "Diets of British Schoolchildren", published in 1989. A copy of the report is available in the Library.

Disabled Young Adults

Sir John Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress health authorities have made in implementing the recommendations made in the report,

"An Assessment of Health Related Needs of Physically Handicapped Young Adults"; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: The report was independent and was commissioned by the Department of Health. It was distributed to regional and district health authorities in March 1993 to help them consider how best to meet the needs of disabled young adults. The priorities and planning guidance 1994-95 (EL(93)54), issued to the national health service in June 1993, requires district health authorities to ensure that rehabilitation services address the special needs of disabled young adults, particularly those moving from child to adult services. The Department has made available £149,000 in 1994-95 to fund a series of projects within the national health service, which aim to develop and improve transition services for physically disabled school leavers.

Anabolic Steroids

Mr. Hargreaves: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment her Department has made of the contribution made by television programmes encouraging young persons to experiment with anabolic steroids; and what research her Department has carried out on this subject.

Mr. Bowis: The Government are concerned at the risk to health arising from the misuse of anabolic steroids. The Department has not carried out any research on the impact of television programmes on young people. We are currently discussing with media companies initiatives to encourage young people not to experiment with drugs or solvents.

Departmental Staff (Travel Costs)

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give details of how many return trips are taken by Department of Health staff between London and Leeds *(a)* per week, *(b)* per month and *(c)* annually; and at what cost.

Mr. Sackville: Information is not available in the form requested.

NHS Executive Outposts

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the numbers of staff employed by the NHS executive outposts.

Dr. Mawhinney: On 31 March, a total of 53 staff were employed in the seven national health service executive outposts.

NHS Trust Hospitals

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list for each wave the start-up costs for each NHS trust hospitals.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary gave the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) on 17 May 1993, *Official Report*, column *29* and to the replies I gave to the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) on 18 May 1992, *Official Report*, column *63*, and to the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms Primarolo) on 12 May, *Official Report*, column 222.

NHS Trust Applications

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list for each wave *(a)* the cost of assessing applications to become NHS trusts, *(b)* the number of applications assessed and *(c)* the consultants used to make the assessment.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 3 November 1993, *Official Report*, column *225*. Updated information for the fourth wave is shown.

Cost £	*Number of Assessments*	*Lead Management consultants*
305,012	156	Touche Ross

Hospitals (Comparative Performance)

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the cost of collecting and publishing the information contained in the patients charter comparative performance guide 1993-94.

Dr. Mawhinney: The final cost of producing the first set of national health service performance tables has not yet been finalised.

AIDS

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the reasons for the reduction in the AIDS support grant to the London borough of Brent.

Mr. Sackville: For 1993-94, AIDS support grant allocations were made on the basis of bids submitted by local authorities. Local authorities not receiving AIDS support grant were given money under the healthy alliances scheme for HIV prevention and joint working with health authorities. For 1994-95, local authorities were invited to submit expenditure plans against indicative allocations of both AIDS support grant and healthy alliances moneys. Those allocations were based on confidential information available for the first time and supplied to the Department by the public health laboratory service on the distribution of AIDS cases by local authority area. Where this formula would mean a reduction in grant in 1994-95, local authorities were advised that there might, in exceptional circumstances, be some scope to adjust allocations on a transitional basis and that applications for additional grant could be made.

Age Discrimination

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health from which organisations representing old people she has received representations alleging age discrimination within the NHS.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Department has received representations from the following organisations:

Age Concern (England);
Association of Retired Persons;
British Geriatrics Society;
Pensioners' Liaison Forum, North West;
Pensioners' Action Committee, Tameside;
Age Concern Leicestershire;
Age Concern Coventry;

Northern Pensioners' Association, Crewe and District Branch;
Bury Pensioners' Association;
National Federation of Post Office and BT Pensioners;
The Methodist Church, Brentwood.

Those representations have not identified individual instances of discrimination.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she is taking to ensure that age discrimination is eliminated from the NHS.

Dr. Mawhinney: We have consistently made it clear that there are no exceptions within the health service to the fundamental principle of equal treatment on the basis of clinical need. The patients charter reaffirms this right. Decisions about individual patient care are for the clinicians responsible for the case, but the patient's ability to benefit must always be the primary consideration.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many individual complaints she has received to date from *(a)* Coventry, *(b)* the west midlands and *(c)* nationally about age discrimination in the NHS.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Department has received approximately 400 letters since April, many of them identical, expressing concern about alleged discrimination. We are not aware of any identified instances relating to services in Coventry or the west midlands.

Privatisation

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which organisations, agencies and other bodies relating to her departmental area of responsibility have been privatised since 1990; and what plans she has for further privatisation.

Mr. Sackville: No part of the Department of Health, its agencies, or related bodies have been privatised since 1990. Apart from the possible sale of a small part of the Public Health Laboratory Service involving up to four staff, there are no firm plans to privatise any parts of these organisations at present. However, privatisation is one of the "prior options" which must be considered before a next steps agency is created; or when an agency or non-departmental public body is the subject, respectively, of a framework or quinquennial review.

Equal Treatment

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make it her policy to ensure that equal treatment for all on the basis of clinical need is adhered to.

Mr. Sackville: Providing equal treatment for all on the basis of clinical need is one of the principles of the national health service. This right is reflected in the patients charter.

Day Nurseries

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of three to five-year-olds attend publicly funded day nurseries.

Mr. Bowis: Information collected by the Department of Health relates to the number of children aged under five attending local authority day nurseries and the number placed and paid for by local authorities in other types of day nursery. At 31 March 1993, there were 8·8 children per thousand aged under five in these two categories.

Bradford Community Health Trust

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what discussions she has had with representatives of Bradford community health trust; what matters were discussed; and what action she has taken following such discussions;

(2) if she will instruct the Bradford community health trust to close the secure unit located at Lynfield Mount hospital in Bradford; and if she will establish an independent public inquiry into how a remand prisoner escaped from the grounds of the hospital at the end of June.

Mr. Bowis: Officials from the national health service executive have regular discussions with Bradford community health national health service trust and have asked Professor Michael Schofield, chairman of the trust, to keep them informed, following the escape of a patient from Lynfield Mount hospital. We understand that the trust is to establish an independent external review panel to look at the policies and procedures of the special care unit at the hospital and that the panel's recommendations will be made public.

Sigthin

Mr. Tredinnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many times the drug Sigthin has been prescribed on the national health service over the past three years.

Dr. Mawhinney: We are unaware of any drug by the name of Sigthin.

NHS Management

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many members of the NHS executive and how many chief executives of *(a)* purchasers, *(b)* providers, *(c)* family health service authorities and *(d)* NHSE outposts have no graduate qualifications; and how she controls the quality of senior NHS management.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 27 June 1994]:* Of the 17 directors in the national health service executive, including the chief executive, 15 are graduates and one has accountancy qualifications. They are subject to departmental annual appraisal procedures, including mid-year reviews based on set objectives. Information on the number of chief executives in the national health service without graduate qualifications is not available centrally. Senior NHS management are also subject to individual appraisal review of their success in meeting locally set objectives for delivering health care. Their levels of remuneration are firmly linked to their performance.

Death Rate

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish a table showing for each year from 1979 *(a)* the number of deaths that were expected annually in each health region and *(b)* the number of actual deaths that occurred in each health region using (i) England as standard, (ii) Wessex region as standard and (iii) Northern region as standard.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 11 July 1994]:* This information will be placed in the Library.

Lesbians (Parental Rights)

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will bring forward proposals to prevent lesbians being given parental rights.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I have been asked to reply. There are no plans to bring forward such proposals.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations she has received from the Gay Hussar group in regard to strategies for reforming the EU common agricultural policy.

Mr. Jack: Neither my right hon. Friend nor I have received any such representations.

Biological Diversity

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representation her Department had at the second session of the intergovernmental committee of the convention on biological diversity held in June in Nairobi; and if she will make a statement on the relevance of the decisions taken at the meeting for the completion of partnership agreements between the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation and the International Agricultural Research Centre involved in gene bank development.

Mr. Jack: The United Kingdom delegation comprised officials from the Department of the Environment, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Overseas Development Administration, the Department of Trade and Industry and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee. Delegates to the meeting recognised and supported the intention of the Food and Agriculture Organisation to conclude agreements with the international agricultural research centres to place certain of their seed banks under its auspices.

Animal Health and Veterinary Group

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when she expects to make an announcement of the conclusions of the review of her Department's animal health and veterinary group.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I intend to issue a consultation document shortly.

EC Intervention Stocks

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the current level of stock of beef, in tonnes, held in intervention in the United Kingdom; and if she will give details of the age profile of the stock.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Responsibility for this matter is delegated to the Intervention Board. I have asked the chief executive to reply to the hon. Member.

Letter from Guy Stapleton to Mr. Austin Mitchell, dated 12 July 1994:

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has asked me to reply to your question about current beef stocks in intervention in the United Kingdom, and the age profile of these stocks.

The information is set out in the attached table:

Beef stocks at end of May 1994

Year of origin	*Weight (tonnes)*
1990	784
1991	6,980
1992	30,845
1993	15,139
1994	Nil
Total	53,658

DEFENCE

China

Dr. John Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of arms spending by China.

Mr. Aitken: China's official defence budget for 1994 is 54·4 billion yuan—about US$6 billion—although there is also a considerable amount of military-related expenditure which does not fall to the Chinese defence budget.

Privatisation

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which organisations, agencies and other bodies relating to his departmental area of responsibility have been privatised since 1990; and what plans he has for further privatisation.

Mr. Aitken: No part of my departmental area of responsibility has been privatised since 1990. The next areas likely to reach that stage are the royal dockyards, for which tenders will be issued in due course. As announced in "Next Steps Review 1993" (Cm 2430), possible defence agency candidates covering a wide range of defence support activity are subject to a prior options review during which the scope for privatisation is explored. Likewise, the scope for privatisation is considered in other areas as part of my Department's "Competing for Quality" programme. For instance, as announced by the then Minister of State for the Armed Forces on 31 March 1993 *Official Report*, column *197*, work is continuing to transfer the services' married quarters estate to a housing trust in the private sector on 1 April 1995. The scope for private sector involvement in defence support business has also been considered as part of the defence costs study on which we shall be making an announcement shortly.

RNAD Trecwn

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when RNAD Trecwn was declared surplus; when tenders were invited to market RNAD Trecwn; and what were the reasons for the delay.

Mr. Hanley: RNAD Trecwn was declared surplus on 1 August 1992 and tenders were invited from estate agents and surveyors to market the site on 28 January 1994. The

intervening period was used to allow consideration to be given to the possibility of establishing a European armaments decommissioning facility at Trecwn.

RAF Hendon and Peninsula Barracks

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what date information was provided to the hon. R. Philipps or Crown Ridge Industries Ltd., on the details of *(a)* RAF Hendon (East Camp) and *(b)* Peninsula barracks, Winchester.

Mr. Hanley: In addition to being available from other sources, details of my Department's sites are widely disseminated by officials to many companies and individuals and no central records are maintained. As far as can be ascertained, however, no specific details of RAF Hendon (East Camp) or Peninsula barracks have been supplied to the hon. Rhodri Philipps and/or Crownridge Industries.

The hon. R. Philipps was, however, provided in October 1993 with a list which is available to the public on request, naming all major sites in disposal or coming up for disposal. This is likely to have included brief details of Peninsula barracks and RAF Hendon (East Camp).

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what dates the decisions were made *(a)* to dispose of Peninsula barracks, Winchester and *(b)* to invite tenders.

Mr. Hanley: The initial decision to vacate and dispose of Peninsula barracks was made in 1980, but this was dependent upon reprovision of the barracks on a green field site north of Winchester. Occupation of the new barracks started in 1986 and vacation of Peninsula barracks was completed in 1988.

The site was initially marketed in July 1988, but the developer selected went into liquidation in 1990. The MOD with the Crown Estate, as joint owners of the site, pursued the planning application submitted by this developer and finally obtained planning permission in September 1993.

Peninsula barracks was remarketed in January 1994 and an offer for the freehold was accepted in June 1994.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what dates the decisions were made *(a)* to dispose of RAF Hendon (East Camp), and *(b)* to invite tenders.

Mr. Hanley: The initial decision to dispose of RAF Hendon (East Camp) was made in 1988 and the site has been marketed since 1989. Since that time some 7 acres of the site have been sold and a further five acres provisionally allocated for the use of the adjoining RAF museum.

The remainder of the site was remarketed in January 1994, with a closing date for informal tenders of 31 March 1994.

Testing Laboratories

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all the MOD establishments which are accredited NAMAS—national measurement accreditation service—testing laboratories.

Mr. Aitken: Establishments in my Department and in defence agencies which are NAMAS accredited for calibration or testing purposes are listed in the table:

Royal Air Force Electrical Standards Laboratory, Deeside, Clwyd
Defence Research Agency, Aquila, Kent
Defence Radiological Standards Centre, Aldermaston
Army Calibration and Standards Laboratory, Army Base Repair Organisation, Old Dalby, Leicestershire
Defence Radiological Protection Service, Gosport, Hampshire
Defence Research Agency Dunfermline, Rosyth, Scotland
Defence Research Agency, Fort Halstead, Kent
Defence Research Agency, Bridgwater, Somerset
Defence Research Agency, Civil Marine Group, Portsmouth, Hampshire
Environmental Test Centre, Foulness, Essex
Proof and Experimental Establishment, Pendine, Dyfed
Proof and Experimental Establishment, Eskmeals, Cumbria
Proof and Experimental Establishment, Shoeburyness, Essex
Proof and Experimental Establishment, Lavington, Wiltshire
Test and Evaluation Establishment, Chertsey, Surrey
Defence Clothing and Textile Authority (Quality and Product Support Division) Oxfordshire
Royal Military College of Science, Swindon, Wiltshire

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much has been spent by RAE Aberperth on sending electronic equipment for calibration at NAMAS accredited laboratories in each of the last three years.

Mr. Aitken: The figures for calibration of electronic equipment not arranged within the MOD and thus incurring charges are as follows:

	£
1993-91	523·34
1992-93	1,511·78
1993-94	2,135·57

Stores Depot (Exeter)

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much money has been spent on refurbishing the Royal Navy stores depot in Exeter in each of the last five financial years.

Mr. Hanley: It is not possible to break down all the costs of expenditure on specific refurbishment from that of general works, maintenance and fire prevention measures at RNSD Exeter; however, overall expenditure in these areas in each of the last five financial years is as follows:

	Cost £
1989-90	515,000
1990-91	1,000,000
1991-92	650,000
1992-93	900,000
1993-94	1,400,000

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what estimate he has made of the cost of closing the Royal Navy stores depot in Exeter;

(2) what plans his Department has to conduct a full impact study of the effects of closing the Royal Naval stores depot in Exeter.

Mr. Hanley: Stores depots, including Exeter, were examined by the defence costs study, the outcome of which we hope to announce shortly.

Chinook Helicopter Crash

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence where the Chinook helicopter that crashed on the Mull of Kintyre on 2 June was scheduled to land.

Mr. Hanley: The Chinook helicopter that crashed on the Mull of Kintyre on 2 June was scheduled to land at Fort George, Inverness.

EMPLOYMENT

Departmental Expenditure

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the amount of expenditure by his Department on training employment, enterprise, employment measures and labour market services in each year since 1979-80 in each region in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* 1993-94 prices.

Miss Widdecombe: The information is not available in the form requested.

Business Initiative Schemes

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his estimate for the business basics scheme for 1994-95.

Miss Widdecombe: Funds for the business start-up scheme have been transferred to the single regeneration budget in 1994-95. Provision for the single regeneration budget includes £70·122 million for business start-up support in that year.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much money was spent on business initiative 1993-94.

Miss Widdecombe: Expenditure in 1993-94 on the business start-up scheme was £82 million.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will set out the extent of *(a)* financial support and *(b)* training time offered by the business basics programme.

Miss Widdecombe: Although now within the single regeneration budget, the business start-up scheme is expected to continue in 1994-95 to offer financial support within the previous range of £20 to £90 per week, plus a training element, both determined locally by training and enterprise councils. TECs may, however, provide start-up support in whatever form they consider appropriate to their local circumstances.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* women and *(b)* men took up the business initiative scheme in each month from April 1993 to April 1994, and give the extent of (i) financial support and (ii) training time.

Miss Widdecombe: Support is given under the business start-up scheme to help unemployed people set up their own businesses. The scheme is delivered by training and enterprise councils, which may provide these services under different titles. The numbers of people taking up the support between April 1993 and April 1994 are set out in the table. Financial support in 1993-94 ranged from allowances of £20 to £90 per week, for between 26 and 66 weeks. Training time was at the discretion of the local TECs.

Business Start-Up Scheme 1993-94—England. 4-Weekly Entrant Statistics

Period Ending	Entrants
25 April 1993	2,771
23 May 1993	2,699
20 June 1993	2,553
18 July 1993	2,470
15 August 1993	2,357
12 September 1993	2,544
10 October 1993	2,680
07 November 1993	2,730
05 December 1993	2,587
02 January 1994	1,819
30 January 1994	2,560
27 February 1994	2,732
27 March 1994	4,005
1993-94	34,507

Individual totals for women and men for the various periods are not available. However, available data suggest that the overall proportion for the year—women: men—was approximately 31 per cent: 69 per cent.

Crown Notices

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many Crown notices have been served and Crown prosecutions initiated in each of the past 10 years; and whether he has any proposal relating to Crown immunity in Government Departments and agencies.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The following table shows the number of Crown enforcement notices issued over the last 10 years for which figures are available:

Crown enforcement notices issued by Health and Safety Executive's Factory and Agricultural Inspectorates (a), 1983—1992-93

Year of issue (b)	Improvement	Deferred prohibition	Immediate prohibition	Total
1983	47	3	11	61
1984	38	—	12	50
1985	27	2	6	35
1986-87	7	1	2	10
1987-88	13	1	5	19
1988-89	8	—	5	13
1989-90	5	—	7	12
1990-91	18	—	4	22
1991-92	5	—	5	10
1992-93	4	2	5	11

(a) Includes notices issued by the Quarries Inspectorate for years since 1990-91.

(b) Figures for the calendar years 1983 to 1985 and the financial years beginning 1 April for subsequent years.

Under the present law, Crown bodies cannot be prosecuted, but administrative procedures are in place for the censure of Crown bodies in circumstances where prosecution would otherwise be considered. The number of censures in each of the past 10 years is shown in the following table:

Year	Number
1985	—
1986	—
1987	—
1988	1
1989	—
1990	3
1991	—
1992	3
1993	—
1994	1

The Government have no immediate plans to change the current position, which is that Crown bodies are bound by health and safety legislation and Health and Safety Executive inspectors seek to ensure that the law is complied with and that Crown employers meet standards of good practice found elsewhere. I understand that the HSE is considering the implications of removing Crown immunity from prosecution under health and safety legislation.

Work Experience

Mr. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to encourage work experience schemes for pupils in their final year at school.

Miss Widdecombe: The Government announced on 24 May, *Official Report*, column *198*, that they have asked training and enterprise councils and their partners to ensure that all pupils in their final year of compulsory education can have at least one week's work experience. An additional £23 million will be provided over the three years to 1997-98 to support this.

Privatisation

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which organisations, agencies and other bodies relating to his departmental area of responsibility have been privatised since 1990; and what plans he has for further privatisation.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The majority of the Employment Department's skillcentres were privatised in 1990. There has been no other privatisation since.

We intend to privatise the Health and Safety Executive's electrical equipment certification service when a suitable legislative vehicle is available.

Engineering Industry (Training)

Mr. Congdon: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has now completed his review of the engineering construction industry training board; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: I am pleased to announce that the review of the Engineering Construction Industry Training Board has now been completed.

The review was wide-ranging and thorough. It included consultation with representatives of employers and employees in the engineering construction industry and an independent survey of all employers in scope to the board. There was widespread support from the industry for the retention of a statutory board with the power to raise a levy on employers.

While it remains Government policy that sector training arrangements should normally be non-statutory, the Government are persuaded that different considerations continue to apply in the engineering construction industry. Since becoming an independent board in 1991, the ECITB has made substantial progress towards modernising training in its industry. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has decided that it will be reconstituted as a statutory training board with effect from 23 July, until the end of March 1998, which will enable it to build on these achievements.

I shall be writing to the chairman of the new board in due course to set out in more detail the Government's expectations of the board. A copy of that letter will be placed in the Library.

May Day Bank Holiday

Sir John Gorst: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment on which day the May day bank holiday will fall during 1995 and 1996; and if he will list the dates of all the public holidays that have been fixed for 1995.

Mr. David Hunt *[holding answer 8 July 1994]:* On 16 December 1993 I announced that, for 1995 only, the early May bank holiday in England, Wales and Northern Ireland will be moved from the first Monday in May to the second Monday, 8 May, to link with events on and near VE day commemorating the 50th anniversary of the ending of the second world war. In Scotland, the anniversary will be marked by an additional day's bank holiday on the second Monday in May for 1995 only. In 1996, the early May bank holiday will revert to the first Monday in May. The bank and public holidays fixed for 1995 are set out in the following table:

Holiday	*England and Wales*	*Northern Ireland*	*Scotland*
Monday January 2 In lieu of January 1	BH	BH	—
Monday January 2 New Year	—	—	BH
Tuesday January 3 In lieu of January 1	—	—	BH
Friday March 17 St. Patrick's Day	—	BH	—
Friday April 14 Good Friday	BH	BH	BH
Monday April 17 Easter Monday	BH	BH	—
Monday May 1 Early May Bank Holiday	—	—	BH
Monday May 8 Early May Bank Holiday	BH	BH	BH
Monday May 8 Bank Holiday	—	—	BH
Monday May 29 Spring Bank Holiday	BH	BH	BH
Wednesday July 12 Battle of the Boyne anniversary (Orangemen's Day)	—	BH[1]	—
Monday August 7 Summer Bank Holiday	—	—	BH
Monday August 28 Summer Bank Holiday	BH	BH	—
Monday December 25 Christmas Day	BH	BH	BH
Tuesday December 26 Boxing Day	BH	BH	BH

BH=Bank/public holiday.

[1]indicates a provisional date, still subject to proclamation by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Railway Signalmen

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 24 June, *Official Report*, column *354*, concerning the increase in real earnings of railway signalmen compared with white collar workers, if he will break down the figures to show the deciles in each case for 1979 to 1989 and 1989 to 1993 together with the actual earnings in April 1993.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information available is set out in the table. Railway signalmen are classified as skilled manual workers and therefore information for manual workers is also included in the table.

Gross weekly earnings of full-time employees— Pay unaffected by absence; at April

	Percentiles		
	25 per cent.	*50 per cent.*	*75 per cent.*
Real increase in pay 1979-1989			
Railway signalmen, and shunters etc.			
Men	5·3	13·7	21·8
Women	—	—	—
All manuals			
Men	6·0	9·8	13·4
Women	10·3	12·2	16·6
Private sector non-manuals			
Men	23·1	33·7	40·7
Women	30·8	40·8	50·3
Increases in pay 1989-1993			
Railway signalman, and shunters etc.			
Men	26·5	18·1	21·7
Women	—	—	—
All	26·5	18·1	21·7
All manuals			
Men	1·6	2·2	2·3
Women	3·6	4·7	7·0
All	2·8	2·2	2·3
Private sector non-manuals			
Men	–0·1	1·2	2·8
Woman	9·3	10·6	12·0
All	6·6	5·1	4·7

Gross pay levels

1993	*Percentiles*			
	25 per cent.	*50 per cent.*	*75 per cent.*	*Mean*
Railway signalmen, and shunters etc.				
Men	260·3	323·4	429·4	365·5
Women	—	—	—	—
All	260·3	323·4	429·4	365·5
All manuals				
Men	201·2	256·4	324·0	274·3
Women	130·5	162·2	205·8	177·1
All	181·4	239·1	308·8	256·6
Private sector non-manuals				
Men	253·9	356·4	498·3	421·9
Women	167·0	218·9	293·3	250·8
All	201·9	289·8	422·4	353·4

Source: New Earnings Surveys

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether railway signalmen are classified as skilled workers.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: For statistical purposes, railway singalmen are classified as skilled manual workers.

Earnings

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the change in real earnings of non-manual workers in *(a)* electricity, *(b)* office machinery, etc., *(c)* retail distribution, *(d)* railways, *(e)* banking etc., *(f)* banking and bill discounting, *(g)* business services, *(h)* accountants, auditors and tax experts, *(i)* social security, *(j)* higher education and *(k)* school education since 1989.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is shown in the table:

Real percentage increase in average gross weekly earnings between April 1989 and April 1993 for full-time non-manual employees

Industry	*Percentage increase*
Production and distribution of electricity	14·8
Manufacture of office machinery and data processing equipment	3·2
Retail distribution	6·7
Railways	12·1
Banking and finance	9·9
Banking and bill discounting	8·0
Business services	5·2
Accountants, auditors, tax experts	11·0
Social Security	29·3
Higher Education	9·8
School education (nursery, primary, secondary)	15·5

Source: New Earnings Survey.

SCOTLAND

Maternity Units

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will make funds available for the introduction of video monitoring cameras at all maternity units;

(2) if he will estimate the cost of bar-code tagging newly born infants at all maternity units;

(3) if he will consult urgently the Royal College of Midwives on proposals for security at maternity units;

(4) if he will extend the pilot schemes for tagging newly born infants at Edinburgh Simpson hospital and Law hospital;

(5) what proposals he has for introducing better security procedures at maternity units.

Mr. Stewart: It is for health boards and NHS trusts to consider and implement the most appropriate security measures to meet the needs of individual maternity units. It is for health boards to decide on the priorities for the extra funds which have been made available to them. My right hon. Friend does not propose to consult the Royal College of Midwives on this matter but any views which the college wishes to offer should be conveyed to health boards and NHS trusts. In addition he will arrange for the lessons drawn from the pilot schemes at Law hospital and Simpson Memorial maternity pavilion, Edinburgh to be disseminated.

The cost of bar code tagging would be relatively inexpensive since the electronic tags themselves are cheap, but the main costs would be on the scanning and alarm systems. There are several different types of security systems on the market, but an average cost would be between £15,000 and £20,000 for a large maternity unit.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of non-administrative staff in maternity units are part-time or temporary workers.

Mr. Stewart: Identification of temporary staff and of staff working solely within maternity units is not possible from data held centrally.

Legal Aid

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what instructions his Department has given to consultants regarding a review of the functions of the Scottish Legal Aid Board; and if he will make it his policy to place a copy of any report in the Library.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In accordance with current practice, the Scottish Office Home and Health Department is at present seeking the views of interested parties on the quinquennial policy and financial management review of the Scottish Legal Aid Board. As part of that process, a small number of interviews with a range of interested individuals are being organised by the Scottish Office central research unit. Professor Alan Alexander, professor of local and public management at the university of Strathclyde, who is a member of the steering group set up to oversee the review, is providing assistance with the analysis of the results of these interviews. No further consultancy input to the review has yet been commissioned. My right hon. Friend will consider in due course how the results of the review should be publicised.

Scottish Enterprise and SDA

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much Scottish Enterprise and the Scottish Development Agency spent on legal fees in each year in the period 1983 to 1993.

Mr. Stewart: The information requested for the Scottish Development Agency was not maintained centrally and is therefore not available. The level of spend on legal fees by Scottish Enterprise is an operational matter for that body and I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Occupational Therapy (Children)

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will take steps to ensure that a locally based paediatric occupational therapy service is provided for children in the Forth Valley health board area.

Mr. Stewart: Forth Valley health board has proposed, as part of its development plans for 1994-95, to set up a community paediatric occupational therapy service which will form part of a local community paediatric team.

Sherriff Court Actions

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many ordinary actions were raised in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Paisley, Dundee, Airdrie and Stornaway sheriff courts in *(a)* November 1992, *(b)* November 1993, *(c)* January 1994 and *(d)* May 1994.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The figures for ordinary actions are set out in the table:

	November 1992	*November 1993*	*January 1994*	*May 1994*
Glasgow	946	803	458	669
Edinburgh	552	442	271	377
Aberdeen	303	260	197	280
Paisley	261	239	110	152
Dundee	189	170	107	156
Airdrie	179	202	70	110
Stornoway	12	18	9	5

Perinatal and Neonatal Mortality

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was *(a)* the perinatal mortality rate and *(b)* the neonatal mortality rate in each health board for 1985, 1990 and 1993.

Mr. Stewart: The information is given in the table.

Health board	Perinatal mortality for Scotland Per 1,000 total births live and still 1985	1990	1993	Neonatal mortality for Scotland Per 1,000 live births 1985	1990	1993
Borders	5	4	5	2	5	—
Forth Valley	10	11	11	8	6	4
Dumfries and Galloway	10	5	9	3	4	4
Fife	10	7	9	5	3	4
Grampian	11	9	9	7	4	3
Highland	7	8	10	4	4	4
Lothian	11	8	9	7	5	3
Tayside	7	12	9	4	4	3
Orkney Islands	21	11	4	9	7	—
Shetland Islands	13	6	6	10	—	3
Western Isles	5	12	14	—	6	7
Strathclyde health areas						
Argyll and Clyde	10	7	12	5	4	4
Ayrshire & Arran	9	8	8	7	4	4
Greater Glasgow	10	10	10	5	5	5
Lanarkshire	9	8	10	5	5	4

Scottish Enterprise

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if the legal fees incurred by Scottish Enterprise form part of its management running costs.

Mr. Stewart: Legal fees incurred by Scottish Enterprise do not form part of its management running costs but are part of a programme budget operated by the Legal Department, and from which the cost of any appropriate external legal advice would be met.

NHS Trust Hospitals

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list by wave the start-up costs for each NHS trust hospital.

Mr. Stewart: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) on 7 December 1993 *Official Report*, column 77.

Spanish and Portuguese

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland in how many schools *(a)* Spanish and *(b)* Portuguese are taught; and how many (i) teachers and (ii) pupils are involved.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Results from the September 1993 schools census show that there were 9,981 pupils taking Spanish in 167 education authority secondary schools in Scotland. No pupils took Portuguese. At September 1992, the latest year for which information is available, there were 274 teachers teaching Spanish in education authority secondary schools; teachers teaching Portuguese are not separately identified in the school census.

At September 1993, 571 pupils in 10 education authority primary schools had contact with a subject specialist teacher in Spanish. No primary pupils had contact with a subject specialist in Portuguese. No information is held centrally on the numbers of teachers involved in teaching Spanish or Portuguese in primary schools.

River Pollution

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the results of the meeting of officials of his Department with Lothian River Purification Board and the ferruginous pollution problems of the River Almond and Breich water.

Sir Hector Monro: Senior officials of the Scottish Office Environment Department attended the launch of the Forth River Purification Board's water quality initiative on 16 May 1994. Topics highlighted by the board included the problem of ferruginous pollution from abandoned mines. No substantive discussions took place about individual rivers.

Courts

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what targets have been set for completing office business in the sheriff courts and supreme courts; and what performance was secured in 1993-94.

Mr. Lang: The targets set for completion of office business in the sheriff courts in 1993-94 are set out later. These targets remain in force for 1994-95. The percentage figures following each target indicate the proportion of sheriff courts achieving the target figures or better in the course of the year. More detailed information on the performance of individual court offices will be made available to local court advisory committees. Similar targets are in force in the supreme courts and all of these were achieved in 1993-94.

Targets for sheriff clerk offices and performance 1993-94

	Per cent.
To issue the first deliverance in all ordinary writs, or return to sender, within two working days of receipt.	98
To issue the first deliverance in all summary cause actions (including small claims), or return to sender, within three working days of receipt.	97
To draft, in preparation for signature, all final ordinary decrees in absence (excluding divorce) within one working day of receipt of the minute craving decree.	94
To draft, within seven days of receipt of the affidavits, in preparation for signature, all final decrees in undefended ordinary actions of divorce *or* return the affidavits to the sender.	92

	Per cent.
To draft, in preparation for signature, all decrees in actions of divorce under the simplified procedure within one working day of expiry of the period of notice.	97
To issue extract decrees in all ordinary actions (excluding divorce) within three working days of the date of ordinary *or* the expiry of the days of appeal—whichever is the later.	89
To issue all summary cause/small claim extract decrees within one working day of the due date.	96
To issue extract decrees in all ordinary actions of divorce within one working day of the due date.	88
To issue extract decrees of divorce under the simplified procedure within one working day of the due date.	90
To issue the first deliverance in all petitions for sequestration/liquidation, or return to sender, within two working days of receipt.	95
To prepare for signature the first deliverance in all adoption petitions within one working day of a correct petition being received.	93
To scrutinise and accept or reject commissary petitions and inventories within two working days of receipt.	96
To issue Confirmation within three working days of acceptance of inventory.	94
To conduct small estate interviews within seven days from the time an interview is requested.	98
To process juror claims for payment, or return to sender, within two working days of receipt.	96
To process postal fines (other than unidentified payments) on day of receipt.	99
To issue warning letters, means enquiry citations, warrants, extracts, etc, and transfer fines within seven days of the trawl.	99
To remit all non-Exchequer receipts to entitled parties within 14 days from the end of the last accountancy period.	98
To effect a card reconciliation of all outstanding financial penalties on a monthly basis.	100
To reply to letter pleas within one working day of the court.	99
To order social enquiry and other reports within one working day of the court.	99
To complete probation, community service, compensation and fines supervision orders within two working days of the court.	100
To issue juror citations in the first instance at least 21 days prior to a jury sitting/trial.	98
To reply to all letter inquiries except those which require extensive investigation within two working days of receipt.	95

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what objectives for reducing court waiting periods have been established; what targets have been set for 1994-95 in respect of court waiting periods for the supreme and sheriff courts; and if he will make a statement about the performance of the supreme courts and each of the sheriff courts in 1993-94.

Mr. Lang: The programming of court business is a matter for the judiciary. Acting in co-operation with the judiciary in the supreme and sheriff courts, the Government seek to provide the resources which will allow speedy access to justice. Having regard to the time required by parties to have their cases properly prepared the following objectives have been adopted:

the Lord President of the Court of Session has accepted the recommendations of a Committee chaired by Lord Maxwell relating to the reduction of waiting periods in the Supreme Courts: the target is to reduce waiting periods to the recommended levels and, subject to any acceleration in the rate of increase in court work, maintain waiting periods at that level: for certain categories of hearing, additional targets involving much reduced waiting periods, have been set;

Sheriffs Principal have agreed to overall targets of reducing waiting periods for summary criminal trials in the Sheriff Courts to 12 weeks or less and to hold them at that level; and to maintain waiting periods at 12 weeks or less for civil cases in the Sheriff Courts.

The main targets for waiting periods for 1994-95 are set down as follows: "waiting period" is the period between a trial or proof being requested or an appeal being received and the date assigned expressed in weeks. Similar targets applied in 1993-94 and national performance for that year is noted in the second column in the table.

	Target	1993-94 Performance
Criminal Appeal Business		
Summary prosecutions: Notes of Appeal against Sentence and Stated cases (accused in custody)	4	4
Court of Session		
(a) Ordinary proofs	20	20
(b) Defended Consistorial proofs	17	18
Sheriff Courts (National average as at 31 March 1994		
(a) Civil proofs/debates	12	11·6
(b) Summary Criminal Trials	12	15·2

In 1993-94 waiting periods of 12 weeks or less were achieved for civil debates/proofs in 81 per cent. of sheriff courts.

Waiting periods of 12 weeks or less were achieved for summary criminal business in 72 per cent. of sheriff courts.

Performance of individual sheriff courts at 31 March 1994 is set out in the following table.

Court	Weeks Civil proofs	Summary criminal trials
Hamilton	14	12
Glasgow	14	25
Inverness	13	11
Cupar	13	13
Dundee	13	16
Paisley	13	14
Dumbarton	12	10
Dunfermline	12	13
Peterhead	12	12
Stirling	12	12
Wick	12	12
Jedburgh	11	11
Kirkcudbright	11	11
Ayr	11	12
Kirkcaldy	11	11
Dingwall	10	10
Oban	10	11
Elgin	10	9
Haddington	10	13
Duns	10	10
Banff	10	10
Linlithgow	10	20
Stranraer	10	11
Falkirk	10	10
Forfar	10	10
Stornoway	10	10
Selkirk	10	10
Stonehaven	9	9
Dumfries	9	9
Peebles	9	10
Tain	9	10
Lanark	9	10
Arbroath	9	11
Aberdeen	9	13
Kilmarnock	9	16
Dunoon	8	8
Edinburgh	8	11

Court	Weeks Civil proofs	Summary criminal trials
Alloa	8	8
Greenock	8	10
Perth	8	8
Portree	8	4
Rothesay	8	10
Airdrie	8	16
Lerwick	7	7
Campbeltown	6	10
Dornoch	6	8
Lochmaddy	6	10
Fort Willliam	6	14
Kirkwall	6	6

In addition, the sheriffs principal have agreed that sheriff court programmes should be designed to ensure that the number of trials adjourned due to lack of court time should not exceed 5 per cent. of the total number set down, a target met in 83 per cent. of sheriff courts.

NHS Statutory Audit

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what changes he proposes to make in the arrangements for NHS statutory audit in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: I am pleased to announce that, following discussions between the Commission for Local Authority Accounts in Scotland and my officials, I have agreed to transfer responsibility for NHS statutory audit to the commission under the terms of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 as amended by section 36 of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990. The Accounts Commission for Scotland, as it will then be called, will take responsibility for all the statutory audit work of health boards, NHS trusts, GP fundholders and other health bodies in Scotland from 1 April 1995. It is envisaged that the audit programme will continue to be shared between the public sector and private audit firms.

Scottish Homes

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the forthcoming policy and financial management review of Scottish Homes.

Mr. Lang: As part of the Government's rolling programme of five-yearly policy and financial management reviews of non-departmental public bodies, my Department will conduct a thorough review of Scottish Homes during 1994-95. The first stage of the review will take the form of a "prior options" study. This will include an examination of the scope for discontinuing, privatising, contracting out or transferring to another body some or all of the functions carried out by Scottish Homes. This will include looking at how it takes forward the Government's housing policies in Scotland, the key objectives of which are: promoting greater housing choice, in particular home ownership; improving housing supply and quality; and making best use of scarce public sector resources. This study is now under way and I would welcome comments from interested parties. Comments should be sent by 16 September 1994 to:

Mr. D. F. Middleton
Assistant Secretary
The Scottish Office Environment Department
Room 417
St. Andrew's House
Edinburgh EH1 1DG

Deaths in Custody

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give brief details of all deaths in custody, including those in police stations, in Scotland since 1989.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 8 July 1994]:* Details of deaths which occurred in custody since 1989 are provided in the following tables:

Police custody

Date of death	Sex	Age	Force area	Cause of death
1989				
8 January 1989	Male	76	Strathclyde	Hypostatic pneumonia
2 February 1989	Male	47	Strathclyde	Subdural haemorrhage
7 February 1989	Male	67	Lothian and Borders	Intracranial pressure
24 April 1989	Male	19	Fife	Hypoxic brain damage due to hanging
4 May 1989	Male	65	Strathclyde	Hypoxia
4 June 1989	Male	76	Strathclyde	Fracture of the skull
21 June 1989	Male	16	Strathclyde	Aspiration of gastric contents
24 August 1989	Male	68	Strathclyde	Acute peritonitis
8 October 1989	Male	49	Strathclyde	Intra-cerebral haematoma
4 November 1989	Male	56	Strathclyde	Acute subdural haematomas
1990				
2 January 1990	Male	43	Strathclyde	Acute renal failure
14 January 1990	Male	22	Lothian and Borders	Acute pulmonary and cerebral oedema
6 February 1990	Male	62	Strathclyde	Head injury
12 February 1990	Male	51	Strathclyde	(1) Fatty degeneration of the liver (2) Chronic alcoholism
5 May 1990	Male	64	Strathclyde	(1) Lung abscess (2) Bronchopneumonia (3) Chronic bronchitis and emphysema
14 June 1990	Male	42	Lothian and Borders	Subarachnoid haemorrhage
16 June 1990	Male	53	Central Scotland	(1) Bilateral bronchopneumonia (2) Polmonary Ehromboembolism
15 November 1990	Male	22	Lothian and Borders	Aspiration of vomit
22 November 1990	Male	26	Lothian and Borders	Aspiration of vomit
30 November 1990	Male	60	Tayside	(1) Cranial cerebral injuries (2) Blunt force trauma

Date of death	Sex	Age	Force area	Cause of death
1991				
28 February 1991	Male	42	Strathclyde	Pulmonary oedema and congestion
1 May 1991	Male	52	Strathclyde	Intracerebral haematoma
25 July 1991	Male	62	Strathclyde	Inhalation of regurgitated vomitus
28 July 1991	Male	32	Lothian and Borders	Alcoholic cardiomyopathy
14 August 1991	Male	36	Strathclyde	Fatty degeneration of the liver
28 November 1991	Male	30	Strathclyde	Inhalation of gastric contents
1992				
8 February 1992	Male	24	Strathclyde	Hanging
13 April 1992	Male	59	Grampian	Chronic alcoholism
25 April 1992	Male	25	Strathclyde	Hanging
2 May 1992	Male	29	Grampian	Hanging
24 June 1992	Male	58	Northern	Ischaemic heart disease
9 July 1992	Male	19	Fife	Hanging
29 September 1992	Female	54	Northern	Meningitis
1 October 1992	Female	57	Lothian and Borders	(1) Acute pulmonary oedema (2) Ischaemic heart disease (3) Previous myocardial infarction (4) Chronic obstruction airway disease
10 October 1992	Male	45	Strathclyde	(1) Acute left ventricular failure (2) Myocardial ischaemic coronary artery thrombosis (3) Chronic alcohol abuse
7 December 1992	Male	29	Lothian and Borders	(1) Chronic alcohol abuse (2) State of fits (3) Postural asphyxia
1993				
6 January 1993	Male	26	Northern	Head injury
14 March 1993	Male	34	Strathclyde	Pulmonary oedema
4 April 1993	Male	53	Strathclyde	Extral-dural haematoma head injury
12 June 1993	Male	36	Strathclyde	Coronary artery atheoma
24 July 1993	Male	23	Grampian	Hanging
28 August 1993	Male	29	Tayside	Chronic intravenous drug abuse
29 September 1993	Male	68	Strathclyde	Left ventricular failure
14 October 1993	Male	53	Strathclyde	Sub-daral haemorrhage
24 October 1993	Male	40	Grampian	(1) Sub-dural haematoma (2) Head injury
26 November 1993	Male	32	Lothian and Borders	(1) Laryngeal obstruction (2) Inhalation of foreign body
1994				
5 February 1994	Male	31	Strathclyde	Sub-arachnoid haemorrhage
30 March 1994	Male	38	Strathclyde	(1) Sub-arachnoid haemorrhage (2) Hodgkins lymphoma (3) Intravenous drug abuse
14 April 1994	Male	52	Strathclyde	Aspiration of gastric contents
17 April 1994	Male	45	Strathclyde	(1) Gastro-intestinal haemorrhage (2) Rupture oesophageal varices (3) Alcoholic liver cirrhosis

Penal custody

Date of death	Sex and age	Sentence	Establishment	Cause of death
1989				
7 February 1989	Male 39	Untried	Barlinnie	Self-inflicted wounds to left arm
5 March 1989	Male 31	Life	Shotts	Suicide by hanging
23 March 1989	Male 50	Untried	Barlinnie	Epileptic seizure
4 June 1989	Male 60	Untried	Aberdeen	Death by hanging
14 July 1989	Male 27	9 years	Perth	Death by hanging
26 July 1989	Male 23	2 years	Shotts	Death by hanging
18 August 1989	Male 33	9 years	Edinburgh	Not determined
3 December 1989	Male 17	3 months	Polmont	Death by hanging
24 December 1989	Male 49	5 years	Shotts	Subarachnoid haemorrhage
1990				
31 January 1990	Male 49	12 years	Shotts	Coronary insufficiency and atherosclerosis
18 March 1990	Male 32	6 months	Barlinnie	Heart attack
9 June 1990	Male 30	Untried	Barlinnie	Death by hanging
28 June 1990	Male 52	Life	Aberdeen	Ischaemic heart disease
21 July 1990	Male 55	12 years	Dungavel	Murdered while on 48 hour home leave
29 July 1990	Male 55	Life	Perth	(1) Myocardial infarction (2) Coronary artery thrombosis (3) Coronary artery atherosclerosis
31 July 1990	Male 39	Life	Barlinnie	Death by hanging

Date of death	Sex and age	Sentence	Establishment	Cause of death
26 September 1990	Male 25	Untried	Barlinnie	Death by hanging
26 September 1991	Male 22	8 years	Perth	Infection of heart valve
13 November 1990	Male 37	9 months	Barlinnie	Bronchopneumonia and chronic alcoholism
9 December 1990	Male 44	42 months	Shotts	Inhalation of gastric contents due to acute morphine intoxication
1991				
3 January 1991	Male 34	2 years	Perth	Self-strangulation
25 January 1991	Male 27	3 months	Greenock	Death by hanging
30 January 1991	Male 44	6 years	Noranside	Coronary artery thrombosis
11 April 1991	Male 22	5 years	Shotts	Endotoxic shock due to intestinal obstruction
17 April 1991	Male 61	3 months	Greenock	Heart attack
28 July 1991	Male 32	60 days	Barlinnie	Death by hanging
18 August 1991	Male 31	11 years	Noranside	Murdered while on home leave
20 August 1991	Male 37	4 years	Shotts	Ischaemic heart disease due to coronary artery atheroma
23 September 1991	Male 19	Untried	Long[illegible]nd	Death by hanging
8 December 1991	Male 24	9 months, 60 days and 5 years	Shotts	(1) Klebsiella pneumonia (2) Immune deficiency
1992				
11 February 1992	Male 17	Untried	Polmont	Death by hanging
27 February 1992	Male 29	30 days	Barlinnie	Death by hanging
22 March 1992	Male 18	11 months	Polmont	Death by hanging
15 June 1992	Male 25	3 years	Edinburgh	Death by hanging
9 July 1992	Male 36	5 years and 5 years	Edinburgh	Death by hanging
25 August 1992	Male 30	Untried	Dumfries	Death by hanging
18 August 1992	Male 50	Life	Shotts	Cirrhosis of the liver
3 September 1992	Male 27	Untried	Edinburgh	Death by hanging
2 November 1992	Male 44	Untried	Edinburgh	Death by hanging
18 October 1992	Male 24	Untried	Barlinnie	Death by hanging
28 November 1992	Male 23	Untried	Aberdeen	Acute infective endocarditis
16 December 1992	Male 52	15 years	Peterhead	Fatal accident inquiry—Determination still awaited
23 December 1992	Male 39	3 years	Peterhead	Cardiac disease and cardiac enlargement
1993				
8 January 1993	Male 43	Life	Edinburgh	Knocked over by van
13 January 1993	Male 22	Untried	Greenock	Death by hanging
7 April 1993	Male 29	Life	Perth	Death by hanging
6 May 1993	Male 42	3 months	Low Moss	Cardiac arrest following an epileptic fit
9 July 1993	Male 26	6 months	Edinburgh	Dihydracodeine poisoning
19 July 1993	Male 42	Life	Perth	Coronary artery thrombosis
22 August 1993	Male 45	Untried	Edinburgh	Fall from gallery
20 September 1993	Male 21	5 years	Polmont	Vasovagal inhibition due to hanging
17 December 1993	Male 23	Untried	Barlinnie	Death by hanging
1994				
7 January 1994	Male 40	Untried	Greenock	Death by hanging
3 January 1994	Male 39	10 years	Peterhead	Metastatic Hodgkinsons Disease lymphoma
7 January 1994	Male 41	8 years	Edinburgh	Bronchial pneumonia and Aids
3 February 1994	Male 18	Untried	Aberdeen	Death by hanging

Forestry

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what sums have been expended on grants for planting of *(a)* broadleaf trees and *(b)* conifers in each of the last three years under each of the various incentive schemes in force; and what has been the average area of each planting on which grant was paid in those years.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 11 July 1994]:* The information is set out in the table.

Planting grants paid in Scotland (£'000s)

	1991-92	1992-93	1993-94
Conifer	3,500	5,600	5,700
Broadleaf	4,400	4,100	7,300
Total	7,900	9,700	13,000

Average area approved (hectares)

1991-92	1992-93	1993-94
14·2	12·6	17·9

Empty Properties

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on the current level of empty properties owned by *(a)* the private sector, *(b)* local authorities, *(c)* housing associations and *(d)* Scottish Homes.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 11 July 1994]:* The number of empty properties owned by local authorities and Scottish Homes was 18,611 and 1,632

respectively at 31 March 1993. Information on empty properties owned by the private sector and housing associations is not held centrally.

Public Bodies

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy to compile a register of members' interests of the non-executive members of NHS trusts and health boards.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 11 July 1994]:* My noble and learned Friend the Minister of State recently issued to health boards and NHS trusts codes of conduct and accountability which provide for relevant interests to be entered in a register which will be available to the public.

Operation Cancellation

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many patients, for each hospital, were not admitted within a month of a second cancellation of their operation in the last five years.

Mr. Stewart: Information on the incidence of cancellations in each hospital is set out in the "NHS Patient Treatment and Waiting Time Bulletin". Copies of the bulletin, which is published quarterly, have been placed in the Library of the House.

The systems for collecting information on the incidence of cancellations in hospitals in Scotland do not at present provide for identification of the numbers not admitted within a month of a second cancellation.

Gaelic Education

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when a copy of the summary of reponses to Her Majesty's inspectorate report, "Provision for Gaelic Education in Scotland" will be made available.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 11 July 1994]:* A summary of the 123 comments received on the report is currently being produced by my officials and should be available in the Library within the next few weeks.

Housing Subsidy

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much subsidy in 1993 was directed to *(a)* council housing and *(b)* other public sector housing.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 11 July 1994]:* In 1993-94, direct subsidies to council housing through housing support grant and general fund contributions amounted to £36·1 million. In the same year, subsidies to other Scottish public sector housing amounted to £21·3 million.

House Condition Survey

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the data on health issues collected during the Scottish house condition survey.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 11 July 1994]:* The information collected in the 1991 Scottish house condition survey consisted of two main strands: a survey to assess the physical condition of the occupied housing stock across all tenures and a socio-economic survey of the residents. The resulting data was analysed by Scottish Homes and poublished in July 1993.

The survey was not designed to collect information on health issues.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has of the numbers and percentages of patients admitted within three months and within 12 months of being listed, and for each hospital.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 11 July 1994]:* The information is shown in the table.

Inpatient and day case discharges[1] and waiting times of patients admitted from waiting lists
Year ending 31 March 1994[2]

Hospital	All discharges	Admitted within 3 months		Admitted within 12 months	
		Discharges	Per cent.	Discharges	Per cent.
Aberdeen City Hospital	495	494	100	495	100
Aberdeen Maternity Hospital	1	1	100	1	100
Aberdeen Royal Infirmary	27,787	24,574	88	27,648	99
Adamson Hospital	1,619	1,419	88	1,597	99
Annan Hospital	2	2	100	2	100
Arbroath Infirmary	173	165	95	173	100
Arduthie Hospital	6	6	100	6	100
Arran View Nursing Home	3	3	100	3	100
Arran War Memorial Hospital	377	374	99	377	100
Ashludie Hospital	78	78	100	78	100
Astley Ainslie Hospital	51	48	94	51	100
Ayrshire Central and Maternity Hospital	117	117	100	117	100
Balfour Hospital	786	773	98	786	100
Ballochmyle Hospital	6,120	4,582	75	5,874	96
Bangour Village Hospital	7	6	86	7	100
Beatson Oncology Centre	3,528	3,527	100	3,528	100
Belford Hospital	1,115	1,036	93	1,113	100
Belhaven Hospital	3	3	100	3	100
Belvidere Hospital	1	1	100	1	100
Biggart Hospital	214	214	100	214	100
Blairgowrie Cottage Hospital	28	28	100	28	100
Blawarthill Hospital	7	7	100	7	100
Bon Secours Private Hospital[3]	325	2	1	11	3
Borders General Hospital	7,620	6,838	90	7,613	100
Brechin Infirmary	6	6	100	6	100

Hospital	All discharges	Admitted within 3 months		Admitted within 12 months	
		Discharges	Per cent.	Discharges	Per cent.
Bridge of Earn Hospital	384	308	80	379	99
Bridge of Weir Hospital	200	200	100	200	100
Broomhill Hospital	29	27	93	29	100
Caithness General Hospital	1,484	1,281	86	1,470	99
Cameron Hospital, Windygates	113	112	99	112	99
Campbell Hospital	14	14	100	14	100
Campbeltown Hospital	11	11	100	11	100
Canniesburn Hospital	5,416	3,807	70	4,728	87
Castle Douglas Hospital	23	23	100	23	100
Chalmers Hospital	198	196	99	198	100
Cleland Hospital	2	2	100	2	100
Corstorphine Hospital	5	4	80	5	100
Cowglen Hospital	5	5	100	5	100
Crosshouse Hospital	15,436	11,298	73	15,029	97
Daliburgh Hospital	81	80	99	81	100
Dalrymple Hospital	2	2	100	2	100
Darnley Hospital	3	3	100	3	100
Davidson Cottage Hospital	1	1	100	1	100
Dr. Gray's Hospital	3,425	3,111	91	3,402	99
Drumchapel Hospital	104	104	100	104	100
Duke Street Hospital	1	1	100	1	100
Dumfries and Galloway Royal Infirmary	10,144	7,504	74	9,868	97
Dunbar Hospital	4	4	100	4	100
Dundee Dental Hospital	891	860	97	890	100
Dundee Limb Fitting Centre	126	125	99	126	100
Dundee Royal Infirmary	8,411	6,309	75	7,973	95
Dunfermline and West Fife Hospital	518	354	68	507	98
Dunoon and District General Hospital	366	306	84	365	100
East Fortune Hospital	1	1	100	1	100
Eastbank Hospital	2	2	100	2	100
Eastern General Hospital	4,656	3,931	84	4,638	100
Edenhall Hospital	47	46	98	47	100
Edinburgh City Hospital	7,966	5,536	69	7,774	98
Edinburgh Dental Hospital	4,343	4,216	97	4,335	100
Edinburgh Royal Infirmary	18,327	14,523	79	17,645	96
Edington Cottage Hospital	3	3	100	3	100
Erskine Hospital	1	1	100	1	100
Falkirk and District Royal Infirmary	9,074	6,596	73	8,884	98
Fleming Cottage Hospital	18	18	100	18	100
Forfar Infirmary	49	44	90	49	100
Forth Park Hospital	6	6	100	6	100
Fourhills Nursing Home	18	18	100	18	100
Fraserburgh Hospital	33	32	97	33	100
Garrick Hospital	931	723	78	912	98
Gartnavel General Hospital	7,320	6,258	85	7,197	98
Gesto Hospital	7	7	100	7	100
Gilbert Bain Hospital	1,121	984	88	1,119	100
Glasgow Dental Hospital and School	507	498	98	507	100
Glasgow Royal Infirmary	22,855	20,630	90	22,621	99
Glen O'Dee Hospital	1	1	100	1	100
Glenrothes Hospital	38	36	95	38	100
Hairmyres Hospital	7,438	6,307	85	7,388	99
Homeopathic Hospital, Glasgow	163	141	87	162	99
Huntley Jubilee Hospital	145	135	93	145	100
Ian Charles Hospital	29	29	100	29	100
Insch and District War Memorial Hospital	5	5	100	5	100
Inverclyde Royal Hospital	9,060	7,309	81	8,930	99
Invergordon County Hospital	5	5	100	5	100
Inverurie Hospital	75	73	97	75	100
Johnstone Hospital	1	1	100	1	100
Kincardine O'Neil War Memorial Hospital	4	4	100	4	100
Kings Cross Hospital	654	657	99	654	100
Kirkcudbright Hospital	24	24	100	24	100
Lady Margaret Hospital, Millport	1	1	100	1	100
Law Hospital	11,380	9,060	80	11,206	98
Lawson Memorial Hospital	688	685	100	688	100
Leanchoil Hospital	38	38	100	38	100
Lenzie Hospital	28	28	100	28	100
Liberton Hospital	43	43	100	43	100
Lightburn Hospital	18	18	100	18	100
Lochgreen Hospital	1	1	100	1	100
Lochmaddy Hospital	33	33	100	33	100
Lockhart Hospital	158	158	100	158	100
Lynebank Hospital	3	3	100	3	100
Mackinnon Memorial Hospital	527	525	100	526	100
Maidencraig House	13	13	100	13	100
Maud Hospital	8	8	100	8	100

Hospital	All discharges	Admitted within 3 months		Admitted within 12 months	
		Discharges	Per cent.	Discharges	Per cent.
Mearnskirk General Hospital	1	1	100	1	100
Meigle Cottage Hospital	36	35	97	36	100
Merchiston Hospital	2	2	100	2	100
Migdale Hospital	1	1	100	1	100
Milesmark Hospital	44	44	100	44	100
Moffat Hospital	36	36	100	36	100
Monklands District General Hospital	8,707	7,013	81	8,408	97
Montfield Hospital	146	145	99	145	99
Montrose Royal Infirmary	7	7	100	7	100
Morningfield Hospital	2	2	100	2	100
Nairn Town and County Hospital	28	28	100	28	100
Netherlea Hospital	1	1	100	1	100
Newton Stewart Hospital	19	19	100	19	100
Nicolson Mackenzie Hospital	13	6	46	13	100
Ninewells Hospital	17,103	12,826	75	16,662	97
Northern General Hospital	1	—	—	1	100
Oban County Hospital	411	410	100	411	100
Perth Royal Infirmary	7,392	6,049	82	7,289	99
Peterhead Cottage Hospital	51	51	100	51	100
Portree Hospital	2	2	100	2	100
Princess Margaret Rose Hospital	4,300	2,793	65	4,212	98
Queen Margaret Hospital	8,517	6,399	75	8,255	97
Raigmore Hospital	14,388	11,201	78	14,129	98
Randolph Wemyss Memorial Hospital	379	311	82	365	96
Ravenscraig Hospital	90	90	100	90	100
Roadmeetings Hospital	1	1	100	1	100
Roodlands General Hospital	1,621	1,280	79	1,619	100
Ross Hall Hospital	1	—	—	—	—
Ross Memorial Hospital	186	139	75	186	100
Rothesay Victoria Hospital	260	236	91	259	100
Roxburghe House	139	139	100	139	100
Royal Aberdeen Children's Hospital	3,499	2,521	72	3,436	98
Royal Alexandra Hospital	15,989	13,613	85	15,781	99
Royal Northern Infirmary	180	180	100	180	100
Royal Samaritan Hospital	8	8	100	8	100
Royal Victoria Hospital	5	4	80	5	100
Royal Victoria Hospital, Edinburgh	89	89	100	89	100
Ruchill Hospital	2	2	100	2	100
RHSC, Edinburgh	4,401	3,381	77	4,338	99
RHSC, Glasgow	7,615	5,362	70	7,516	99
Seafield Hospital	54	53	98	54	100
Simpson Memorial Maternity Pavilion	557	557	100	557	100
Southern General Hospital	14,597	12,389	85	14,137	97
Southfield Hospital	1	1	100	1	100
Spynie Hospital	95	95	100	95	100
St Andrew's Hospice	5	5	100	5	100
St Andrews Memorial Hospital	889	770	87	886	100
St John's Hospital At Howden	13,416	9,718	72	12,644	94
St Michaels Hospital	16	13	81	16	100
Stephen Cottage Hospital	24	24	100	24	100
Stirling Royal Infirmary	14,033	10,349	74	13,830	99
Stobhill Hospital	10,524	8,744	83	10,426	99
Stonehouse Hospital	5,267	3,905	74	5,237	99
Stracathro Hospital	3,664	3,205	87	3,655	100
Strathclyde Hospital	4	4	100	4	100
The Ayr Hospital	6,675	4,676	70	6,495	97
Thomas Hope Hospital	2	2	100	2	100
Thornhill Hospital	1	1	100	1	100
Tippethill Hospital	24	23	96	24	100
Tor-na-dee Hospital	29	29	100	29	100
Turner Memorial Hospital	72	72	100	72	100
Turriff Cottage Hospital	18	18	100	18	100
Udston Hospital	6	6	100	6	100
Vale of Leven District General Hospital	4,916	4,581	93	4,916	100
Victoria Cottage Hospital	55	52	95	55	100
Victoria Geriatric Unit, Glasgow	18	18	100	18	100
Victoria Hospital, Kirkcaldy	11,985	9,500	79	11,747	98
Victoria Infirmary, Glasgow	15,395	12,200	79	15,048	98
West Highland Hospital	1,417	1,301	92	1,409	99
Western General Hospital, Edinburgh	17,104	14,250	83	16,396	96
Western Infirmary, Glasgow	22,065	18,307	83	21,746	99
Western Isles Hospital	1,290	1,204	93	1,290	100
Woodcot Hospital	2	2	100	2	100
Woodend General Hospital	3,557	2,514	71	3,510	99
All Hospitals	449,182	362,775	81	439,437	98

[1] Excludes psychiatric and obstetric services.
[2] Provisional.
[3] Patients admitted to the Bon Secours Private Hospital are plastic surgery waiting list initiative cases previously waiting at Canniesburn Hospital.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish, for each hospital, the percentage of patients seen within half an hour of appointment times for each of the past five years.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 11 July 1994]:* Information on how long patients have to wait to be seen after their appointment time at out-patient clinics is monitored by health boards and is not collected centrally. Health boards report that few patients overall wait longer than 30 minutes; that where they do they are given an explanation and an indication of how much longer the wait is likely to be; and that where monitoring reveals a particular problem action is taken to remedy it.

GP Fundholders

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many general practitioner fundholders he expects there to be in each health board area by January 1995; and how many there are currently in each area.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 11 July 1994]:* According to the latest information provided by health boards the current number of operational fundholders and estimated numbers by January 1995 are as set out in the table.

	Number of GP fundholders currently operational	*Estimated number of operational GP fundholders by January 1995*
Argyll and Clyde	5	5
Ayrshire and Arran	4	4
Borders	2	2
Dumfries and Galloway	1	1
Fife	4	4
Forth Valley	4	5
Grampian	31	31
Greater Glasgow	11	11
Highland	3	3
Lanarkshire	14	15
Lothian	15	18
Orkney	—	—
Shetland	—	—
Tayside	9	9
Western Isles	—	—
SCOTLAND	103	108

Ambulances

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will instruct ambulance services to remove the bull bars fitted to their vehicles immediately and instruct all ambulance services that the fitting of bull bars to emergency vehicles is prohibited on the grounds of safety.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 11 July 1994]:* There are no bull bars fitted to the fleet of accident and emergency ambulances usd by the Scottish Ambulance Service and there are no plans to do so. Only 13 Land Rovers have bull bars. These vehicles are useful for work in rough terrain. The bars were supplied and fitted by the manufacturer. The Scottish Ambulance Service would comply with any safety guidance issued by the manufacturer or the Department of Transport.

Ambulance Arrival Times

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on the numbers and percentages of emergency ambulances arriving within 14 minutes in urban areas and 19 minutes in rural areas, for the past five years.

Mr. Stewart: The information available is as follows:

	[1]*High*		*Medium*		*Sparse*	
Year	*Number of calls*	*Percentage in 14 minutes*	*Number of calls*	*Percentage in 18 minutes*	*Number of calls*	*Percentage in 21 minutes*
1993-94	90,604	90	89,078	94	29,464	88
1992-93	87,668	87	87,652	94	28,095	89
1991-92	82,676	87	83,442	93	24,490	88
1990-91[3]	—	—	—	—	—	—
1989-90[3]	—	—	—	—	—	—

[1] The Scottish target times for ambulance response to emergency calls are based on population density and are as follows:

Density measured in people per acre	*95 per cent. of emergency calls responded to in*
Highly populated > 3 per acre	14 minutes
Medium populated < 3 > 0·5 per acre	18 minutes
Sparsely populated < 0·5 per acre	21 minutes

[3] Figures are not available for 1990-91 and 1989-90.

Housing

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the real-terms increase or decrease in his Department's spending on each sector of housing since 1979, setting aside borrowing consents and income gained from sale of housing stock.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 11 July 1994]*: Expenditure by the Scottish Office Environment Department and the Scottish Office Industry Department, for housing in the new towns, on housing subsidies to local authorities and new towns, which accounted for around one third of the net housing programme in 1979-80, decreased in real terms by 93 per cent. and 70·3 per cent. respectively between 1979-80 and 1993-94 consistent with our policy of ending indiscriminate subsidies and concentrating resources on tenants in greatest need through housing benefit. The Scottish Special Housing Association and Housing Corporation in Scotland were subsumed by Scottish Homes in 1989 which is funded on a different basis; no comparison with 1979-80 can therefore be made.

Pollution

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on the number of patients suffering ill health or death from carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, tobacco smoke, formaldehyde, asbestos, microbes and radon pollution in their homes.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 11 July 1994]:* Morbidity details are not available. The death data for 1992 are set out in the table.

Deaths from Selected Causes Scotland 1992

	Number
	Number
Carbon monoxide	122
Nitrogen dioxide	—
Tobacco smoke	—
Asbestosis	8
Formaldehyde (solution)	4
Formaldehyde (gas or vapour)	—

Hospital Waiting Times

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish, for each accident and emergency unit, the percentage of patients seen within five minutes of arrival for each of the last five years.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 11 July 1994]*: Information on waiting times in accident and emergency departments has not previously been collected centrally. On 31 March 1994, my noble and learned Friend the Minister of State announced waiting time targets which each health board in Scotland had agreed with hospitals providing accident and emergency services. The targets cover the maximum time to be seen and assessed; the maximum time to be seen by a doctor and have treatment comence and the maximum time for completion of treatment. Arrangements are in hand for the monitoring of performance against these targets to be carried out later in the year. Information on waiting times in accident and emergency departments is scheduled for publication in 1995.

Hospital League Tables

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what statistics he will collect in order to prepare hospital league tables.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 11 July 1994]:* The statistical requirements of the patients charter are under constant review. Over the past few years the "NHS Patient Treatment and Waiting Time Bulletin" has expanded as more, and reliable, statistics on performance against charter standards have become available. This process will continue.

Water Piping (Dissolved Lead)

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the latest information for each region of the level of dissolved lead in water piping.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 11 July 1994]:* Such detailed information is not held centrally. Results of analysis of water samples taken from consumers' taps are held on public registers maintained by the water authorities. Summaries of this information are included in the authorities' annual reports on drinking water quality, available from each authority. Further summaries are included in the annual drinking water quality in Scotland report published by the Scottish Office, copies of which are in the Library.

TREASURY

Pensions Contributions

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the E/T ratio for each year since 1964 for working on two-thirds average and twice average earnings, where E represents the direct cost of employment, including national insurance and pension contributions, and T represents take-home pay after deducting normal PAYE and national insurance and representative pension contributions.

Mr. Dorrell: The information on pension contributions which would be necessary to answer this question is not available.

Living Standards

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on living standards.

Mr. Portillo: Government policies provide a firm basis for sustained growth with low inflation. That is the best way to protect the living standards of all groups.

Privatisation

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what were the net contributions to public finances from the formerly publicly owned companies in the five years prior to their privatisation.

Mr. Dorrell: The net contributions to public finances, represented by the negative external financing requirements—EFRS—for ex-nationalised industries in the years leading to their privatisations, is shown in the table below. The positive EFRs represent a cost to the public finances. Data in previous years are not available on a consistent basis.

External Financing Requirements

£ million

	1980-81	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
British Aerospace	[1]-30·0	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
National Freight Company Ltd	10·0	7·0	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
British Transport Docks Board	1·0	13·3	-11·8	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Enterprise Oil	n/a	n/a	n/a	-65·0	-20·0	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
British Telecom	-109·0	250·0	-323·0	-225·0	-341·0	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
British Shipbuilders (Warships)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	78·0	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
British Nuclear Oil Corporation	-217·0	-269·5	-59·7	9·5	42·7	31·3	P	P	P	P	P	P
British Gas	-409·0	39·0	-230·0	-45·0	-189·0	-190·0	-684·0	P	P	P	P	P
British Airways	304·0	167·7	-34·7	-173·8	-334·6	-211·3	-113·0	P	P	P	P	P
British Airports Authority	18·0	1·9	1·7	17·9	9·6	-21·0	17·4	-8·6	P	P	P	P
National Bus Company	85·0	74·2	62·1	64·5	55·7	47·6	-18·7	-117·8	-1·9	P	P	P
British Steel	1,119·0	766·0	569·0	318·0	523·0	411·0	22·0	-290·0	-392·0	P	P	P
Water (England and Wales)	n/a	280·1	291·3	350·0	286·4	207·5	106·8	34·1	11·2	-4·6	P	P
Girobank	[2]n/a	-3·5	-4·5	-11·7	-2·4	-3·1	-9·1	-18·9	-25·0	-16·9	P	P
Electricity (England and Wales)	140·0	-221·2	-153·8	-485·0	522·9	-467·6	-1,325·0	-1,261·0	-1,773·0	-1,262·0	-209·1	P
North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board	42·0	-60·1	-2·0	-20·0	41·6	-39·3	-11·8	4·3	-9·5	33·1	2·8	-22·6
South of Scotland Electricity Board	32·0	127·7	127·3	253·0	285·1	229·1	235·7	124·3	132·5	-307·1	-108·9	-47·8

[1] BAe figure for 1980-81 up to 31 December 1980.
[2] Girobank was a part of the Post Office EFR in 1980-81.
P=Privatised.
n/a=Not applicable.

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the amount of corporation tax received from formerly publicly owned companies since each privatisation has taken place.

Mr. Dorrell: Corporation tax paid by formerly publicly-owned companies since 1987-88 is as follows:

Year	*£ billion*
1987-88	1·5
1988-89	1·6
1989-90	1·5
1990-91	2·1
1991-92	2·3
1992-93	2·3
1993-94	1·9

Pensioners (Income Tax)

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the total amount of income tax paid, in the most recent year for which figures are available, by people aged *(a)* over 65 years, *(b)* over 70 years and *(c)* over 75 years.

Mr. Dorrell: Provisional estimates for 1994-95 are given below:

Total income tax liability

	£ billion
Taxpayers aged 65 years or over	5·0
Taxpayers aged 70 years or over	3·0
Taxpayers aged 75 years or over	1·6
All taxpayers	69·7

Royal Taxation

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the broad categories of spending which are tax deductible under the memorandum of understanding on royal taxation; and what limitations there are on the items which are classified as tax deductible.

Mr. Dorrell: Appendix A to the memorandum of understanding sets out rules for determining the head of state expenses deductible from Privy Purse income, so that income tax falls only on the income used for the Queen's personal expenditure. Paragraph 4 lists nine categories of deductible expenses. Similarly, appendix B to the

memorandum sets out four categories of expenses for the income of the Prince of Wales from the Duchy of Cornwall. The memorandum of understanding makes it clear that only official expenses within these categories are deductible.

Venture Capital Trusts

Mr. Horam: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what progress he is making with consultations on the consultative document on venture capital trusts issued last March.

Mr. Dorrell: We have undertaken extensive consultations on the venture capital trust proposals and are now reflecting on the points that have been made.

Inheritance Tax

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his reply of 9 March, *Official Report*, column *220*, if he will make it his policy to require those landowners benefiting from conditional exemption from inheritance tax on the grounds that there is public access across their land to cause notices to be erected at suitable intervals around the perimeter of the land indicating a right of public access.

Mr. Dorrell: As I explained in my reply to the hon. Member on 8 March, *Official Report*, column *98*, the owner of land which is conditionally exempt from inheritance tax is required to publicise the agreed public access arrangements. Each case is considered individually and the extent and nature of the publicity will depend on all the facts of each particular case. For new designations of scenic land in England, owners are required to display at all points of entry on to their land map boards showing the agreed public access.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the total acreage of land in England where the landowners benefit from conditional exemption from inheritance tax by virtue of there being a right of public access.

Mr. Dorrell: The area, rounded, of land in England of outstanding scenic interest which is conditionally exempt from inheritance tax or capital transfer tax is 51,000 hectares.

Higher Rate Tax

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 17 December 1993, *Official Report*, column *970*, if he will provide comparable information on higher rate tax forgone by reigon for the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Dorrell: The available data were given in my reply of 17 December.

Exchange Rate Mechanism

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what factors Her Majesty's Government took into account before entry into the exchange rate mechanism; what estimates of the effect on United Kingdom exports and imports were made at the time; and what was the outturn up to September 1992;

(2) what has been the change in the nominal rate for the pound sterling against the *(a)* deutschmark and *(b)* ecu since December 1989; and what has been the effect on exports, imports, output and employment in the principal import-competing and export industries, distinguishing between trade with EC countries and trade with the rest of the world;

(3) what was the change in the real and nominal exchange rates of the pound against *(a)* the dollar, *(b)* EU countries and *(c)* the rest of world from (i) September 1992 and (ii) February 1993 to latest available date.

Mr. Nelson: The Government took into account a broad range of economic and political factors before sterling's entry into the exchange rate mechanism in 1990. The exchange rate is only one factor affecting exports, imports, output and employment. It is difficult to isolate the effects of the exchange rate from that of other factors such as activity and prices in the United Kingdom and its trading partners. I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 21 March, *Official Report*, column *15*, which provides references to exchange rate and price data which can be used to calculate the information requested.

Retail Prices Index

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the import share of goods sold retail which are covered by the retail prices index; what has been the relative price increase since August 1992 of *(a)* such imported goods and *(b)* domestically produced goods.

Mr. Nelson: The information requested is not available.

Capital Gains Tax

Mr. Butterfill: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the yield from capital gains tax in each of the last five years and what were the costs of collection in each year; what proportion of the yield and costs in each year derived from the taxation of investments in unquoted companies; and what estimates he has made of each figure for each of the next two years.

Mr. Dorrell: The requested figures for capital gains tax yield and costs of collection are:

£ million

	Total Net Receipts[1]	*Cost of Collection*[1,2]
1989-90	1,854	34·3
1990-91	1,852	39·0
1991-92	1,140	43·3
1992-93	982	38·4
[3]1993-94	711	[4]N/A
[3]1994-95	900	N/A
[3]1995-96	1,000	N/A

[1] The figures quoted exclude tax on gains made by companies included in corporation tax. Some of the costs associated with companies, however, cannot be separately identified and are therefore included in the costs figures for CGT rather than for corporation tax.

[2] Costs are based on total departmental expenditure. Manpower usage and costs of administration for 1989-90 onwards have been adjusted to reflect a new basis of costing therefore direct comparisons of this and later figures with earlier years may be misleading. More detail regarding this adjustment is given in the Board of Inland Revenue's Report for the year ending 31st March 1991.

[3] Summer Economic Forecast rounded to the nearest £100 million.

[4] The 1993-94 cost of collection is not yet available and will be given

in the Board of Inland Revenue's Report for the year ending 31st March 1994 to be published in September 1994.
[5] Provisional.

I regret that routine information on CGT yield and costs analysed by type of asset is not available. However, a recent survey of capital gains taxpayers with liabilities in 1990-91 showed that around one sixth of the disposals and one third of net chargeable gains arose from shares in unquoted companies. This survey was before changes were made to retirement relief and the introduction of reinvestment relief, which will affect the proportion of tax coming from investment in unquoted trading companies.

Mr. Butterfill: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the annual loss of revenue from capital gains tax resulting from a change of tax residence by individual taxpayers.

Mr. Dorrell: The information on which to base a reliable estimate is not available.

Tax Receipts

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the total receipts from *(a)* value added tax and *(b)* income tax for 1979 and for each subsequent financial year for which figures are available.

Sir John Cope: The information requested is given in the table below. It also appears monthly in "Financial Statistics" which is produced by the Central Statistical Office.

VAT and Income tax receipts

Year	*VAT (£ billion)*	*Income tax (£ billion)*
1979-80	8·2	20·6
1980-81	11·0	24·3
1981-82	11·9	28·7
1982-83	13·8	30·4
1983-84	15·2	31·1
1984-85	18·5	32·5
1985-86	19·3	35·4
1986-87	21·4	38·5
1987-88	24·1	41·4
1988-89	27·3	43·4
1989-90	29·5	48·8
1990-91	31·0	55·3
1991-92	35·6	57·5
1992-93	37·3	56·8
[1]1993-94	39·2	58·4

[1] Provisional outturn.

Alcohol Duties

Mr. Steen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what amounts and percentages of the total revenue raised by duties on alcohol arose from *(a)* spirits, *(b)* wines and *(c)* beers in each month since 1 December 1993 or other convenient period.

Sir John Cope: A breakdown of excise revenue for spirits, beer and wine from December 1993 to May 1994 is as follows:

£ million

	December 1993	*January 1994*	*February 1994*	*March 1994*	*April 1994*	*May 1994*
Spirits	307	115	68	112	126	128
Percentage of alcohol revenue	43·6	25·4	26·5	32·3	28·9	30
Beer	242	235	133	161	214	201
Percentage of alcohol revenue	34·3	51·9	51·6	46·8	49·1	47·2
Wine	148	93	53	67	86	87
Percentage of alcohol revenue	21	20·5	20·5	19·2	19·7	20·4

Note:—The figures for April and May 1994 are provisional.

VAT (Fuel)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many pensioners receiving compensation for the cost of value added tax on fuel will pay income tax on that money.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 24 June 1994]:* Some 3·4 million pensioners, out of a total of 10 million, pay income tax.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much of the compensation for the cost of value added tax on fuel given to pensioners will return to the Treasury in the form of income tax.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 24 June 1994]:* The Inland Revenue estimates that in 1994-95, about £20 million of income tax will come from the increase in benefits to pensioners given in the value added tax compensation package.

Consultants

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what consultancy income has been paid under Government contracts to (i) Touche Ross, (ii) Arthur Andersen, (iii) Coopers and Lybrand, (iv) Ernst and Young, (v) KPMG Peat Marwick and (vi) Price Waterhouse in each of the last five years.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 1 July 1994]:* This information is not held centrally.

Contracts

Mr. Byers: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer on what occasions in the last 10 years he or a Minister in his Department has given a direction to civil servants to award a contract against the advice of the civil service; what was the subject matter of the contract and its value; and when it was awarded.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 8 July 1994]:* I know of no such cases.

Luxury Cars

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he will take to ensure that non-Italian luxury cars are subject to a taxation system when sold in Italy that does not discriminate against cars made in other EU countries.

Mr. Needham: I have been asked to reply.

Officials have made written and oral representations in Brussels in support of a formal complaint to the Commission by a British car manufacturer. The British embassy in Rome has raised the issue with the Italian Government. We have made clear our willingness to discuss further action to help British car manufacturers affected by the Italian tax.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Child Support Agency

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what information he has on the number of fathers who have left their jobs following assessment by the Child Support Agency.

Mr. Burt: The information requested is not available. It is, however, unlikely that many fathers would leave their jobs to avoid paying maintenance for their children. Following the legislative changes in February, the maintenance assessment formula ensures that all absent parents, and their second families, are at least £30 a week better off after payment of maintenance than they would be if unemployed and receiving income support. In addition, someone who has left work voluntarily is not entitled to unemployment benefit, and income support is payable at a reduced rate.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many complaints he has received about the workings of the Child Support Agency since its creation.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from J. T. Hughes to Dr. Lynne Jones, dated 12 July 1994:

In her absence the Chief Executive, Mrs. Hepplewhite, has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the number of complaints that have been received about the Child Support Agency since its creation.

Between 5 April 1993 and 31 March 1994, 10,886 complaints were recorded, which represents just over 1 per cent. of the 850,000 cases the Agency has taken on.

I hope you will find this reply helpful.

War Pensions

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people are currently in receipt of *(a)* war widows' pension or *(b)* war disablement pension.

Mr. Hague: On 30 June 1994 there were:

(a) 49,272 war widows' pensions in payment; and

(b) 250,315 war disablement pensions in payment.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate he has of the total cost of war widows' pension payments in *(a)* 1978-79, *(b)* 1983-84, *(c)* 1987-88, *(d)* 1992-93, *(e)* 1993-94 and *(f)* 1994-95.

Mr. Hague: Table A details actual expenditure in respect of war widows for the financial years 1978-79, 1983-84, 1987-88, and 1992-93

Table A

Financial year	*Amount (£ millions)*
1978-79	117
1983-84	177
1987-88	190
1992-93	225

Total actual expenditure for 1993-94 is not yet available. Table B details the current estimate of expenditure in respect of war widows for that year and the estimate for 1994-95.

Table B

Financial year	*Amount (£ millions)*
1993-94	237
1994-95	237

Disabled People

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if, when the hearing of a case involving a disabled person has to be resited because of difficulties of access for that disabled person from what would have been its normal venue, the resultant additional expenses can be reimbursed by the appropriate administrative department.

Mr. Scott: Any appellant who attends the hearing of an appeal has all travelling and associated expenses reimbursed.

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list *(a)* the amounts payable and the earnings limits for adult dependency increases payable with invalidity benefit since 1971, *(b)* the changes in eligibility conditions for adult dependency increases payable with invalidity benefit since 1971, *(c)* the arrangements for transitional protection for each and *(d)* numbers of claimants receiving transitional protection under each heading.

Mr. Scott: The information is in the tables:

(i) adult dependency increases: rates and earnings limits

Date	*Weekly rate £*	*Earnings limit £*
September 1971	3·70	9·50
October 1972	4·15	9·50
October 1973	4·75	9·50
July 1974	6·00	13·00
April 1975	6·90	20·00
November 1975	7·90	20·00
November 1976	9·20	20·00
November 1977	10·50	40·00
November 1978	11·70	45·00
November 1979	14·00	45·00

Date	Weekly rate £	Earnings limit £
November 1980	15·60	45·00
November 1981	17·00	45·00
November 1982	18·85	45·00
November 1983	19·55	45·00
November 1984	20·55	45·00
September 1985	20·55	28·45
November 1985	23·00	30·45
July 1986	23·25	30·80
April 1987	23·75	31·45
April 1988	24·75	32·75
April 1989	26·20	34·70
April 1990	28·20	37·35
April 1991	31·25	41·40
April 1992	32·55	43·10
April 1993	33·70	44·65
April 1994	34·50	45·45

Note: Until 16 September 1985, the increase was withdrawn on a tapered basis when earnings exceeded the limit shown above by 0·10p or more. From that date except in transitionally protected cases the increase is wholly extinguished when earnings exceed the limit shown above by any amount.

(ii) Changes in eligibility conditions and details of transitional protection

Date and description of change	Details of transitional protection
November 1981	
Payment for a prescribed relative discontinued	Right to protection continues for a maximum of two years whilst entitlement remains. No longer applies.
November 1983	
Provision made for a dependent husband if his earnings are no more than the increase payable.	Not required—beneficial change.
November 1984	
Occupational pensions treated as earnings.	Protection continues whilst increase remains in payment. Number still benefitting unknown.
Provision made for a male adult dependant caring for a child.	Not required—beneficial change.
September 1985	
Tapered earnings rule abolished (see note to Table (i)).	Right to protection continues whilst entitlement remains. 3,000[1] recipients estimated as benefitting at 4 April 1992.
October 1989	
Personal pensions treated as earnings.	Protection continues whilst increase remains in payment. Number still benefitting unknown.

[1] Rounded to the nearest thousand.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people on invalidity benefit who were found *(a)* capable of alternative work and *(b)* capable of normal occupation in each of the quarters between the quarter ended June 1993 and quarter ended June 1994 subsequently received (i) unemployment benefit, (ii) income support, by virtue of signing on as unemployed and (iii) regained entitlement to invaldity benefit.

Mr. Scott: Information about subsequent activities of people found capable of work following a medical examination by the Benefits Agency medical service is being collected as part of the arrangements for monitoring the revised medical control procedures introduced from April 1993. The sample size from this exercise is not yet sufficient to provide statistically reliable information.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the total sum currently withheld from recipients of invalidity benefit in respect of the Government's appeal against the decision of the social security commissioner regarding equal treatment for women and men in entitlement to the benefit.

Mr. Scott: Around 37,000 women are having their increase of benefit suspended pending the outcome of the appeal. Information about the amount of money involved is not routinely collected and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many appeals concerning invalidity benefit where received by his Department during each of the quarters between the quarter ended June 1993 to the quarter ended June 1994; and what percentage of these were found in the claimant's favour.

Mr. Scott: The available information is in the table:

Appeals registered with Social Security Appeal Tribunals: Invalidity Benefit

Quarter ending	Appeals lodged with the tribunal	[1]Appeals heard and decided by the tribunal	[2]Percentage decided in the claimants favour
30 June 1993	5,689	1,800	51·7
30 September 1993	7,021	2,961	54·9
31 December 1993	7,150	3,225	57·8

Source: Analytical Services Division.
[1] Includes appeals lodged in an earlier quarter.
[2] Percentage of appeals heard and decided.

Benefits Claims

Mr. Bates: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what action is being taken to establish and investigate inconsistencies in information given in relation to claims for different benefits made by the same person.

Mr. Lilley: I have authorised a series of exercises to compare information held on different departmental

computer files to ensure that inconsistencies are identified. Work has already started to match data for income support, family credit and child benefit. Any inconsistencies identified from such work will be investigated.

Privatisation

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security which organisations, agencies and other bodies relating to his departmental area of responsibility have been privatised since 1990; and what plans he has for further privatisation.

Mr. Hague: None.

Residence Qualification

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security for what reasons foreigners entering the United Kingdom immediately qualify for social security benefits; which other EC countries have a similar policy; and if he will now take steps to amend the recent United Kingdom situation so as to require a minimum of six months' residence to qualify for benefit.

Mr. Burt: In general, income support, housing benefit and council tax benefit are not available to people who come from outside the European Economic Area. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced yesterday new regulations which will reduce eligibility further. From 1 August claimants to these benefits will have to satisfy a habitual residence test, unless they are workers, refugees or given exceptional leave to remain in this country. The qualifying conditions for other social security benefits vary but are usually dependant on a contribution condition. Eligibility conditions for income-related safety net benefits in other EEA countries vary widely, but most have a residence condition, the changes announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, yesterday bring us into line with them.

Retirement Pensions

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many British pensioners residing overseas in countries where their pensions are frozen are over *(a)* 80, *(b)* 75 and *(c)* 70 years of age; and what would be the cost of unfreezing their pensions above these respective age thresholds.

Mr. Hague: The information is in the table.

	Number of pensioners
Pensioners aged 80 and over	79,273
Pensioners aged 75 and over	123,366
Pensioners aged 70 and over	228,377

Estimated cost of unfreezing pensions

	£ million
Pensioners aged 80 and over	107
Pensioners aged 75 and over	138
Pensioners aged 70 and over	192

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many individuals are in receipt of frozen British state retirement pensions; and what is the average level of weekly payment in *(a)* Australia, *(b)* Canada, *(c)* New Zealand, *(d)* South Africa and *(e)* the Falkland Islands.

Mr. Hague: The information is in the table.

Country	*Number of retirement pension and widow beneficiaries at 29 January 1994*	*Estimated average level of weekly payment* £
Australia	159,235	21·54
Canada	118,362	17·86
New Zealand	32,042	20·57
South Africa	33,208	21·17
Falkland Islands	17	29·26

Benefits Agency

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security for each Benefits Agency district office in Birmingham *(a)* how many people were in receipt of (i) invalidity benefit and (ii) disability premium at the beginning of each of the last three financial years, *(b)* how many people (1) in receipt of invalidity benefit and (2) in receipt of disability premium were referred to a regional medical officer for a medical examination in each of the last three financial years and how many were found to be *(x)* incapable of work, *(y)* fit for work within limits and *(z)* fit for work.

Mr. Scott: This is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Dr. Lynne Jones, dated 11 July 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about benefit recipients in Birmingham.

The information is not available in the format requested. This is because Benefit Agency (BA) District boundaries do not correspond exactly with county or borough boundaries.

Birmingham postal districts B1 to B45 are dealt with by the BA Districts of Birmingham, Chamberlain, Birmingham Heartlands, Birmingham North West, Birmingham South East and Birmingham South West collectively. Other Birmingham postal districts are dealt with by BA Districts which also cover areas outside the Birmingham grographical region. Statistics relating to recipients of Invalidity Benefit (IVB) and Disability Premium payable with Income Support dealt with by these Districts and who were resident in a Birmingham postal district could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

At Appendix 1, I have provided the numbers of people claiming IVB in each of the Birmingham Districts covering postal districts B1 to B45. The figures show the position on the last working day of March in each year from and including 1992. This information was obtained from a monthly 100% clerical count of cases in each District's offices, and represents the most accurate statistics available to show the position at the beginning of each financial year.

No corresponding information can be provided for March 1991. IVB recipients were not identified separately until May 1991. Prior to this date, numbers of IVB cases were aggregated with Sickness Benefit cases. In addition, there is no requirement for Districts to retain statistics relating to numbers of claims for more than two years.

The statistics provided for IVB recipients to include a small number of customers who have claimed but are not receiving benefit; eg. where there is underlying title to IVB but a higher, overlapping benefit is in payment.

At Appendix 2 I have provided numbers of people receiving Disability Premium with their entitlement to Income Support

from the BA Birmingham Districts on the last working day of March each year since 1992. Statistics relating to Income Support recipients are not routinely collected in relation to financial years. The figures provided represent the most accurate available to reflect the position on the dates in question.

Information regarding numbers of recipients of Invalidity Benefit and Disability Premium referred to the Medical Reference Service of the Benefits Agency Medical Service (BAMS), (formerly the Regional Medical Service), in the last three financial years; and the outcomes of any medical examinations; is only available at disproportionate cost.

BA Districts in Birmingham refer cases to the BAMS, Birmingham, reference office. However, this office also receives references from a much larger geographical area. Such information as is available relating to the Birmingham reference office has been provided at Appendix 3. These statistics have only been maintained since 1 January 1993 and therefore no earlier information is available.

BAMS provide an opinion on a customer's capacity for work. However, the decision on this question lies with the Adjudication Officer (AO), the independent adjudication authority. The AO considers the BAMS report along with all other available evidence.

Where the customer has a regular employment, BAMS provide an opinion on capacity for work in that regular employment and any suitable alternative work. Statistics relating to numbers of cases found incapable of work; fit for suitable alternative work; and fit for work; by an AO following reference to BAMS, could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Appendix 1
IVB recipients in Birmingham

Date	*March 1992*	*March 1993*	*March 1994*
Birmingham Chamberlain	4,502	4,991	5,917
Birmingham Heartlands	[1]—	[1]—	7,377
Birmingham North West	4,849	5,433	5,803
Birmingham South East	5,941	7,030	8,205
Birmingham South West	4,836	5,303	6,335
Total	26,297	30,742	33,637

[1] The figures relating to IVB cases recordced for this District for these two years were incorrectly collated due to administrative error in the District concerned, and have therefore been omitted. The figure provided for March 1994 gives the true figure at that date.

Appendix 2
Disability premium recipients in Birmingham

Date	*March 1992*	*March 1993*	*March 1994*
Birmingham Chamberlian	2,193	2,730	3,323
Birmingham Heartlands	2,057	2,599	2,913
Birmingham North West	2,068	2,519	2,993
Birmingham South East	2,104	2,434	2,716
Birmingham South West	2,087	2,596	3,064
Total	10,509	12,878	15,009

Appendix 3
References cleared at BAMS Birmingham reference office

1 *Period*	*2* *Total cleared*	*3* *Incapable of work*	*4* *Capable of suitable alternative work*	*5* *Capable of work*	*6* *Others*
Quarter ending 31 March 1993	21,602	17,311	1,667	410	2,214
Quarter ending 30 June 1993	24,383	19,681	1,785	315	2,602
Quarter ending 30 September 1993	23,087	17,785	2,025	340	2,937
Quarter ending 31 December 1993	23,660	18,124	2,258	355	2,923
Quarter ending 31 March 1994	26,350	18,697	2,918	315	4,420

Social Fund

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applications for *(a)* social fund grants and *(b)* social fund loans, that met the criteria, were refused because of budgetary constraints in each social security office in the United Kingdom in each year since 1989-90.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the social fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Alan Milburn, dated 11 July 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about Social Fund (SF) applications refused on grounds of budgetary constraints in the United Kingdom since 1989-90.

I have confined my answer to the former Department of Social Security Local Offices and Benefits Agency Districts, as questions concerning Northern Ireland are the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

I should explain that District budgets, which must not be exceeded, have to be managed so that, as far as possible, similar levels of need can be met throughout the year. Therefore, Social Fund Officers (SFOs) ensure that the highest priority needs are met whilst adopting as consistent an approach as possible.

Information for the year 1989-90 is not available by Local Office but you may wish to know that the number of loans and grants refused nationally on the grounds of insufficient priority in that year was 138,997 and 50,342 respectively.

Details of loans and grants refused on grounds of insufficient priority for the year 1990-91 by former Departmental Local Office and for the years 1991-92 to 1993-94 by Benefits Agency District are enclosed and copies have been placed in the Library under the heading *Department of Social Security, Social Fund, Applications Refused on the Grounds of Budgetary Constraints 1990-91—1993-94.*

The new Social Fund Computer System (SFCS) introduced in 1993-94, collects additional statistics which were not held on the old system. Many statistical items are collected differently and are not directly comparable with previous years. The previous system recorded reasons for refusal per application whereas SFCS records reasons for refusal per item requested. In cases where a partial award is made a reason for refusal will also be appropriate. As SFCS was introduced into Districts on a rollout basis throughout the year, the figures for 1993-94 will be a combination of the information held on the two systems.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

TRANSPORT

Vehicle Excise Duty Discs

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his estimate of the number of vehicle excise duty discs that are stolen from vehicles each year.

Mr. Key: Precise figures are not available for the number of VED discs stolen from vehicles each year. However, approximately 200,000 discs are either lost or stolen annually.

Railway Industry Posts (Pay Policy)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport to what levels of post the public sector pay policy applies in the railway industry.

Mr. Freeman: The Government's approach to public sector pay applies to the total pay bills of the various components of the railway industry.

Public Transport Expenditure

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he keeps regarding the proportion of gross domestic product spent on *(a)* buses, *(b)* trains and *(c)* all public transport, annually, for the years 1979 to 1993, inclusive.

Mr. Freeman: Expenditure on public transport, by passengers and through grants and subsidies, as a percentage of GDP was as follows:

Total of grants/subsidies and receipts

Year	Rail		Bus		Taxi	Total
	£ million	Percentage GDP	£ million	Percentage GDP	Percentage GDP	Percentage GDP rounded
1979	1,751·2	1·01	1,738	1·00	—	n/a
1980	2,005·4	1·00	2,179	1·08	0·13	2·2
1981	2,293·8	1·05	2,335	1·07	0·13	2·3
1982	2,315·7	0·97	2,603	1·09	0·10	2·2
1983	2,605·6	1·00	2,713	1·04	0·12	2·2
1984	2,699·0	0·96	2,822	1·01	0·13	2·1
1985	2,878·4	0·94	2,844	0·93	0·13	2·0
1986	2,902·5	0·89	2,835	0·87	0·17	1·9
1987	3,112·5	0·87	2,878	0·80	0·17	1·8
1988	2,994·4	0·75	3,022	0·76	0·16	1·7
1989	3,292·4	0·75	3,175	0·72	0·19	1·7
1990	3,833·6	0·80	3,358	0·70	0·18	1·7
1991	4,311·5	0·87	3,556	0·72	0·19	1·8
1992	4,748·7	0·92	3,633	0·71	—	(1·8)
1993	—	—	—	—	—	—

Privatisation

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which organisations, agencies and other bodies relating to his departmental area of responsibility have been privatised since 1990; and what plans he has for further privatisation.

Mr. Norris: The following organisations have been privatised since 1990: five trust ports—Clyde, Forth, Medway, Tees and Hartlepool, and Tilbury; two operating subsidiaries of London Buses Ltd.—London Coaches Ltd. and Stanwell Buses Ltd.; DVOIT, the former IT arm of the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency; and three subsidiaries of British Rail—Transmark, Meldon quarry, and special trains unit.

The position on further privatisation is as follows:

The Government believe that the future of a number of the remaining larger trust ports should be within the private sector; London Transport are planning to sell the remaining 10 operating subsidiaries of London Buses Ltd. and London Transport Advertising Ltd. by the end of this year; my right hon. Friend announced on 30 March his decision to privatise the Transport Research Laboratory, which we hope can be achieved during 1995-96. In addition, plans to privatise the railways include:

Three rolling stock leasing companies (Eversholt, Angel, and Porterbrook) to be offered for sale in 1995.

Twenty-five passenger franchises to be offered for sale as follows:

during 1995:

East Coast Main Line; Great Western Main Line; ScotRail; Gatwick Express; London, Tilbury and Southend; South West.

during 1996:

Anglia; Merseyrail; South Wales and West; South London and Sussex Coast Lines; Cardiff Valleys; Midland Main Line; West Coast Main Line.

for later sale:

Central Region; Cross Country; North East Region; Thames; West Anglia and Great Northern; Kent Link and Kent Coast Lines; Northampton and North London Lines; Chiltern Line; Great Eastern; North West Region; Thameslink.

Railtrack to be privatised in due course. There is no timetable for sale.

Freight businesses: Freightliner (BR's container business) and Red Star (express parcels) were advertised for sale in May 1994. BR's trainload freight services, and the Rail Express systems (mail train business) will be offered for sale in 1995. The Channel Tunnel freight services will be privatised once they have been established fully.

Fourteen Infrastructure Service Units. Sales due to be completed by April 1996.

European Passengers Services (a Government owned company). The intention is for EPS to be transferred in 1995, along with Union Railways (a subsidiary of the British Railways Board), to the consortium chosen to build and own the Channel Tunnel Rail Link.

Some 30 other businesses which provide support services to the railway industry will be offered for sale as soon as possible. they include:

British Rail Telecommunications plc;
British Rail Maintenance Ltd. and Level 5 depots;
The Works Division;
Marketing Services;
Technical Services;
Business Systems;
Quality and Safety Systems;
Training activities and establishments

Note: Two of these businesses will be offered to the private sector

Manchester Airport

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what role his Department has had in negotiations between Manchester airport and the Highways Agency; when he expects the negotiations will be concluded; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: I have kept in close touch with with the negotiations between Manchester Airport plc, the Highways Agency and officials of the Government Office for the North-West over the provision of road access to Manchester airport if consent is given for the construction of a second runway. These discussions continue.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Privatisation

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Attorney-General which organisations, agencies and other bodies relating to his departmental area of responsibility have been privatised since 1990; and what plans he has for further privatisation.

The Attorney-General: None. As to the future, I refer the hon. Member to my answer to the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) on 8 July 1994, *Official Report*, column *337*.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Orders In Council

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the titles of the Orders in Council enacted under the *(a)* affirmative, *(b)* negative and *(c)* emergency procedures for each year since 1979.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: A list of the Orders in Council that have been made under Northern Ireland Act 1974 since 1979 will be placed in the Library.

Schools (Capital Grants)

Rev. William McCrea: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list all applications for capital grants from *(a)* grant-maintained schools and *(b)* integrated schools from 1990 to 1993; and if he will list those grants approved, the date approved and the capital fund requested and granted.

Mr. Ancram: Information in the form requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Housing Benefit

Rev. William McCrea: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many claimants living in private rented accommodation had their housing benefit reduced in the last year; and what was the average level of reduction.

Mr. Ancram: Information in the form requested is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Renovation and Replacement Grants

Rev. William McCrea: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total amount of renovation and replacement grants paid out in each year since 1989-90; and what is the latest available information for each district council area in the Province.

Mr. Tim Smith: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. However I am advised by its Chief Executive that the information requested is as follows:

Table 1: Expenditure by grant type

£ million

	Renovation[1]	*Replacement*[2]	*Other*[3]	*Total*
1989-90	22·50	nil	11·1	33·6
1990-91	21·00	nil	10·0	31·0
1991-92	22·00	nil	8·0	30·0
1992-93	21·00	nil	9·1	30·1
1993-94	23·94	0·66	7·8	32·4

The Housing (NI) Order 1992 introduced a new grants regime and the figures supplied reflect comparable grants under the new and old schemes.
[1] The figures for Renovation Grants include Improvement Grants and grants associated with disabled facilities.
[2] Replacement grants were first introduced in the financial year 1991-92 and expenditure did not accrue until the 1993-94 financial year.
[3] "Other" includes Repair, Intermediate, Houses in Multiple Occupation, and Minor Works Grants.

Table 2: Grant expenditure by council area 1993-94[1]

£000s

Council	*Renovation*	*Replacement*	*Others*	*Total*
Antrim	—	—	6·4	6·4
Ards	—	—	38·5	38·5
Armagh	16·6	15·0	160·0	191·6
Ballymena	4·4	—	8·1	12·5
Ballymoney	38·6	18·9	4·1	61·6
Banbridge	1·2	—	19·5	20·7
Belfast	780·9	—	229·8	1,010·7
Carrickfergus	12·3	—	4·3	16·6
Castlereagh	8·8	—	17·8	26·6
Coleraine	57·7	16·4	16·6	90·7
Cookstown	—	—	19·0	19·0
Craigavon	28·9	—	193·0	221·9
Derry	17·9	—	16·7	34·6
Down	95·4	90·1	14·1	199·6
Dungannon	16·7	—	19·1	35·8
Fermanagh	68·5	396·9	65·4	530·8
Larne	8·1	—	4·8	12·9

Council	Renovation	Replacement	Others	Total
Limavady	—	—	4·1	4·1
Lisburn	129·0	57·1	20·3	206·4
Magherafelt	1·1	—	6·8	7·9
Moyle	1·1	—	0·8	1·9
Newry and Mourne	43·5	35·8	105·9	185·2
Newtownabbey	45·5	—	11·5	57·0
North Down	8·0	—	29·8	37·8
Omagh	—	—	22·5	22·5
Strabane	7·7	23·7	14·3	45·7
Total	1,391·9	653·9	1,053·2	3,099

[1] These figures only represent expenditure on grants approved under the Housing (NI) Order 1992.
Further expenditure of £29·3m was incurred under the previous scheme but is not available by Council area.

Omagh-Ballygawley Road

Rev. William McCrea: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects to commence the upgrading of the Omagh to Ballygawley road.

Mr. Tim Smith: Two schemes at Brackagh and Augher Point have been completed and a scheme to provide a climbing lane at Garvaghy will start in the 1997-98 financial year, subject to the continuing availability of finance.

Cookstown Bypass

Rev. William McCrea: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans the Department of the Environment has to commence the completion of the Cookstown bypass.

Mr. Tim Smith: The completion of the Cookstown bypass is not included in the Department's current five-year major road works programme.

Workspace, Draperstown Ltd.

Rev. William McCrea: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what grants have been received from central Government, the International Fund for Ireland and European sources by Workspace, Draperstown Ltd.

Mr. Tim Smith: Grants received by Workspace, Draperstown Ltd. and its subsidiaries from central Government and European sources are as follows:

	£
Local Enterprise Development Unit	986,990
European Regional Development Fund	197,400
Department of Agriculture	2,138
EU LEADER Programme	21,470
Training and Employment Agency	[1]3,608,873
EU HORIZON Programme	130,380

[1] Last two years only.

The question of the amount of grant aid received from the International Fund for Ireland is a matter for the board of the fund, which is independent of Her Majesty's Government.

Child Care

Rev. William McCrea: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much the Department of Health spends on child care; on what provision this sum is spent; and how many children receive the child care.

Mr. Ancram: The Department of Health and Social Services encourages the development of child care by grant aiding regional voluntary child care organisations in Northern Ireland. In the current financial year, over £241,000 is being provided. That is in addition to the support that health and social services boards provide to local day care projects, which in 1991-92, the latest year for which the information is available, amounted to £1,598,000. In that year, boards also spent £148,000 on family day centres, although those do not cater exclusively for parents with young children. In January 1994, the Department also allocated £310,000 to the health and social services boards on a once-only basis in support of local initiatives in the child care sector.

Details of the forms of provision and number of places available, as at 31 March 1993, are as follows:

Type	Places available
Pre-school playgroups	14,742
Day nurseries	2,080
Childminders	13,492
Total	30,314

Prison Statistics

Rev. William McCrea: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many prisoners are at present being held *(a)* Magilligan, *(b)* Maze, *(c)* Crumlin and *(d)* Maghaberry prisons.

Sir John Wheeler: The prison population in these establishments on 7 July 1994 was as follows:

Establishment	Number of prisoners
HM Prison Magilligan	297
HM Prison Maze	575
MR Prison Belfast	547
HM Prison Maghaberry	327

Integrated Schools

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give the location of each *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary integrated school in Northern Ireland, together with the catchment area from which its pupils are drawn, the number of children at each school and its capacity; and if he will give the number of (i) voluntary grammar, (ii) maintained primary and secondary schools

and (iii) controlled primary and secondary schools within each such catchment area, showing the number of pupils at those schools and their capacity, or as much of such information as is readily available to him.

Mr. Ancram: The "open enrolment" regulations currently in operation allow parents to state a preference for the school which they wish their child to attend. If the school has places, it must accept the child. Catchment areas as such are not prescribed and the Department does not hold information on the catchment area of each school.

The information readily available on integrated schools is as follows:

Integrated schools in Northern Ireland

School name	*Location*	*Capacity*	*Enrolments (1993-94)*
Grant-maintained Integrated Primary Schools			
Acorn[1]	Carrickfergus	82	52
Braidside[1]	Ballymena	145	118
Bridge	Banbridge	270	227
Corran[1]	Larne	120	91
Cranmore[1]	Belfast	120	38
Enniskillen[1]	Enniskillen	174	161
Hazelwood	Belfast	305	302
Lough View[1]	Belfast	50	24
Millstrand	Portrush	198	170
Oakgrove[1]	Londonderry	240	219
Omagh[1]	Omagh	131	110
Portadown[1]	Portadown	140	115
Saints and Scholars[1]	Armagh	100	26
Windmill	Dungannon	121	110
Controlled Integrated Primary Schools			
All Children's	Newcastle	176	148
Carhill	Garvagh	97	50
Forge	Belfast	210	159
Grant-maintained Integrated Secondary Schools			
Hazelwood College	Belfast	643	585
Lagan College	Belfast	850-860	849
Oakgrove College[1]	Londonderry	400	180
Controlled Integrated Secondary Schools			
Brownlow College	Craigavon	400	205

[1] As these schools have not been open for the full seven years of primary level education and five years of secondary level education. The figures represent planned long-term capacity.

Benefits

Rev. William McCrea: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people in Northern Ireland were in receipt of *(a)* disability allowance, *(b)* attendance allowance, *(c)* family credit, *(d)* income support and *(e)* invalidity benefit, at the latest available date.

Mr. Ancram: The information available is given as follows:

Number of claimants in receipt of certain benefits in Northern Ireland May 1994

Type of benefit	*Number*
Attendance Allowance	49,237
Disability Living Allowance	67,980
Family Credit	19,952
Income Support	222,621
Invalidity Benefit	67,813

Child Support Agency

Rev. William McCrea: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in how many cases the Child Support Agency has used earnings deduction orders to obtain maintenance payments.

Mr. Ancram: Responsibility for the subject of this question has been delegated to the Child Support Agency under its chief executive, Patrick Devlin. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Pat Devlin to Rev. William McCrea, dated 5 July 1994:

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has asked me to reply to your question about the number of cases where a Deduction from Earnings Order is used to obtain maintenance.

Between April 1993 and 30 June 1994 Deductions from Earnings Orders were imposed in 297 cases.

I hope you find this information useful.

Rev. William McCrea: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many cases have been dealt with by the Child Support Agency in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ancram: Responsibility for the subject of this question has been delegated to the Child Support Agency under its chief executive, Patrick Devlin. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Pat Devlin to Rev. William McCrea, dated 5 July 1994:

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has asked me to reply to your question about the number of cases dealt with by the Child Support Agency in Northern Ireland.

Between April 1993 and 1 July 1994 the Agency contacted 25,423 persons with care of children and in 16,990 cases application was returned. The Agency has cleared 14,121 cases in the same period.

I hope you find this information useful.

Rev. William McCrea: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many cases the Child Support Agency has pursued to date where there is a court agreement regarding maintenance in existence.

Mr. Ancram: Responsibility for the subject of this question has been delegated to the Child Support Agency under its chief executive, Patrick Devlin. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Pat Devlin to Rev. William McCrea, dated 5 July 1994:

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has asked me to reply to your question about the number of cases the Child Support Agency has pursued to date where there is a court order agreement regarding maintenance in existence.

Information on the number of cases assessed where there was a previous court agreement is not collected routinely and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

I hope you find this information useful.

Job Creation

Rev. William McCrea: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many jobs have been created through *(a)* the Industrial Development Board and *(b)* Local Enterprise Development Unit initiatives in each Northern Ireland constituency in each year since 1990.

Mr. Tim Smith: Information on job creations is not available in the form requested. Statistics for job creations

are not available before 1991-92. The table below gives details of IDB and LEDU job creations for Northern Ireland since 1991-92.

	New jobs created		
	1991-92	*1992-93*	*1993-94*
Industrial Development Board	2,490	2,815	3,289
Local Enterprise Development Unit	1,750	2,630	2,870

Roads

Rev. William McCrea: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the allocation of Department of the Environment finances for *(a)* road maintenance, *(b)* major and *(c)* minor roadworks in each of the 26 district council areas in the last financial year.

Mr. Tim Smith: Expenditure for the 1993-94 financial year is as follows:

District council	*Road maintenance*	*Major works*[1]	*Minor Works*
Antrim	2,213	1,415	419
Ards	1,988	75	383
Armagh	3,028	0	881
Ballymena	1,813	113	552
Ballymoney	1,068	0	171
Banbridge	1,738	93	371
Belfast	6,495	[2]12,713	1,037
Carrickfergus	784	144	309
Castlereagh	2,018	82	582
Coleraine	1,988	589	979
Cookstown	2,042	4	383
Craigavon	2,617	40	535
Derry	2,219	381	904
Down	2,628	128	644
Dungannon	2,745	43	379
Fermanagh	3,128	16	596
Larne	1,203	0	202
Limavady	1,430	653	457
Lisburn	4,530	597	909
Magherafelt	1,593	188	775
Moyle	905	0	152
Newry and Mourne	3,115	1,270	890
Newtownabbey	2,877	156	963
North Down	1,257	226	407
Omagh	3,106	107	698
Strabane	2,517	150	541
Total	61,045	19,183	15,119

[1] Major works are not allocated on a District Council basis. These figures represent expenditure on specific schemes some of which may have been completed prior to 1993-94.
[2] Includes expenditure on Belfast Cross Harbour Bridges.

Rev. William McCrea: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what investigations have been carried out in Northern Ireland in relation to the link between the road network and employment and prosperity.

Mr. Tim Smith: While no specific investigations have been carried out by the Department, the link between the road network and the economy is one of the factors considered in the formulation of road policy.

Education Costs

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the average cost of educating a child at *(a)* a controlled primary school, *(b)* a controlled secondary school, *(c)* a voluntary grammar school, *(d)* an integrated primary school, *(e)* an integrated secondary school and *(f)* an integrated primary school in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ancram: The average expenditure per pupil in Northern Ireland in 1992-93 was as follows:

	£
Controlled primary school	1,393
Controlled secondary school	2,294
Voluntary grammar school	2,157
Integrated primary school	1,697
Integrated secondary school	2,268

Public Bodies

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether his appointments to public bodies and non-departmental public bodies are subject to investigation by the Fair Employment Commission.

Sir John Wheeler: The vast majority of appointments made by my right hon. and learned Friend to public bodies in Northern Ireland do not constitute employment within the meaning of the provisions of the Fair Employment Acts, and would therefore lie outside the scope of the investigative powers of the Fair Employment Commission. However, a small number of public appointments, where the chairman of the public body concerned is also the chief executive, would come within the investigative powers of the Fair Employment Commission. Appointments which do not fall within the scope of the Fair Employment Acts are subject to the anti-discrimination provisions of section 19 of the Northern Ireland Constitution Act 1973.

Capital Works

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what sums have been extended in each education board area in Northern Ireland on capital works in each of the last five years for which figures are available on *(a)* the integrated sector, *(b)* the voluntary grammar schools, *(c)* the controlled primary and secondary schools and *(d)* the maintained primary and secondary schools.

Mr. Ancram: Capital expenditure by education and library boards for each of the years from 1988-89 to 1991-92 is analysed by area and by school sector in the statements and summary of the education and library boards' accounts, Cmnd 1105, 1531, 1977, and 2249, copies of which are available in the Library. The figures for 1992-93 will be published on 27 July 1994, Cmnd No. 2603. Capital grants paid by the Department of Education to grant-maintained integrated schools and voluntary schools over the five year period 1988-89 to 1992-93 are set out in the table:

Board area and year	*Integrated schools*	*Voluntary grammar schools*	*Maintained primary and secondary schools*
	£000s	*£000s*	*£000s*
Belfast			
1988-89	Nil	1,368	1,604
1989-90	Nil	1,425	1,816
1990-91	49	1,602	3,301

Board area and year	Integrated schools £000s	Voluntary grammar schools £000s	Maintained primary and secondary schools £000s
1991-92	71	2,516	3,045
1992-93	329	1,195	2,556
Western			
1988-89	Nil	864	1,601
1989-90	Nil	1,208	1,749
1990-91	Nil	2,034	2,216
1991-92	406	4,163	4,000
1992-93	19	5,040	3,475
North Eastern			
1988-89	Nil	2,073	1,766
1989-90	Nil	1,848	930
1990-91	650	2,575	732
1991-92	32	3,976	896
1992-93	530	4,193	1,167
South Eastern			
1988-89	Nil	509	922
1989-90	Nil	1,783	1,503
1990-91	101	1,375	2,896
1991-92	1,761	1,381	2,225
1992-93	113	1,323	2,189
Southern			
1988-89	Nil	1,972	1,921
1989-90	Nil	3,309	3,063
1990-91	35	2,923	5,318
1991-92	2	2,519	4,499
1992-93	389	1,922	5,399

Perinatal and Neonatal Mortality

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was *(a)* the perinatal mortality rate and *(b)* the neonatal mortality rate in each health and social services board for 1985, 1990 and 1993.

Sir John Wheeler: The information is as follows:

	1985		1990		1992	
	Perinatal	Neonatal	Perinatal	Neonatal	Perinatal	Neonatal
Eastern Health and Social Services Board	10·4	4·8	7·3	3·5	8·7	3·8
Northern Health and Social Services Board	10·4	5·2	7·1	4·2	7·6	3·5
Southern Health and Social Services Board	12·8	7·7	6·4	4·0	8·5	3·8
Western Health and Social Services Board	11·4	5·5	10·2	4·9	7·8	5·6

Note: 1993 figures are not yet available. Perinatal are per 1,000 live and still births. Neonatal are per 1,000 live births.

Chill Factor Definition

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will define the chill factor which he requires to be taken into account for health provision in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ancram: The chill factor refers to the requirement for health and social services boards, in planning the provision of services, to ensure that no section of the community would perceive itself to be unduly disadvantaged in terms of its continued access to services as a result of changes in their location.

Countryside Protection Schemes

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the cost in 1993 in Northern Ireland of payments made under *(a)* the countryside stewardship scheme, *(b)* the hedgerow incentive scheme, *(c)* the countryside premium scheme and *(d)* the wildlife enhancement scheme; and what is his estimate of the cost in 1994.

Mr. Ancram: None of the listed schemes apply in Northern Ireland.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the cost in 1993 in Northern Ireland of payments under *(a)* the environmentally sensitive area scheme, *(b)* the nitrate sensitive area scheme, *(c)* the farm and conservation grant scheme, *(d)* the pilot beef and sheep extensification schemes, *(e)* the woodland grant scheme, *(f)* the farm woodland premium scheme, *(g)* the orchard grubbing scheme, *(h)* the optional five year set-aside scheme, *(i)* the habitat scheme, *(j)* the moorland scheme, *(k)* the countryside access scheme and *(l)* the organic aid scheme; and what is his estimate of the cost in 1994.

Mr. Ancram: The information in respect of the schemes is as follows:

Scheme	Expenditure by £'000 1993-94	Estimate by £'000 1994-95
Environmentally sensitive areas	586	700
Farm and conservation grant	6,250	4,580
Pilot beef and sheep extensification	15	15
Woodland grant	729	842
Farm woodland premium	68	95
Orchard grubbing	Nil	1
Optional 5-year set aside	63	34

Nitrate sensitive areas and countryside access schemes do not apply in Northern Ireland, while the habitat improvement scheme, moorland scheme and organic aid scheme will be launched later in 1994 and expenditure will not arise before 1995-96.

Privatisation

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland which organisations, agencies and other bodies relating to his departmental area of responsibility have been privatised since 1990; and what plans he has for further privatisation.

Sir John Wheeler: Northern Ireland Electricity's four generating stations were sold to private interests in 1992, and the remainder of the business—transmission, distribution and supply—was successfully floated in June 1993, thus completing privatisation of the electricity

supply industry in Northern Ireland. The process of privatising Northern Ireland Airports Ltd. has begun, with a target date of mid-1994 for completion by means of a trade sale.

The Government remain committed to the privatisation of water and sewerage services at the earliest possible date but recognise that, for a number of technical reasons, this will not be possible in the lifetime of the present Parliament. Legislation is being promoted to enable ports in Northern Ireland to be privatised, while the Department of the Environment is considering the extent to which the non-core activities of Northern Ireland Railways and Ulsterbus/Citybus may be sold.

Health Visitors

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many health visitors were employed in each health and personal social services board area in September 1988 and in September 1992.

Mr. Ancram *[holding answer 7 July 1994]:* The information as requested is not readily available. However, figures for all nursing staff, in the specialty of health visiting is given as follows. Staffing figures prior to 1990 were not collected on a comparable basis.

Health visiting staff in Northern Ireland	*1990*		*1992*	
	Number	*WTE*	*Number*	*WTE*
Eastern Board	124	117	234	209
Northern Board	92	86	95	90
Southern Board	54	50	90	84
Western Board	77	71	79	72
Northern Ireland Total	347	324	498	455

WTE—Whole time equivalent.

The following nursing grades are included in the specialty of health visiting and are included in the figures provided:

Assistant Director Nursing Services (Grade 1), Assistant Director Nursing Services (Grade 7), District Nursing Sister G, Enrolled Nurse E, Enrolled Nurse F, Fieldwork Teacher H, Health Visitor, Health Visitor (Grade G), Health Visitor (Grade H), Home Care Worker, Nursing Auxiliary B, Nursing Sister/Charge Nurse H, Post Basic Student D, Post Basic Student E, School Nurse E, School Nurse F, Senior Nurse/Nursing Officer I, Staff Nurse E, Staff Nurse F, Student Health Visitor, Team Leader/Health Visitor, Team Leader (Health Visiting/District Nursing), Unit Senior Manager 2.

Contracts

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on what occasions in the last 10 years he or a Minister in his Department has given a direction to civil servants to award a contract against the advice of the civil service; what was the subject matter of the contract and its value; and when it was awarded.

Sir John Wheeler *[holding answer, 8 July 1994]:* The information requested could not be obtained by the Northern Ireland Office in the time available, except at disproportionate cost. However, within the Northern Ireland Departments, the Minister responsible for the Department of Health and Social Services, on one occasion, directed that a contract be awarded to a firm other than that recommended by his officials. This contract, for providing catering facilities, was awarded on 22 November 1990 and was valued at £265,548.

EDUCATION

Full-time Further Education

15. **Mr. Garrett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many people applied to study full time for a degree or equivalent qualification at an institution of higher education for the academic years 1992-93 and 1993-94; and what are the latest available figures for the coming academic year.

Mr. Boswell: Applicants through central schemes to full-time higher education courses totalled some 395,000 in 1992 and 419,000 in 1993. As at May, applicants for admission in 1994 stood at some 378,000—virtually the same level as at May last year.

Voluntary Activity

17. **Mr. Alan Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will take steps to encourage volunteering on the part of students in schools and further and higher education.

Mr. Boswell: The Government are seeking to promote voluntary activity among all age groups through their make a difference initiative. The make a difference team will be considering the role of young people as part of the development of a United Kingdom volunteering strategy. Many students are already volunteers, and it is primarily for educational establishments to consider what further steps to take to encourage students to volunteer.

Primary Schools (Funding)

18. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to reform the funding of large primary schools.

Mr. Robin Squire: Decisions about funding levels for such schools are for local education authorities to make in the context of their own schemes for the local management of schools.

Road Safety

19. **Mrs. Ann Winterton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he is taking to improve understanding among school pupils of road safety.

Mr. Forth: The Department encourages schools to make full use of opportunities within the national curriculum and the wider school curriculum to teach pupils about road safety.

Grant-maintained Schools

20. **Mrs. Dunwoody:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many times a year he meets chief education officers to discuss grant-maintained schools.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend and other Ministers meet chief education officers throughout the year as the need arises and discuss a wide variety of topics, including grant-maintained schools.

27. **Mr. Liddington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has made of the opinions of parents whose children attend grant-maintained schools about the quality of education which those schools provide.

Mr. Robin Squire: Growing numbers of parents are choosing self-governing schools for their children. Some 70 per cent. of grant-maintained schools responding to a recent survey reported increases in pupil numbers. Pupil numbers at secondary schools which have been grant-maintained for the last four years have grown three times faster than the secondary pupil population as a whole. This is clear evidence of parents' confidence in the quality of education provided by self-governing schools.

School Performance Tables

21. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many requests his Department received for copies of last year's school performance tables.

Mr. Robin Squire: Copies of the 1993 tables were sent to schools which appeared in the secondary school tables, and to all maintained primary schools, for distribution to parents and students considering their options for transfer to secondary school or to education post-16. A further 125,000 copies have since been distributed in response to supplementary requests to the Department.

Sixth Forms

22. **Sir Michael Neubert:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what percentage of grant-maintained secondary schools have their own sixth form.

Mr. Robin Squire: Of the 594 grant-maintained secondary schools currently operating, 68 per cent. have sixth forms.

Returning Teachers

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will publish figures giving his current estimates on potential returners to the teaching profession, broken down by employment status, age and gender.

Mr. Robin Squire *[holding answer 4 July 1994]:* The latest available estimates are for 1990-91:

Thousands, rounded

Employment status	*Men*	*Women*	*Total*
Part-time and supply teachers in maintained sector	3	88	90
In independent schools or teacher-related employment	8	32	40
Employment other than teaching	70	92	162
Not in paid employment	7	66	73
TOTAL	88	276	365

Information by age is not readily available. However, these figures exclude out-of-service teachers aged over 55 years as well as those who qualified before 1965 and have not taught after that date and those not resident in England.

Independent And Grant-maintained Schools

23. **Mr. Congdon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he is taking to prevent local education authorities from discriminating against independent and grant-maintained schools.

Mr. Forth: Section 129 of the 1993 Education Act provides that local education authorities, in performing their duties and exercising their powers, must treat pupils at grant-maintained schools no less favourably than pupils at schools maintained by a local education authority. The Department will continue to investigate allegations of discrimination against GM schools. Pupils at independent schools are not covered by equivalent statutory protection.

Specialisms

24. **Sir John Hannam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what support he proposes to give to those schools which wish to develop a specialism in *(a)* music, *(b)* art, *(c)* languages and *(d)* other areas of the curriculum.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Government are committed to extending choice and diversity in secondary school provision and want to see more schools develop their own specialisms. We are currently examining in detail how new types of specialist schools can best be supported, within available resources. We expect to make an announcement in due course.

Lecturers (Contracts of Employment)

25. **Mr. Pope:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received regarding further education lecturers' contracts of employment.

Mr. Boswell: My right hon. Friend and I have received a number of letters on this matter, both directly and through hon. Members.

University Places

26. **Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what action he is taking to ensure that all suitably qualified students are offered university places over the next three years.

Mr. Boswell: It is for universities and colleges to decide how many places to offer in the light of maximum aggregate student numbers notified to them by the Higher Education Funding Council for England. They are best placed to judge whether a candidate is suitably qualified for a place. The Government's spending plans allow for the current record proportion of almost one in three young people entering high education to be maintained for the next three years.

Further Education (Funding)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will review the current funding arrangements for further education.

Mr. Boswell: The way in which funds are allocated to colleges in the further education sector is a matter for the Further Education Funding Council to determine, having regard to the funding aims set by Government. The council has, after extensive and detailed consultation with colleges, put in place a new funding methodology for 1994-95, which has been widely welcomed. It is pledged to review the methodology year by year and has already started work for 1995-96.

Pupil Expenditure

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the expenditure on books and equipment in 1992-93 in maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools per pupil.

Mr. Robin Squire: Separate information is not collected for nursery and primary schools. Local education authorities' spending on books and equipment in 1992-93 was £59 per pupil in LEA-maintained nursery and primary schools and £98 per pupil in LEA-maintained secondary schools. Equivalent information is not available for grant-maintained schools.

Work Experience

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what discussions he has had with his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment on the subject of ensuring the effective provision of work experience in schools, with particular reference to the issues of health and safety; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment announced on 24 May, *Official Report*, column *198*, the Government are asking training and enterprise councils and their partners to ensure that all pupils in their last year of compulsory education can have at least one week's work experience and will make available an additional £23 million over three years to 1997-98 to support this. Guidance on work experience placements, including health and safety aspects, is contained in the Department for Education booklets "Education at Work".

Higher Education (Access Funds)

Mr. Booth: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what resources will be available for access funds for students in higher education institutions in 1994-95; and when he proposes to issue new guidance on the use of the funds.

Mr. Boswell: The Department is making available £20·9 million for access funds for students in higher education in England for 1994-95. The sum is being allocated between the three funds as shown below:

	£ million
Undergraduate Fund	15·30
Postgraduate Fund	5·30
Further Education Fund	0·34

The Department has now written to the Higher Education Funding Council for England with guidance to be given to HE institutions about allocation and use of the funds for 1994-95.

Portuguese and Spanish

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education in how many schools *(a)* Portuguese and *(b)* Spanish are taught; and how many teachers and pupils are involved.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Department does not have full details on the numbers of schools where Portuguese and Spanish are taught. However, the database of GCSE and GCE A-level and AS-level examination results used for the publication of school and college performance tables for England in November 1993 shows that 162 schools entered 213 pupils for GCSE Portuguese and 1,621 schools entered 25,500 pupils for GCSE Spanish in 1992-93.

The estimates from the 1992 secondary school staffing survey, which covered approximately a 10 per cent. sample of schools in England, showed that at national level there were around 3,400 full-time and part-time teachers teaching Spanish in England in 1992. Figures for teachers of Portuguese cannot be reliably estimated.

Privatisation

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Education which organisations, agencies and other bodies relating to his departmental area of responsibility have been privatised since 1990; and what plans he has for further privatisation.

Mr. Forth: No organisations within my right hon. Friend's area of responsibility have been privatised since 1990 and there are no plans for privatisation, although the forthcoming periodic review of the Teachers' Pensions Agency will include consideration of the scope for privatising the agency as part of the "prior options" study.

School Inspections

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many schools are due to receive Ofsted inspections in the autumn term 1994; for those inspections, how many contracts have not yet been awarded; how many schools have not yet been informed of the date of their inspection; and how many schools he expects will not receive inspections in the autumn term due to lack of contracts being awarded.

Mr. Robin Squire: This is a matter for Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools, who heads the independent Office for Standards in Education. I have asked Professor Sutherland to write to the hon. Member.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 13 July 1994

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Civil Service

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he will publish the report on the civil service fast stream entry.

Mr. Waldegrave: As I announced on 18 February, the team reviewing the civil service fast stream entry, as recommended by the career management and succession planning study, was asked to report by the end of June 1994. Its report will be published today. Copies have been placed in the Library of the House.

The review team's report reaches five main conclusions:

the fast-stream schemes make an essential contribution to meeting Departments' needs for high quality recruits; but

Departments need to update and clarify what they expect from, and offer to, recruits to the main generalist fast-stream scheme for the Home Civil Service, and how that relates to the training and development of staff recruited by other routes;

the way the Service is presented to potential recruits needs to be improved to reflect more accurately the nature of the Civil Service in the late 1990s and to strengthen and broaden its appeal;

the selection process itself, although already well researched, should be subject to indpendent audit to ensure that it operates effectively;

there needs to be a clearer distinction between the recruitment schemes and the later distinct process of indentifying people with top management potential. The term "fast-stream" confuses the two and should be abandoned.

The Government will now consider these recommendations and would welcome comments on them in the context of the White Paper on the civil service, which is being published today, and in accordance with the procedure set out in paragraph 1.8 of that paper.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he will publish the report of the review team which has been considering the respective responsibilities of the Civil Service Commissioners and Government Departments.

Mr. Waldegrave: The head of the home civil service commissioned in January an internal review of responsibilities for civil service recruitment, with the following terms of reference:

"In the light of experience in practice and increasing open competition for posts to re-examine the specific split of responsibilities made between the Commissioners, the Recruitment and Assessment Services Agency and departments in 1991 by, in particular:

—considering whether changes are required to improve effectiveness;

—identifying any issues here which affect RAS's performance;

—reviewing the definition of Commissioners' recruitment."

The review team has now completed its work. Copies of its report, entitled "Responsibilities for Civil Service Recruitment", have been placed in the Library of the House. The review team has made a number of recommendations designed to reinforce the principles of openness, fairness and merit in civil service recruitment and to clarify responsibilities for ensuring that these principles are properly and effectively applied. The main proposals are that:

The Civil Service Commissioners should be given strengthened powers to maintain the principles of fair and open competition and selection on merit as they apply to all Civil Service recruitment.

Departments and Agencies should be more clearly accountable for undertaking recruitment in accordance with those principles.

The Commissioners should audit recruitment policies and practices within the Service and report on the outcome in their annual reports.

The Commissioners should be required to approve individually only the most senior appointments, removing the present requirement for them to process around 700 cases a year in more junior grades. The Government proposes that the Commissioners' approval should be required for recruitment to the new Senior Civil Service as envisaged in the White Paper on the Civil Service.

There should be a clear separation between the role of the Commissioners and that of the Recruitment and Assessment Services Agency.

The Government welcome the review team's report and would also welcome comments on it. These should be addressed to Miss E. Goodison, the Office of the Civil Service Commissioners, Alencon Link, Basingstoke RG21 1JB and should be received by 30 September 1994. Copies of the report can be obtained free of charge from the same address.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the Government's response to the efficiency unit's report on "Career Management and Succession Planning in the Civil Service".

Mr. Waldegrave: The statement I made to the House today and the accompanying White Paper on the civil service set out the main lines of the Government's response to the efficiency unit report, and build further upon it. I am placing in the Library of the House today a note of the detailed response to each of the report's recommendations.

Chessington Computer Centre

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what key performance targets he has set for Chessington Computer Centre trading fund for the current year.

Mr. David Davis: The key performance targets for Chessington Computer Centre trading fund for 1994-95 are:

* an operating surplus of £1·1 million;
* an increase in pay clerk productivity of 6 per cent. (over 1993-94 performance);
* increasing usage of the online data capture system (SPIRE) to 82·5 per cent.;
* raising minimum online service and availability to 98·5 per cent;
* continually improving services to customers by updating software.

Market Testing

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will set out the criteria used in determining the allocation of a contract under the Government's policy of market testing.

Mr. Waldegrave: All Government purchasers are encouraged to base all procurement of both goods and services on value for money criteria. They should take into account, as appropriate, the requirements of EC procurement directives, which in the case of services, have been put into effect in the United Kingdom by the Public Services Contracts Regulations 1993, SI 3228. Section 9 of the Government's "Guide to Market Testing", which is in the Library, outlines the main criteria which Departments should take into account in market testing.

European Particle Physics Laboratory

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the United Kingdom's current annual commitment to CERN; what are the budget projections for the next six years; and if he will make a statement on the effects of those spending proposals on the development of the large hadron collider.

Mr. Waldegrave: The United Kingdom's subscription to CERN for 1994-95 is £60·5 million, which is some 13·6 per cent. of CERN's overall budget. Our contribution for the next six years, at most recent exchange rates, are estimated to be:

	£ million
1995-96	61·0
1996-97	61·7
1997-98	62·4
1998-99	63·1
1999-00	63·8
2000-01	64·5

These figures are likely to change due to fluctuations in exchange rates and in the relative net national incomes of CERN members.

These spending proposals, taken in association with the normal subscriptions to CERN of other member states, will make possible the construction of the large hadron collider. For the construction of the LHC to be on schedule, however, additional income will be required. CERN is currently in discussion with host states and non-member states to secure additional contributions towards the project.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Small Claims Court

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what was the average value, as stated by plaintiffs, of those claims heard in the small claims court for each year since 1990.

Mr. John M. Taylor *[holding answer 29 June 1994]:* The information requested is not recorded and can be obtained only at disproportionate cost. I previously gave a holding answer to enable further investigation to take place. This showed that it is not possible to extract relevant data at a reasonable cost.

Disability

Mr. Alan Howarth: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what involvement his Department will have in the Government's forthcoming consultation on disability.

Mr. John. M. Taylor: My right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People will be co-ordinating action on this front and will involve other Departments as necessary.

TREASURY

Environmental Protection

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he has taken to ensure that discussion of economic policy at the Group of Seven summit meeting will include consideration of the ecological sustainability of economic activity.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given to him by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 11 July, *Official Report,* column *376.*

Public Sector Pay

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will set out the details of his public sector pay policy and indicate what the permitted level is; how it was arrived at; to which posts in the public sector it applies; and to what extent its effectiveness is measured by the *(a)* total wage or salary bill of a public sector organisation, *(b)* rates of pay or *(c)* comparability with outside rates.

Mr. Portillo: The Government expect pay across the public sector in 1994-95 to be considered in accordance with the approach which my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced in my statement of 14 September 1993 and which was reflected in the expenditure programmes announced in the Budget on 30 November. That approach will play a role in restraining the overall level of public expenditure and ensuring that within established ceilings resources can be devoted to public services and investment rather than running costs and pay.

The effective application of this approach to public sector pay will constrain the overall Government pay bill and ensure that the costs of pay settlements are offset by efficiencies and other savings. Within this framework there is flexibility for different public sector groups to reach different pay settlements consistent with their own particular circumstances and under their usual pay determination procedures.

Resource Accounting and Budgeting

Mr. Watts: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects to publish detailed proposals on resource accounting and budgeting.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: My November 1993 Budget statement contained a commitment to produce detailed proposals on the introduction of resource-based accruals accounting in Government Departments. It also said that the Government would look at the implications of this development for the current arrangements for public expenditure planning and control. This initial review is now complete and I am today publishing a Green Paper entitled "Better Accounting for the Taxpayer's Money: Resource Accounting and Budgeting in Government". Copies are available from the Vote Office.

The Green Paper announces the intention to proceed with the introduction of resource accounting for

Departments and that all Departments prepare these accounts by April 1998. The Green Paper also announces a commitment in principle to build on the introduction of resource accounting by developing a system of resource budgeting, which would mean changing the basis of the public expenditure survey and in-year control arrangements to reflect the full cost of resources, while retaining controls relating to cash.

The Green Paper provides for a consultation period of six months, until January 1995.

Government Staff

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the number of staff in post in central Government Departments at 1 April.

Mr. Portillo: On 1 April 1994 there were 533,350 permanent staff in post in central Government, which is a new post-war low. This is a decrease of nearly 20,900 in the last year.

Of the total staff in post 487,435 were non-industrials and 45,915 were classified as being in industrial work.

A summary showing staff in post by Department has been placed in the Libraries of the House.

Monetary Union

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what powers the Monetary Commission and the Commission of the European Union have to initiate alterations in the conditions for nations proceeding to monetary union set out in the Maastricht treaty; and if he will make a statement on the current discussions between the Commission and the Government of the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 11 July 1994]:* The conditions under which member states may proceed towards economic and monetary union are set out in the Maastricht treaty. The Commission has the right to propose amendments to that treaty but such amendments would require the unanimous consent of an intergovernmental conference. Discussions between the Commission and the Government of the Republic of Ireland are a matter for them.

"The Arts and Compulsory Competitive Tendering"

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects to respond to the report on "The Arts and Compulsory Competitive Tendering" commissioned from the consultants Positive Solutions Ltd.

Mr. Brooke: I have been asked to reply.

I will make a statement as soon as possible.

Kenya

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what view he is taking about the quality of response by the Government of Kenya to previous World bank and International Monetary Fund criticisms; and what action will be urged by the British Government's director at the World bank in forthcoming debates in Kenya.

Mr. Lennox Boyd: I have been asked to reply. The IMF and World bank believe that there has been good progress recently in the implementation of Kenya's economic reform programme. We share that view. Macroeconomic stability is being restored; and the agreed structural reforms are broadly on schedule. We shall encourage the continued vigorous implementation of the economic reform agenda.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the consequences of World bank programmes on the poor of Kenya, the role of the Kenyan Government in promoting or alleviating poverty, and the action that should be taken in future programmes to alleviate poverty.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I have been asked to reply.

We have been assisting in the preparation of a poverty assessment, sponsored by the Kenyan Government and a number of donors, including the World bank. This aims to provide a thorough analysis of both the nature of poverty, and the impact on the poor of the Government's structural adjustment programme, which includes a social dimension. Poverty in Kenya will be reduced by faster economic growth, which effective implementation of the adjustment programme will help to achieve, and by direct interventions favouring specific poor groups.

HEALTH

Departmental Running Costs

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) pursuant to her answer of 21 June, *Official Report*, columns *117-18*, if she will break down to the smallest possible unit the budget heads for all expenditure on non-staffing costs within the Department of Health administration budget;

(2) pursuant to her answer of 23 June, *Official Report*, column *306*, with regard to her Department's administrative budget, if she will detail the amounts spent on those items listed in her answer including *(a)* buildings—rent, maintenance, fuel and utilities, security, cleaning and other services, *(b)* meetings of expert advisory committees and working groups, conferences, seminars and publications, *(c)* payments to other Government Departments and *(d)* consultancy, staff training and travel.

Mr. Sackville: Details of expenditure for 1992-93 and 1993-94 are shown in the table. The full information requested is not available centrally because individual managers set budgets for different types of non-staffing expenditure according to the particular needs of their business area. It is not possible to give the same level of detail prior to 1992-93.

Expenditure details for 1992-93 and 1993-94

£000s

Expenditure	*1992-93*	*1993-94*
Accommodation (rent)	41,055	30,928
Building maintenance	1,704	1,280
Fuel and utilities	2,357	1,609
Security	1,150	1,139
Cleaning	1,426	1,033
Office services	3,685	3,670
Committee expenditure	1,098	1,130
Seminars/Conferences/Workshops	1,086	666
Publishing, printing and stationery	6,240	4,258
Payments to other Government Departments for services provided	25,901	17,793

Expenditure	1992-93	1993-94
Consultancy	19,439	16,658
Staff training	3,155	2,853
Staff travel and subsistence	6,052	6,397
Labour services	1,615	1,189
Library and information services	1,423	1,234
Telecoms	3,853	3,430
Computer current	2,852	1,634
Staff relocation costs	5,890	3,606
Early retirement pension	1,497	4,931
Civil service recruitment	1,059	651
Other miscellaneous expenditure	1,436	2,562

Notes:
1. Figures have not been adjusted for inflation.
2. Expenditure of less than £1 million is shown separately under Other Expenditure.

Dental Deregistrations

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give a regional breakdown of the number of dental deregistrations across England and Wales for each year since June 1992.

Dr. Mawhinney: The available information will be placed in the Library. Patient deregistrations in Wales are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Violent Patients

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of state for Health if she will make a statement on guidance to general practitioners and family health services authorities about the change in general practitioners' terms of service to allow the immediate removal of particularly abusive or violent patients from general practitioners' lists.

Dr. Mawhinney: The national health service executive issued guidance, FHSL(94)24, in April which explained the new arrangements for removing violent patients from general practitioners' lists.

Mental Illness

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what investigations she has undertaken into the treatment and resuscitation of patients with a history of mental illness;

(2) what guidelines or advice she has issued concerning the treatment and resuscitation of patients with a history of mental illness.

Mr. Bowis: No recent investigations have been carried out. Hospital consultants are responsible for having clear policies for making decisions about resuscitation. Decisions should take account of the best interests of individual patients.

The Department has not issued any specific guidelines about the resuscitation of patients with a mental illness. The Chief Medical Officer wrote to all regional and district directors of public health on 20 December 1991, PL/CMO(91)22, to make it clear that responsibility for resuscitation policy lies with hospital consultants, who should ensure that their policy is known to junior medical staff. Copies of the letter will be placed in the Library.

Kawasaki Disease

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will fund research into the cause, detection and treatment of Kawasaki disease;

(2) what information she has on the incidence of Kawasaki disease in *(a)* England and Wales, *(b)* the west midlands and *(c)* Birmingham in each of the last 12 years;

(3) what action she has taken to reduce deaths from Kawasaki disease;

(4) if she will ask the Chief Medical Officer to issue advice to general practitioners on the diagnosis and treatment of Kawasaki disease.

Mr. Sackville: Kawasaki disease is an uncommon disease of childhood. Most children make a full recovery but, in a minority of cases, cardiac complications can arise. The following information is available centrally on the prevalence of the condition and deaths recorded:

Annual total cases

Year	Total number of cases: England and Wales	Total number of cases: West Midlands region
1986	59	4
1987	72	3
1988	87	5
1989	81	6
1990	123	14
1991	151	15
1992	147	13

Source: British Paediatric Surveillance Unit.

Deaths from Kawasaki disease 1985-92

	England	West Midlands	Birmingham
1989	—	—	—
1990	6	—	—
1991	2	—	—
1992	—	—	—

Source: OPCS mortality statistics.

Information about the diagnosis and treatment of Kawasaki's disease is available to doctors. Although we are not aware of any current research directed specifically at this disease, basic research being carried out on pathology in childhood is relevant. The main agency through which the Government support biomedical and clinical research is the Medical Research Council, which receives its grant in aid from the office of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. The MRC is always willing to consider for support soundly based new scientific proposals in competition with other applications.

Hospital Treatment

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in what circumstances a person in need of hospital care may choose the hospital in which they receive treatment under the national health service.

Mr. Sackville: It is a fundamental objective of the current national health service reforms to improve patient choice and it is the responsibility of district health authorities, in consultation with general practitioners and local people, to agree contracts with those hospitals where patients prefer to be treated. GPs will sometimes wish to

refer a patient to a hospital or service with which the DHA has no contract in place and DHAs hold funds to meet the cost of these extra-contractual referrals.

Green Belt Hospitals

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many national health service hospitals that *(a)* are in use and *(b)* have been closed and are surplus to requirements lie in the green belt.

Mr. Sackville: The information is not available centrally.

Conferences

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the estimated cost to the national health service of officials attending conferences; and what guidelines she proposes to issue.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many chairs, chief executives and non-executive directors of NHS trusts and health authorities attended the recent NAHAT conference; who paid their fees; and what was the overall cost to public funds.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information requested is not available centrally. We have no plans to issue central guidance. It is for individual health authorities and NHS trusts to decide what priority they attach to attendance at conferences. In doing so, however, we expect them to have proper regard to value for money and the potential benefits to the NHS and its staff, compared with other kinds of developmental training.

Counselling

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his answer of 17 May, *Official Report,* column *420,* when he expects a report from the current departmental review of the cost and cost-effectiveness of counselling.

Mr. Bowis: The report of the Department's review of strategic policy on psychotherapy services, which will include a review of research evidence on the cost-effectiveness of counselling, is expected to be available towards the end of this year.

Tranquillisers

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 6 July, *Official Report,* column *215,* if she will provide whatever figures are available from the prescribing analyses and costs data produced by the Prescription Pricing Authority on the quantity of minor tranquillisers prescribed in *(a)* York, *(b)* North Yorkshire and *(c)* England in those years for which figures were collected.

Mr. Bowis: The number of prescription items for minor tranquillisers dispensed nationally since 1979 and in North Yorkshire in 1992 and 1993 is shown in the table:—

Minor tranquillisers: number of prescriptions (thousands) dispensed

Year	*England*	*North Yorkshire Family Health Services Authority*
1980	12,631	—
1981	12,354	—
1982	11,964	—
1983	11,292	—
1984	10,290	—
1985	9,090	—
1986	8,606	—
1987	8,086	—
1988	6,810	—
1989	6,044	—
1990	5,548	—
1991	5,554	—
1992	5,339	79
1993	5,175	74

Notes:

1. The data included in the attached table are for minor tranquillisers referred to in section 4.1.2 of the British National Formulary.
2. Information of this kind at FHSA level is not readily available for the years prior to 1992 and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.
3. 1980 to 1990 data are estimates based on fees and cover prescriptions dispensed by community pharmacists and appliance contractors only.
4. 1991 to 1993 data are based on items for all prescriptions dispensed by community pharmacists and appliance contractors, dispensing doctors and personal administration.

Access to Health Records Act 1990

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement concerning the costs of implementing the Access to Health Records Act 1990.

Mr. Sackville: The costs of implementing the Act are minimal, and largely self-financing. The Act allows a charge of up to £10 to be made to people seeking access to records which have not been added to in the last 40 days. A fee may also be made, where applicable, to cover the cost of copying and postage.

Hospitals (Disabled Access)

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has for each national health service hospital or trust as to whether people with physical disabilities have access to all wards, clinics and out-patient departments.

Mr. Sackville: This is a matter for each individual hospital and trust and consequently no detailed information is available centrally. However, as part of the patients charter, hospitals should make arrangements to ensure that everyone, including people with disabilities, can use their services. In addition, we have published guidance—"Designing for Disabled People"—on the briefing and design stages of schemes for providing new or adapting existing health buildings and health authorities and trusts are encouraged to consult local representatives of disabled people on this issue. Copies of the guidance are available in the Library.

Medicines Commission

Mrs. Browning: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she expects to receive the annual report of the Medicines Commission for 1993.

Mr. Sackville: We have received the report, and copies have been laid today before both Houses of Parliament in accordance with the requirements of section 5(2) of the Medicines Act 1968.

Bound volumes have been placed in the Library containing the 1993 reports of the Medicines Commission,

the Committee on Safety of Medicines, the Committee on Dental and Surgical Materials, the British Pharmacopoeia Commission and the Veterinary Products Committee.

We are glad to pay tribute to the valuable work done by the distinguished members of the Medicines Act advisory bodies and thank them warmly for the time and effort which they contribute in the public interest to this most important field.

Steroids

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to ensure *(a)* the use of steroid warning cards and *(b)* that a right of informed consent is given to patients prescribed corticosteroids.

Mr. Sackville: The use of steroid treatment cards is a well-established practice. We have no plans to discontinue their use.

Under the patients charter, patients have a right to be consulted about, and to be given an adequate explanation of, their proposed course of treatment, and information on alternatives available through the national health service. However, there will be some cases where doctors will feel that informing patients of the treatment proposed and possible risks could be counter-productive to the well-being of the patient. In such cases, the decision on whether the patient should be informed of the proposed treatment and possible risks or not is for the doctor's discretion.

Official Complaints

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many official complaints were received from NHS patients by each NHS hospital or trust between January and March.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not yet available centrally.

Waiting Times

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the average time that patients in *(a)* England, *(b)* each English regional health authority and *(c)* each hospital or trust waited from the date that their general practitioner referred them to a consultant until the date of their first out-patient appointment between January and March.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information requested is not yet available.

Youth Treatment Service

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she will publish the annual report of the chief executive of the Youth Treatment Service for 1993-94; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: Copies of the report have been placed in the Library today. The report contains, at annexe 7, the Youth Treatment Service's receipts and payments account for the year ended 31 March 1994. These accounts, which are unaudited and have no form of endorsement by the National Audit Office, represent the service's view of the financial outcome for the year.

Operating Theatres

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will give the latest figures and those for the previous four years for the total number of operating theatres *(a)* for England, *(b)* by region and *(c)* by district;

(2) if she will give the latest figures and those for the previous four years for the number of operating theatre sessions cancelled because suitable back-up resources are absent or insufficient *(a)* for England, *(b)* by region and *(c)* by district;

(3) if she will give the latest figures and those for the last four years for operating theatre sessions cancelled because there was insufficient appropriate staff available to the operating theatre session *(a)* for England, *(b)* by region and *(c)* by district.

Mr. Sackville: Information on operating theatres for financial years 1988-89 to 1992-93 is published in "NHS Operating Theatres Availability and Use", financial year 1988-89, year ending 31 March 1992, year ending 31 March 1993—copies of which are available in the Library.

Reasons for the cancellation of operating theatre sessions are not recorded centrally.

Hospital Admissions

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will give by district the latest figures and those for the last four years for patients funded by general practitioner fundholders waiting for ordinary admission *(a)* less than three months, *(b)* three to five months, *(c)* six to eight months, *(d)* nine to 11 months, *(e)* 12-23 months, *(f)* more than 24 months and *(g)* in total;

(2) if she will give by district the latest figures and those for the last four years for patients funded by district health authorities waiting for ordinary admission *(a)* less than three months, *(b)* three to five months, *(c)* six to eight months, *(d)* nine to 11 months, *(e)* 12-23 months, *(f)* more than 24 months and *(g)* in total.

Dr. Mawhinney: Such information on waiting times for in-patient and day case treatment as is available is given in "Hospital Waiting List Statistics: England", copies of which are available in the Library.

Administrative Expenditure

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish a table showing the total amount spent on administration by *(a)* regional health authorities, *(b)* district health authorities, *(c)* special health authorities, *(d)* family health service authorities, *(e)* trusts and *(f)* the Department of Health/NHS executive, in 1993-94, in each case breaking the figure down to show expenditure on (i) salaries and wages and (ii) establishment expenses.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 17 June 1994]:* Expenditure on Department of Health administration, including national health service executive administration, in 1993-94 was £250 million, of which £117 million was on salaries and wages. The figures are provisional. Information on the 1993-94 expenditure of NHS bodies is not yet available.

Cardiological Procedures

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the variations, adjusted by age and sex, in the number of cardiological procedures by purchaser; and what are the causes of these variations.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 4 July 1994]:* Information about variations in the numbers of cardiological procedures by purchaser is not available centrally. The table shows the number of finished consultant episodes involving a heart operation in 1991-92 by region of residence of patient, expressed relative to the national total, England-100, adjusted for the age and sex distribution within each region.

The Government asked the Clinical Services Advisory Group to advise on access to and the availability of coronary bypass grafting. Its report, which also covers coronary angioplasty, published in March 1993, sets out the possible causes of variations in the services provided; a copy has been placed in the Library.

1991-92 index of finished consultant episodes involving a heart operation (England-100)

	Number
Northern	74
Yorkshire	133
Trent	89
East Anglian	79
North West Thames	156
North East Thames	149
South East Thames	124
South West Thames	89
Wessex	84
Oxford	83
South Western	59
West Midlands	83
Mersey	98
North Western	90
England	100

These figures are based on preliminary, unpublished, data from Hospital Episodes Statistics.

Immunisations

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many children per 100,000 have been damaged by vaccine for each category of damage, broken down by first and second immunisations, for each year since 1987.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 5 July 1994]:* The information requested is not available. However, the number of awards made under the Vaccine Damage Payments Act 1979 since 1987 is as follows:

Year	*Awards*
1987-88	10
1988-89	3
1989-90	3
1990-91	1
1991-92	7
1992-93	13
1993-94	4

Note: Awards do not necessarily relate to vaccines administered in that year.

The Act, which is administered by the Department of Social Security, provides a scheme of one-off, lump-sum payments for people who have suffered either severe mental and/or physical disablement of 80 per cent. or more where it can be shown on the balance of probability that damage has resulted from vaccination.

ENVIRONMENT

Energy Saving Trust

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the future funding of the Energy Saving Trust.

Mr. Atkins: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan) on 4 July, *Official Report*, column 22.

Menwith Hill Station

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when a proposal for two radomes, support buildings, security fencing and extension of service road at Menwith hill station, Harrogate, was referred to him to determine whether the development should proceed; how many objections have been lodged against this development; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The proposal has not been referred to the Secretary of State.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what research the Energy Efficiency Office has carried out to explore top management attitudes to energy efficiency and the environment.

Mr. Gummer: A report outlining the findings of research carried out among a sample of firms with more than 200 employees over the past three years has been published by HMSO today. Copies have been placed in the Library of the House.

The findings show improvements in top management attitudes to and practices on energy efficiency and the environment. The proportion of firms with an environmental policy has increased steadily over the period from 46 per cent. to 58 per cent. and those with an energy policy from 34 per cent. to 46 per cent. Yet much remains to be done if the Rio target of returning CO_2 emissions to 1990 levels by the year 2000 is to be met.

I welcome particularly the findings which show that organisations which have joined the "Making a Corporate Commitment" campaign are leading the way in contributing to the CO_2 partnership I have called for. Campaign signatories agree to give board-level commitment to energy management, to reassess their energy efficiency strategy and to set performance improvement targets. The findings show that they are making good progress. For example:

63% have already set energy targets compared to 37% in business generally; while

85% have actual plans to implement energy efficiency measures in the next 12 months. The corresponding figure for business at large is only 52%.

I urge all organisations to increase the priority they give to energy management and follow the lead of campaign signatories. Such action provides the ideal contribution to the CO_2 partnership. The benefits to business are increased profits. The benefits for us all are a better environment, since energy efficiency is the quickest and most cost-effective response to the threat of global warming.

North Circular Road

Mr. Tracey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his position with regard to any decision on the proposed north circular road improvement scheme between Hangar lane and Gunnersbury avenue, Ealing.

Mr. Gummer: Given that my London residence is close to the proposed scheme I shall not be taking any part in the decision-making process which will pass to a colleague. Neither will I be commenting on the merits of the scheme as the inspector's report is currently under consideration. The tried and tested method for considering major road proposals is through a public inquiry of which there have been two into this particular stretch of the north circular road. Such inquiries enable the issues to be debated openly and a decision to be made on the merits of the scheme after all those concerned have had a chance to put their case.

Privatisation

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which organisations, agencies and other bodies relating to his departmental area of responsibility have been privatised since 1990; and what plans he has for further privatisation.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 12 July 1994]:* Since 1990, the operating activities of the Property Services Agency Services were sold as follows:

Division	*Date*	*Purchaser*
PSA Projects	1 December 1992	Tarmac Construction Ltd
Building Management (BM) Scotland	1 September 1993	Serco
BM Manchester	1 October 1993	W. S. Atkins
NorEast BM	1 October 1993	Mowlems
BM South East and BM South West	1 October 1993	Amec-Pell Frischmann Consoritum

My Department continues to examine regularly all its activities to ensure that the best mode of delivery is achieved. In particular, the Government have a manifesto commitment to privatise the docklands light railway and an announcement will be made in due course.

Victoria Street

Mr. Mudie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the estimated total cost of the refurbishment works on 1 to 19 Victoria street.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

1-19 Victoria street is being refurbished for reoccupation by DTI as its headquarters building. The work is expected to cost £61·4 million, net of VAT, £59 million of which is being provided by the landlord, Legal and General Property.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Quality Standards

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, representing the House of Commons Commission, what plans he has to introduce compliance with British Standards Institute quality standard BS 5750 in Departments of the House of Commons.

Mr. Beith: While there are no plans to require Departments of the House formally to comply with the performance standards contained in BS 5750, considerable importance is attached to the development of the quality control and management procedures by which performance can be assessed. Details of the measures so far adopted by individual Departments of the House may be found in the Commission's annual reports.

7 Millbank (Lifts)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee if he will make a statement on the number of times the lifts have broken down in 7 Millbank and the penalties imposed by the lift contractors.

Mr. Ray Powell: These are matters for the Director of Works and I shall ask him to write to the hon. Member.

EDUCATION

Parents Charter

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many copies of the updated parents charter have been printed.

Mr. Robin Squire: A total of 20 million copies of the parents charter have been printed.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the printing cost of the updated parents charter.

Mr. Robin Squire: The cost of printing 20 million copies of the updated parents charter was some £2 million.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the delivery and distribution cost of the updated parents charter.

Mr. Robin Squire: The final cost of the household distribution of the updated parents charter has yet to be confirmed.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education where was the updated parents charter printed.

Mr. Robin Squire: The updated parents charter was printed in the north of England.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Tracey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he intends to reply to the first report of the Education Committee of Session 1993-94, HOC 255, on the common funding formula for grant-maintained schools.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Government's formal response has been sent to the Chairman of the Committee today, together with a consultation paper, seeking views on the design and scope of the common funding formula in 1995-96. Copies of both documents have been placed in the Library.

Student Loans

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what figures he has requested from the Student Loans Company for each year on graduates deferring payment of their student loans for *(a)* one year, *(b)* two years, *(c)* three years, *(d)* indefinitely and *(e)* refusing payment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: The SLC provides certain statistics annually for inclusion in the Department's statistical bulletin "Student Loans". They are not in the form requested by the hon. Member. The last bulletin on student loans was published in February. I will place a copy in the Library.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Livestock Subsidies

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the cost in 1993 in Northern Ireland of payments under *(a)* the sheep annual premium, *(b)* the suckler cow premium, *(c)* the beef special premium and *(d)* the hill livestock compensatory allowances; and what is his estimate of the cost in 1994.

Mr. Ancram: The information requested is as follows:

£ million

	1993 (cost)	1994 (cost)
Sheep annual premium	41·7	30·2
Suckler cow premium	8·8	39·8
Beef special premium	4·9	48·8
Hill livestock compensatory allowances	18·5	13·6

Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people have been interviewed by authorised investigators under schedule 5(2) of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991 in each year and part year since 1991.

Sir John Wheeler: The following statistics indicate the number of persons interviewed by authorised investigators since schedule 5 of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991 came into force. They also show the incidence of use, by authorised investigators, of the other powers available to them under schedule 5.

	1991	1992	1993	[1]1994
Number of applications for appointment[2]	1	24	24	12
Number of appointments made[2]	1	23	24	12
Number of notices to attend issued[2]	1	30	29	16
Number of interviews conducted[3]	1	23	26	14
Number of persons interviewed[2]	1	22	19	12
Number of search warrants obtained[2]	0	0	0	0
Number of persons charged with schedule 5 offences[2]	0	1	0	1
Number of persons convicted of schedule 5 offences[2]	0	1	0	0
Number of search warrants or orders obtained[4]	0	0	0	12
Number of production orders obtained[4]	0	0	1	5
Number of explanation orders obtained[4]	0	0	0	0

[1] Up to 30 June.
[2] Under the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991.
[3] Some persons have been interviewed more than once.
[4] Under the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989.

I remain of the view that use of the powers available under schedule 5 of the 1991 Act plays an important part in the investigation of terrorist finance.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people have been prosecuted as a result of investigations involving the use of powers authorised by section 57 of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991 since 1991; in relation to what offences these people were prosecuted; and how many people have been convicted.

Sir John Wheeler: Four persons have been prosecuted as a result of investigations involving the use of the powers authorised by section 57 of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991.

One person has been convicted of failing to comply with a requirement made by an authorised investigator contrary to paragraph 4(1) of schedule 5 to the 1991 Act. A further person awaits trial on a charge of contravening that provision. One person awaits trial on two charges of false accounting contrary to section 17(1) of the Theft Act (Northern Ireland) 1969. The fourth person awaits trial on two charges of making a false instrument contrary to section 1 of the Forgery and Counterfeiting Act 1981 and two charges of false accounting contrary to section 17(1) of the Theft Act 1968.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much money has been recovered under confiscation orders obtained under section 47 of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991 since 1991.

Sir John Wheeler: No moneys have yet been recovered under the provision.

Firearms

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many murders were committed in Northern Ireland in each of the last three years for which figures are available; of these how many were the result of terrorist activity; and, of the rest, how many persons were killed by *(a)* shotguns, *(b)* handguns and *(c)* other firearms.

Sir John Wheeler: The available information is as follows:

Murders committed in Northern Ireland

Terrorist Murders		*Other Murders*				*Total*
		By shotgun	*By handgun*	*By other firearms*	*By other means*	
1991	89	0	6	0	19	114
1992	81	5	2	1	19	108
1993	82	0	0	0	19	101

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many of the persons charged with causing the death of another person by the use of a firearm of any description had authority to possess that firearm, excluding all those cases where terrorists were involved or where the death was caused by a member of the security forces, in each of the last three years.

Sir John Wheeler: The numbers of persons charged with non-terrorist murders involving the use of a firearm in each of the last three years are as follows:

	Number
1991	2
1992	5
1993	Nil

In each case the firearm was legally held but not by the person committing the offence. In addition, in both 1991 and 1992, two persons who could otherwise have faced charges committed suicide.

TRANSPORT

Vehicle Emissions

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what further proposals he has to reduce carbon emissions from road traffic.

Mr. Key: We have already introduced measures to address the problem of carbon emissions from vehicles. Our fuel duty strategy, which gives a commitment to annual increases in fuel duty of at least 5 per cent., is estimated to save 2·5 million tonnes of carbon in the year 2000. This represents one quarter of the total carbon dioxide emissions the United Kingdom aims to save under the climate change convention. No other European state has given such clear long-term signals on fuel duty movements.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish his Department's assessment of the impact and effectiveness of the most recent change of regulations regarding vehicle exhaust emissions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: New emissions limits, which came into force on 31 December 1992, effectively require new cars to be fitted with catalytic converters which reduce emissions of carbon monoxide—CO—hydrocarbons—HC—and oxides of nitrogen—NOx—by over 75 per cent. Similar measures will apply to new light vans from 1 October 1994. Some three million cars are already fitted with catalytic converters.

From 1 October 1993, emission limits for new diesel-engined trucks and buses over 3·5 tonnes, were reduced by 60, 50 and 45 per cent. respectively, for CO, HC and NOx, and a limit on particulates set for the first time. A further reduction, to be implemented in October 1996, by halving the particulate limit, will increase the level of stringency to that soon to be applied in the United States.

London Transport (Grant)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will set out in tabular form *(a)* total grant, *(b)* core business capital grant, *(c)* new lines and extensions capital grant and *(d)* revenue support grant, excluding the docklands light railway, awarded to London Transport in each year since 1978; and what is the planned expenditure for each year between 1994-95 and 1996-97, at both cash and 1993-94 prices.

Mr. Norris: The information requested is as follows:

Year	*Core business capital grant*	*Core business revenue support grant*	*New lines and extensions capital grant*	*Total grant*
Cash Prices				
1978	64	56	—	120
1979	97	60	—	157
1980	116	102	—	218
1981	135	82	—	217
1982	126	186	—	312
1983	167	175	—	342
1984-85[1]	137	186	—	323
1985-86	182	125	—	307
1986-87	224	66	—	290
1987-88	159	44	—	203
1988-89	150	20	—	170
1989-90	204	44	—	248
1990-91	366	74	2	442
1991-92	405	103	65	573
1992-93	546	254	83	883
1993-94	506	66	120	692
1994-95[2]	360	13	527	900
1995-96[3]	477	—	453	930
1996-97[3]	556	—	431	987
1993-94 prices				
1978	184	161	—	345
1979	238	147	—	385

Year	Core business capital grant	Core business revenue support grant	New lines and extensions capital grant	Total grant
1980	241	212	—	453
1981	256	155	—	411
1982	223	329	—	552
1983	282	296	—	578
1984-85[1]	220	299	—	519
1985-86	277	191	—	468
1986-87	332	98	—	430
1987-88	224	62	—	286
1988-89	198	26	—	224
1989-90	251	54	—	305
1990-91	417	84	2	503
1991-92	434	110	70	614
1992-93	564	262	86	912
1993-94	506	66	120	693
1994-95[2]	346	13	507	866
1995-96[3]	442	—	420	862
1996-97[3]	503	—	390	893

[1] 15 months accounting period.
[2] In addition to grant in 1994-95 LT will benefit substantially from proceeds from the sale of the subsidiaries of London Buses Ltd. £13 million revenue grant is ear marked for the Dial-a-Ride service.
[3] Grant, announced in the Unified Budget, for LT for 1995-96 and 1996-97 has not yet been allocated between revenue and capital spend, but it is expected that all of the core business grant will be used for capital investment with the exception of revenue support of Dial-a-Ride.

These figures understate the growth in the level of investment by LT over the period arising from its improving financial position. With LT's move into operating surplus total capital investment is expected to be £1 billion per annum or more in each of the years 1994-95 to 1996-97 in cash prices.

Bull Bars

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to introduce legislation to ban the attachment of bull bars to road vehicles; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: As I indicated in my reply to the hon. Lady of 21 June, *Official Report*, column *133*, it would not be sensible to legislate without compelling evidence of increased injuries in actual accidents. Meanwhile I support voluntary action by individuals and organisations to remove existing bull bars and my Department has invited the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders to discourage their sale.

Petrol

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what estimate he has made of the trends in the relative use of *(a)* benzene and other aromatics and *(b)* lead additives in petrol; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what estimate there is of the increase in the use of benzene and other aromatics as the level of lead additives in petrol has been reduced; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what research has been conducted into the possible effects upon the environment of the increase in use of benzene in motor fuel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: Differences in the aromatic and benzene content of petrol are the result of the refinery processes used to make the components of the fuel. Benzene in petrol is controlled at 5 per cent. maximum by EC directive and available data indicate that the present content for United Kingdom fuels averages some 2 per cent., a reduction on previous findings. There is no significant upward or downward trend in the aromatic content of United Kingdom petrols, though the overall percentage of aromatics in unleaded fuel is slightly higher than in leaded. Lead added to petrol is restricted by EC directive to 0·15 per cent. grams/litre maximum. Average content varies between 0·12 and 0·14 per cent. grams/litre.

Benzene in exhaust gases is, however, principally a product of the combustion process rather than the fuel itself. Of the trace quantities created in the combustion process over three quarters are removed by catalytic convertors. All pollution from motor vehicles, including benzene, is falling as a result of tighter controls on emissions.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the benefits of super-unleaded fuel over unleaded fuel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: High octane super unleaded petrol gives motorists whose cars were not originally designed to run on unleaded fuel the opportunity of choosing a fuel which will bring environmental benefits through a reduction of lead in the atmosphere. Current usage averages some 6 per cent. of total petrol sales and is expected to decline as cars built prior to 1991 are phased out. After this date all cars have been designed to use premium unleaded petrol.

Catalytic Convertors

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate there is of the number of motor vehicles which are equipped with catalytic convertors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: The precise number of vehicles fitted with catalytic convertors is not known, but is estimated at approximately 3 million or 15 per cent. of the total licensed passenger car fleet, excluding diesel cars.

Shipping Incidents, Bristol Channel

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many incidents have taken place involving commercial *(a)* fishing vessels and *(b)* merchant ships in

the Bristol channel during each of the last five years; and how many lives have been lost as a result of those incidents.

Mr. Norris: The figures given relate to incidents involving UK-registered merchant or fishing vessels where it has been established that the accident happened in the Bristol channel.

The figures are given only for the years shown as information relating to a particular sea area can only readily be obtained from the Marine Accident Investigation Branch computerised accident database. The database contains data from 1991 onwards only. To obtain the information requested for 1989 and 1990 would entail a great deal of research of the manual records for those years.

	1991	*1992*	*1993*	*1994 (to date)*
Registered Fishing vessels	6	2	13	3
Registered Merchant vessels	2	1	—	1

None of the incidents involved loss of life, but the Department is aware that an incident involving an unregistered fishing vessel resulted in the death of two sea anglers.

Coastguard Service

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give for each of the last 10 years the full details of *(a)* coastguard station closures and *(b)* the number of sector posts reduced by (i) promotion, (ii) retirement and (iii) non-filling of vacant posts.

Mr. Norris: In the last 10 years the following coastguard rescue centres have been closed: Shoreham—1983; Tees—1984; Hartland Point—1988; Peterhead—1989; and Ramsey—1989.

There have been no sector posts reduced in the last 10 years by promotion, retirement or the non-filling of vacant posts.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which office posts, in which districts, will be affected by the proposed efficiency savings for the Coastguard Service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: The Coastguard Agency, along with other DOT executive agencies, has submitted proposals on how a 20 per cent. improvement in efficiency could be achieved. The Secretary of State is currently considering these proposals. No decisions have yet been made and it is not possible to give details of the office posts or districts which will be affected.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the effect of staff competence arising from fatigue relating to changed duties in coastguard stations around the country; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: During the 12 years that HM coastguard's existing watch structure in rescue co-ordination centres has been in place, there has been no documented evidence to suggest it has been necessary to conduct an assessment of the effect of staff competence arising from fatigue.

Driving Tests

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will reconsider his policy to suspend the practice of allowing heavy goods vehicles and motor cycle driving schools to block-book test slots.

Mr. Key: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Driving Standards Agency under its chief executive, Dr. Ford, and I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given. The agency's deputy chief executive, Mr. Lobo, will answer in Dr. Ford's absence on leave.

Letter from G. Lobo to Ms Joan Walley, dated 12 July 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked the Chief Executive to reply to your question about the plans to end the present block-booking arrangements for motorcycle and large vehicle driving tests. I am replying as Dr. Ford is on annual leave.

Block-booking is an arrangement that has enabled certain trainers to reserve blocks of test appointments without nominating candidates to use the appointment. This has commercial attractions to those training bodies as it enables them to coordinate their training programmes with test appointments that they control. Trainers have not been charged a fee for this special facility; indeed they have frequently not submitted payments for the block-booked appointments when they were reserved, whereas tests are normally paid for when they are booked.

Block-booking has not been operating satisfactorily. It has involved the Agency operating a shadow booking system and administering the individual agreements. Reserving test appointments where a candidate does not exist has prevented those appointments being used by other prospective candidates and led to examiner time being wasted thus reducing productivity and increasing costs. All of this has added to the cost of the service which has had to be recovered from the test fees paid by candidates. The change is part of a package of measures to reduce the Agency's costs by an estimated £148,000 annually. All parts of the Department have been tasked with finding 20% efficiency savings over the next two years and this package will help the DSA to achieve part of that objective.

Some trainers have indicated that they wish to make proposals about how the booking system could be developed in ways that would help training organisations without the problems of the present block-booking system. The Agency will consider those closely.

MV Derbyshire

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place in the Library a copy of the report presented by the International Transport Workers' Federation in respect of the search for the MV Derbyshire; and when he now expects to make a further statement.

Mr. Norris: The Department has not received such a report from the International Transport Workers Federation.

The technical material which has been received is currently being examined by the Marine Accident Investigation Branch. When that examination is complete the chief inspector of marine accidents will advise my right hon. Friend on the course of action which he recommends.

Highways Agency

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to make announcements on restructuring of the Highways Agency

only while Parliament is sitting and to inform immediately those hon. Members with Highways Agency facilities in their constituencies of his proposals.

Mr. Key: An announcement on Highways Agency restructuring will be made as soon as possible. My right hon. Friend has asked the chief executive of the agency to consider what arrangements are appropriate for informing hon. Members with Highways Agency facilities in their constituencies.

Transport Supplementary Grant

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the level of transport supplementary grant in each year since 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: Transport supplementary grant is payable to local highway authorities in England. The amounts of TSG made available in each of the last five settlements are as follows:

	£ million
1990-91	233·125
1991-92	317·790
1992-93	370·000
1993-94	430·841
1994-95	329·433

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the projected figure for transport supplementary grant for 1995-96 based on the Government's expenditure plans for transport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: The amount of transport supplementary grant to be distributed to local authorities in 1995-96 will be determined later this year in the light of the total resources available for transport investment and the bids submitted by local authorities.

Auxiliary Coastguard Service

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his budget for volunteer auxiliary coastguards in each of the last 10 years as a percentage of the budget for officer posts; and on how many occasions and in what circumstances auxiliary coastguards have been used in excess of 16 hours per week.

Mr. Norris: The budget for volunteer auxiliary coastguards for each year as a percentage of the budget for officer posts, including a small number of administrative staff was: 1990-91, 16·7 per cent.; 1991-92, 18·3 per cent.; 1992-93, 16·8 per cent.; 1993-94, 15·7 per cent.; 1994-95, 13·7 per cent. The figures for the years 1984 to 1989 are not now available as a different accounting system was then used.

Details of how many occasions in the last 10 years and in what circumstances auxiliary coastguards have been used in excess of 16 hours per week could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will set out the details of *(a)* insurance liability and *(b)* responsibility for health and safety matters in respect of auxiliary coastguards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: Auxiliary coastguards are volunteers. They have a call on the principal civil service pension scheme in the event of injury while on duty, limited to impairment of earning capacity. In all other insurance matters they receive the same cover as regular staff while on duty.

Auxiliary coastguards are covered by the same health and safety arrangements as apply to regular staff.

Transport of Children

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he will now take to ensure that councils do not suffer financially by allocating a seat to every child on a school bus; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: The Public Service Vehicles (Carrying Capacity) Regulations 1984 permit three children, each of whom is under 14, to share a double seat and count as two passengers.

The Government are considering the way forward as part of the wider review.

Lorry Bans

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has held with the Metropolitan and the City of London police on the enforcement of the London night-time and weekend lorry ban.

Mr. Norris: Enforcement of the ban is the responsibility of the London borough councils and the police. Informal contact with the Metropolitan police has indicated they see no particular difficulties with the Government's proposals to amend the ban. Once the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill receives Royal Assent the police will be consulted on any draft order to amend the ban under the provisions of clause 24.

Hartland MRSC

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the need for additional staff arising from increased incidents following the closure of Hartland maritime rescue sub-centre in 1988.

Mr. Norris: Following the closure of Hartland maritime rescue sub-centre in 1988, staff complements were increased in the Maritime rescue co-ordination centre Seansea and an extra sector post established in the north Devon area. Experience since indicates that no additional staff are necessary.

Driving Tests (Fraud)

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his Department's estimate of the scale of fraud in taking driving tests; and what steps are being taken to prevent abuse.

Mr. Key: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Driving Standards Agency under its chief executive, Dr. Ford, and I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given. The agency's deputy chief executive, Mr. Lobo, will answer in Dr. Ford's absence on leave.

Letter from G. Lobo to Mr. John Spellar, dated 12 July 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked the Chief Executive to reply to your question about preventing fraud at the driving test. I am replying as Dr. Ford is on annual leave.

The driving test provides an important safeguard for road safety and the risk of impersonation of driving test candidates is viewed seriously. A conviction could lead to a £5,000 fine or 2 years imprisonment.

Test candidates are required to establish their identity at the start of the test, normally by showing the examiner their provisional driving licence. Candidates also provide a signature and examiners check that against the signature on candidates' driving licences. Driving examiners are trained to distinguish between experienced and learner drivers. If there are grounds for suspicion the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency can delay issuing the licence until the matter has been fully investigated. This system will be further strengthened by the introduction of photographs on driving licences planned from July 1996.

Notwithstanding recent well publicised instances of candidate impersonation, the Agency does not have evidence to indicate that this is a large scale problem. Over the last 12 months there have been nine convictions for the offence nationally compared with 1·7 million driving tests conducted, similar to the number in previous years.

Driver Licensing

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport by what date he intends *(a)* to go out to consultation on and *(b)* to implement regulations under the European Communities Act 1972 to implement the second EC directive on driver licensing.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 5 July 1994]:* Consultation on the second EC directive on driver licensing began on 31 March and ended on 24 June. Regulations to be made under section 2(2) of the European Communities Act 1972 to implement the directive will be made as soon as remaining questions of interpretation have been clarified with the European Commission. The directive will come into effect on the due date of 1 July 1996.

Pollution (Marine Incidents)

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the date, the cause of the accident, and the extent of any resultant pollution for maritime losses, collisions and contacts in 1993 and 1994 to date in the sea areas of the Irish sea and the English channel.

Mr. Norris: The information given in the table relates to incidents involving one or more United Kingdom registered merchant or fishing vessels where is has been established that the accident happened in either the Irish sea or the English channel.

Date	*Accident*	*Vessel*
Losses, collisions and contacts in the Irish sea		
1993		
6 January	Collision	Stephanie Jane/OSA Vooyager
27 February	Collision	Breaksea/Tourmalet
22 May	Stranding/Loss	Darmel
14 July	Collision	Amber Rose/Opossum
31 July	Stranding/Loss	Coeur De Lion
17 September	Collision	Cakgarth/Bay Driller
21 September	Grounding/Loss	Defiance III
27 October	Contact	Artful Dodger III
23 November	Contact	James Mervyn of Porthgain
1994		
16 January	Foundering/Loss	Katy
19 April	Foundering/Loss	Malin
Losses, collisions and contacts in the English Channel		
1993		
4 January	Foundering/Loss	Lisa Marie
7 January	Foundering/Loss	Doomey D
28 January	Foundering/Loss	Helbri of Plymouth
16 February	Collision	Reseda/HMS Cornwall
16 February	Capsizing/Loss	Lia—G
2 March	Foundering/Loss	Charlynne II
18 March	Foundering/Loss	Heather Amorel
18 April	Foundering/Loss	Nil Desperandum II
17 July[1]	Collision/Loss	M.D.A.C./Lady Mira
25 July	Collision	Sea Lady/Ocean Hound
23 August	Collision	Condor 9/Huelin Despatch
26 August	Contact	Norleader
11 September	Contact	Cowes Castle
25 September	Collision	Pride of Winchester/Duchess Anne
26 September	Collision	Press On/Marcon Sabre
30 September	Collision	Girl Allison II/Steel Fisher
1994		
19 January	Contact	Dowlais
27 January	Contact	Pride of Hampshire
4 March	Foundering/Loss	Karen Marie II
26 March	Collision	Canari/Jacomina
28 March	Foundering/Loss	Karma
30 March	Collision	Our Zoe Anne/Largs Bay

[1] The pleasure craft Lady Mira was lost after collision with the fishing vessel M.D.A.C.

There was very minor pollution in respect of the stranding/loss of the Coeur De Lion.

There was very minor pollution in respect of the capsizing/loss of the LIA-G, the foundering/loss of the Charlynne II and the foundering/loss of Heather Armorel.

WALES

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how much the Welsh Development Agency spent on legal fees in each year in the period 1983 to 1993;

(2) what was the cost of the consultant hired by the Welsh Development Agency to report on a project entitled "Jobs and Pay"; and why its proposals were not implemented.

Mr. Redwood: I will arrange for the chief executive of the agency to write to the hon. Member and for a copy of his letter to be placed in the Library of the House.

Public Bodies

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of the Welsh Development Agency, the Development Board for Rural Wales and the Land Authority for Wales are councillors.

Mr. Redwood: None of the current board members of the Welsh Development Agency is a councillor; 30 per cent.—three—of members of the Development Board for Rural Wales are councillors, which will be increased to five members following my statement on 7 July; and 50 per cent.—four—of members of the Land Authority for Wales are councillors.

Water Quality (Llandudno and Rhyl)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what initiatives he intends to take to improve water quality of Llandudno west shore and Rhyl beaches; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Dwr Cymru's programme of improvements to bathing waters includes schemes at both of these waters which should be completed next year. The schemes are designed to enable the waters to meet the mandatory standards in the European bathing water directive.

Unemployment

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the change in the numbers of the unemployed since May 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: On a consistent and seasonally adjusted basis the number of claimant unemployed in Wales was 68,700 in May 1979 and 122,200 in May 1994, an increase of 53,500.

Historic Buildings

Mr. Elfyn Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, how many buildings of historical importance are currently being renovated in *(a)* Gwynedd, *(b)* Clwyd, *(c)* Dyfed, *(d)* Powys, *(e)* Gwent, *(f)* South Glamorgan, *(g)* Mid Glamorgan, *(h)* West Glamorgan and (i) Wales as a whole; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments executive agency under its chief executive, John Carr. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from E. A. J. Carr to Mr. Elfyn Llwyd, dated 13 July 1994:

The Secretary of State for Wales has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question originally put to the Secretary of State for National Heritage about the renovation of buildings of historical importance.

There is no centrally collected information on the number of buildings of historical importance being renovated in Wales. What we do know is of Wales stock of some 16,165 buildings listed as being of special architectural or historic importance how many are the subject of listed building consent. The attached table [1] sets out this information.

The other area in which we do have information relates to buildings which are receiving grant aid from Cadw. I have set out in the attached table [2] the numbers of properties currently the subject of grant aid.

I hope this information is helpful. If you require more detailed information please do let me know and we will seek to provide it.

(Table 1)
1993-94
Number of LBC applications received by CADW for each county

	Number
Clwyd	78
Dyfed	147
Gwent	64
Gwynedd	86
Mid Glamorgan	35
Powys	114
South Glamorgan	51
West Glamorgan	19
	594

Alter/extend/partially demolish=584.
Total demolition=10.

(Table 2)
Live grant cases (CADW)

	Number
Clwyd	54
Dyfed	62
Gwent	55
Gwynedd	60
Mid Glamorgan	15
Powys	62
South Glamorgan	28
West Glamorgan	17
Total	353

Schools (Security)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will outline his policies as they impinge upon meassures concerning the safety and the welfare of pupils on the school site with specific reference to the need for schools to be secure from casual visitors and passers by; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what is his assessment of whether the infant and primary schools of Wales are safe and secure from the point of view of the personal safety of the children during school hours; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: It is the responsibility of individual local education authorities to ensure the health and safety of all children attending schools within their area. With regard to grant-maintained schools, this responsibility falls to the governing body of each school. Clearly, security is an important issue and local authorities and schools have a wealth of national guidance and advice to draw upon. They

can also seek the assistance of the local police as necessary. I am satisfied that local education authorities and schools take these responsibilities seriously.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list by wave *(a)* the number of non-executive directors of NHS trust hospitals and *(b)* the number of chairs of NHS trust hospitals, by salary band.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information is as follows:

Non-executive directors—1992-5
1993-62
1994-43

Chairmen's Salary	*1992*	*1993*	*1994*
Band 1 (£19,285)	—	5	2
Band 2 (£17,145)	1	7	5
Band 3 (£15,125)	—	1	3

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the cost of installing capital equipment in each of the hospital trusts of Wales over the last year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Information about the cost of installing capital equipment is not held centrally.

Community Care

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the number of people employed in community care in *(a)* Clwyd and *(b)* Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The whole-time equivalent numbers of staff directly employed by local authority social services departments to provide day and domiciliary services are as follows:

Staff in post at 30 September 1992.
Clwyd 544·7
Wales 5,752·3

These figures exclude local authority staff employed in the areas of care assessment, social work support and management and also exclude staff of other contracted agencies.

Health Service Staff

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the latest figures and list for each of the last four years by region the number of *(a)* doctors, *(b)* nurses, *(c)* midwives, *(d)* health visitors, *(e)* administration and clerical staff and *(f)* managers.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The available information is given in the table.

Health authority area[1]	*Staff in post (whole-time equivalents) at September 1990*	*September 1991*	*September 1992*	*September 1993*	*March 1994*
Clwyd					
Doctors[2]	312	315	331	353	—
Nursing and Midwifery staff[3]:					
Learners	406	296	169	67	12
Other	3,174	3,270	3,348	3,328	3,366
Administrative and clerical staff	840	886	944	935	944
Managers[4]	51	98	136	147	154
East Dyfed					
Doctors[2]	223	213	224	246	—
Nursing and Midwifery staff[3]:					
Learners	210	208	138	70	36
Other	2,043	2,018	2,052	2,061	2,046
Administrative and clerical staff	598	636	672	688	688
Managers[4]	36	61	70	102	108
Gwent					
Doctors[2]	362	367	391	400	—
Nursing and Midwifery staff[3]					
Learners	364	366	239	120	70
Other	4,014	3,924	3,864	3,747	3,692
Administrative and clerical staff	980	1,014	1,018	975	975
Managers[4]	51	69	83	129	134
Gwynedd					
Doctors[2]	175	175	193	212	—
Nursing and Midwifery staff[3]:					
Learners	230	165	99	30	3
Other	1,912	1,920	1,968	2,049	2,035
Administrative and clerical staff	549	574	607	631	625
Managers[4]	21	31	66	74	76
Mid Glamorgan					
Doctors[2]	423	429	452	473	—
Nursing and Midwifery staff[3]:					
Learners	626	635	461	269	145
Other	4,777	4,777	4,901	4,808	4,753
Administrative and clerical staff	1,149	1,184	1,206	1,184	1,179
Managers[4]	235	89	90	132	145
Pembrokeshire					
Doctors[2]	79	82	87	93	—

Health authority area[1]	Staff in post (whole-time equivalents) at September 1990	September 1991	September 1992	September 1993	March 1994
Nursing and Midwifery staff[3]					
Learners	56	56	36	21	10
Other	677	686	643	544	525
Administrative and clerical staff	212	233	154	107	92
Managers[4]	16	17	3	1	1
Powys					
Doctors[2]	42	39	43	43	—
Nursing and Midwifery staff[3]:					
Learners	53	50	34	23	19
Other	1,059	1,084	1,044	1,010	1,009
Administrative and clerical staff	201	216	229	243	241
Managers[4]	25	38	39	52	54
South Glamorgan					
Doctors[2]	679	684	697	702	—
Nursing and Midwifery staff[3]:					
Learners	628	678	455	250	159
Other	4,309	4,197	4,378	4,359	4,390
Administrative and clerical staff	1,566	1,598	1,716	1,674	1,668
Managers[4]	87	133	187	183	189
West Glamorgan					
Doctors[2]	339	371	398	398	—
Nursing and Midwifery staff[3]:					
Learners	502	480	338	183	118
Other	3,043	3,080	3,181	3,222	3,265
Administrative and clerical staff	900	940	1,005	1,074	1,083
Managers[4]	67	79	89	93	101
WHCSA[5]					
Doctors[2]	14	14	14	14	—
Nursing and Midwifery staff[3]:					
Learners	—	—	—	—	—
Other	10	72	73	77	73
Administrative and clerical staff	658	766	794	1,064	1,046
Managers[4]	27	70	86	117	133
Wales					
Doctors[2]	2,648	2,689	2,821	2,934	—
Nursing and Midwifery staff[3]	—	—	—	—	—
Learners	3,075	2,934	1,970	1,033	572
Other	25,018	25,028	25,451	25,206	25,153
Administrative and clerical staff	7,653	8,050	8,347	8,577	8,540
Managers[4]	416	683	848	1,028	1,095

Notes:

[1] Includes staff employed by those Family Health Service Authorities using Health Authority payroll systems.
The use of locally devised payscales from 1991 may affect the comparability of figures as these staff cannot be allocated centrally to specific staff group and are not, therefore, included above. This affects figures for Pembrokeshire in particular.
Staff employed by NHS Trusts have been amalgamated with the health authority area in which they are situated in order to show comparisons over time.

[2] Doctors working in the hospital and community health service. The figures are obtained from an annual census of staff in post on 30 September and, therefore, no figures are available for March 1994.

[3] Reliable estimates of the numbers of nursing staff employed in specific occupational groups, such as midwives and health visitors, are not available centrally. Since the autumn of 1991 learner (student) nurses have been classified as students and are no longer included in the NHS staff figures. Learner staff numbers shown in the table for 1992 onwards are learners finishing courses started before this change took place.

[4] General managers, senior managers and managers.

[5] Certain responsibilities and staff have transferred to the Welsh Health Common Services Authority from Health Authorities in recent years, affecting the comparability of figures over time.

Customs House School, Deeside

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will meet the chairman of the Education Assets Board and direct him to reverse his decision to transfer to and vest in the Deeside College a property within the grounds of Customs House county primary school, Deeside, Clwyd;

(2) if he will make a statement concerning his working relations with the Education Assets Board (Leeds);

(3) if he will meet the chairman and governors of Customs House county primary school, Deeside to discuss their plans for the future of the school.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Education Assets Board has responsibility under section 36 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 to secure that the transfer of property, rights and liabilities from any local authority to a further education corporation is fully effective. Where there is a disagreement about whether or not an asset should transfer, the board considers representations from each side before making a direction to the effect either that the asset should remain in local authority ownership or that it should transfer to the corporation. Both the local authority and the further education corporation have a right to appeal to my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Wales against a direction made by the board.

No appeal has been received in respect of the board's decision that ownership of a property within the grounds of

Customs House CP school, Deeside, Clwyd should transfer to the Deeside further education corporation. If an appeal is received, my right hon. Friend will give it careful consideration.

The Education Assets Board keeps the Welsh Office informed of the progress it is making in effecting the transfer of assets to the further education corporations and any disputes which arise in the course of its work.

My right hon. Friend has no plans to meet the chairman and governors of Customs House CP school. I have met both the headmaster and a governor of the school with the hon. Member.

Clinical Waste

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of whether hospital clinical waste is incinerated correctly and that localities are safe from injurious effects; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: All current guidance on the management of clinical waste, including incineration, has been issued to health authorities and NHS trusts in Wales. Under the pollution control provisions of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, the prime regulatory responsibility for hospital incinerators rests with district councils in Wales; and in licensing the operation of such facilities councils include safeguards to protect public health and the environment.

Dental Health

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures he proposes to improve dental health among children of school age.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The "Protocol for Investment in Health Gain: Oral Health", published two years ago outlines arrangements necessary to secure improved oral health of the population including schoolchildren.

The local strategy for health prepared by Clwyd health authority reflects the aims of the protocol in seeking to obtain improvements in patient care and quality of services.

Health Service Staff

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the fairness of the current terms and conditions of NHS authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I asume this to be a question about the terms and conditions of service applicable to NHS staff, with the fairness of which I am broadly satisfied.

Nurses Regrading

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the regrading of nurses in *(a)* Wales, and *(b)* Clwyd giving the date when regrading began; and how many regradings have taken place in each of the health authorities.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The new grading structure for nurses took effect on 1 April 1988. The other information requested is not held centrally.

Dental Care

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures he proposes to obtain more NHS dentists in Clwyd; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The assessment of health need and the procurement of appropriate care is the responsibility of the relevant health authority. General dental practitioners are independent contractors who can locate their practices where they wish. The Welsh Office is considering the Clwyd family health services authority's application to employ salaried dentists.

NHS Research and Development

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what arrangements are in place in his Department to collect centrally data on the numbers of people employed directly or indirectly to administer research and development in the national health service in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: This information is not held centrally.

Land Schemes

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the cost in 1993 in Wales of payments made under *(a)* the countryside stewardship scheme, *(b)* the hedgerow incentive scheme, *(c)* the countryside premium scheme and *(d)* the wildlife enhancement scheme; and what is his estimate of the cost in 1994.

Sir Wyn Roberts: *(a)* The countryside stewardship scheme does not operate in Wales. The Countryside Council for Wales runs a broadly equivalent farm-based scheme called Tir Cymen, which was launched in July 1992.

The estimated costs are as follows:

£ million

	1993-94	*1994-95*
Total expenditure	2·01	3·42
Grants paid	1·57	2·98
Administration and research	0·44	0·44

(b) The estimated costs of the hedgerow incentive scheme are as follows:

£ million

	1993-94	*1994-95*
Total expenditure	0·45	0·51
Grants paid	0·38	0·44
Administration	0·07	0·07

(c) and *(d)* There are no equivalent schemes in Wales.

Day Surgery

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many operations on a day-care basis were carried out in the last year in each of the hospitals in Clwyd; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However,

information on the number of day cases treated in each hospital in Wales is published annually in "Hospital Bed Use Statistics Volume 1: In-patients and Daycases" the latest edition of which, relating to the financial year 1992-93, is in the Library of the House.

DEFENCE

Meteorological Office

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what key performance targets have been set for the chief executive of the Meteorological Office executive agency for the financial year 1994-95.

Mr. Hanley: The agency has been set a range of quality, financial and efficiency targets to ensure that it delivers progressive improvements in the provision of weather-related services.

The key quality targets set for the Meteorological Office during financial year 1994-95 are to achieve 80 per cent. of all business plan targets for customer satisfaction, forecast accuracy and timeliness; and in particular to attain an accuracy of at least 84 per cent. for the 24-hour national forecast broadcast at 1755 hours by BBC Radio 4.

The financial targets are to deliver the agreed Meteorological Office programme within a business plan cash limit of £75,000,000; to reduce net expenditure, as shown in the annual report and accounts, to £93,200,000, representing a decrease of 9·1 per cent. on the 1993-94 budget; and to provide a net contribution to the agency's core costs and general overheads of £3,600,000 from commercial services to the public, industry and commerce, excluding the Civil Aviation Authority and the Department of the Environment, representing an increase of £300,000 over the 1993-94 budget.

Individual areas of Meteorological Office have been set targets to increase efficiency by between 2 and 3 per cent., typically, through improvement in quality and volume of service and reduced unit costs.

Defence Accounts Agency

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what performance targets have been set for the Defence Accounts Agency 1994-95.

Mr. Hanley: The chief executive of the Defence Accounts Agency is responsible for providing accounting services for the Ministry of Defence as defined in the agency framework document. He has been set the following challenging key performance targets for 1994-95:

a. To complete the following workload within the funds allocated for this purpose:

Manage 92,500 non-industrial pay accounts
Manage 45,200 industrial pay accounts
Complete 150,000 pensions awards/transactions
Approve 500,000 claims for travel or transfer expenses
Pay 17,000 fees claims
Pay 3,300,000 bills
Process 48,000 invoices
Make 420,000 personal payments
Manage 9,000 imprest accounts
Process 35,000 HQ receipts
Process 2,750 banknote orders
Process 2,150 bank fundings

b. To meet the Agency's quality of service standards in Service Level Agreements and performance targets.

c. To achieve 10 per cent manpower reductions required by centrally managed efficiency measures by 31 March 1995.

d. To make efficiency savings with a value of at least £1,100,000 which is approximately 2·5 per cent. of the initial cash allocation, concentrating on the fixed costs identified in a recent study.

e. To compete for Payroll and Pension awarding business offered through the Government's Market Testing programme.

f. To operate a Customer Charter for Civil Pay services by March 1995.

g. To complete the Full Study Stage of the Mainframe Rationalisation Project.

h. To develop a Quality Strategy by 31 March 1995.

Base Storage and Distribution

Mr. John Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about possible defence-agency status for the base storage and distribution organisation of the Army.

Mr. Hanley: I have decided that the Army base storage and distribution organisation should be considered as a candidate for defence agency status, under the next steps initiative. A prior options study will be undertaken to establish whether agency status or other options would be appropriate. I would welcome comments from interested parties. Comments should be sent by 9 September 1994 to:

Major General D. L. Burden CBE
Director General Logistic Support (Army)
Headquarters Quartermaster General
Portway
Monxton Road
Andover
Hants SP11 8HT

Directorate of Transport and Movements

Mr. John Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about possible defence agency status for the Directorate of Transport and Movements (Army).

Mr. Hanley: I have decided that, subject to the satisfactory conclusion of normal trade union consultation, the Directorate of Transport and Movements (Army) should be considered as a candidate for defence agency status under the next steps initiative. The directorate will undergo a prior options study to determine whether agency status or alternative options would be most appropriate. Comments and ideas would be welcomed from any interested party. They should be sent by Friday 9 September 1994 to:

Major General D. L. Burden CBE
Director General Logistic Support (Army)
Headquarters Quartermaster General
Portway
Monxton Road
Andover
Hants. SP11 8HT

Parachute Training

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the current arrangements for the use of balloons for Army parachute training; what annual costs are involved; what plans he has for the replacement of balloons by aircraft; what savings in costs and reductions in service and civilian numbers are expected; what are the operational implications; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The RAF Balloon Operations Squadron —BOS—provides support both for initial parachute

training at No. 1 Parachute Training School and for continuation training for units of the three services. The squadron's operating costs for financial year 1993-94 were £3,858,000. The BOS is due to be disbanded on 1 April 1995, when its function will be taken over by a contractorised operation using Skyvan aircraft. Substantial savings are expected and there will be a reduction of 78 uniformed posts. As the Skyvan operation will mirror the existing operation, there will be no operational implications arising from this change.

Army Service

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list those Army regiments or battalions which served in *(a)* the Falklands campaign and completed tours there since, *(b)* Gulf war, *(c)* Bosnia and *(d)* Northern Ireland since 1990.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is set out in the table. Complete regiments and battalions only—the Royal Armoured Corps, Infantry and Royal Artillery—are listed in order of seniority.

1. *The Falklands.*

a. Operations 1982:

2nd Battalion Scots Guards.
1st Battalion Welsh Guards.
2nd Battalion the Parachute Regiment.
3rd Battalion the Parachute Regiment.
1st Battalion 7th Duke of Edinburgh's Own Gurkha Rifles.
4th Field Regiment Royal Artillery.
29th Commando Regiment Royal Artillery.

b. Post-Operations:

2nd Battalion Grenadier Guards.
1st Battalion Coldstream Guards.
1st Battalion The Royal Scots (The Royal Regiment).
2nd Battalion The Queen's Regiment.
1st Battalion The King's Own Royal Border Regiment.
1st Battalion the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers.
2nd Battalion The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers.
3rd Battalion The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers.
1st Battalion The King's Regiment.
3rd Battalion The Royal Anglian Regiment.
1st Battalion The Devonshire and Dorset Regiment.
1st Battalion The Light Infantry.
3rd Battalion The Light Infantry.
1st Battalion The Green Howards (Alexandra, Princess of Wales's Own Yorkshire Regiment).
1st Battalion The Cheshire Regiment.
1st Battalion The Royal Welch Fusiliers.
1st Battalion The Royal Irish Rangers.
2nd Battalion the Royal Irish Rangers.
1st Battalion the Duke of Wellington's Regiment (West Riding).
1st Battalion the Royal Hampshire Regiment.
1st Battalion the Queen's Own Highlanders (Seaforth and Camerons).
1st Battalion The Gordon Highlanders.
1st Battalion The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders (Princess Louise's).
2nd Battalion 2nd King Edward VII's Own Gurkha Rifles (The Sirmoor Rifles).
1st Battalion The Royal Green Jackets.
3rd Battalion The Royal Green Jackets.
The Royal Scots Dragoon Guards (Carabiniers and Greys).
The Queen's Royal Irish Hussars.
14th/20th King's Hussars.
16th/5th The Queen's Royal Lancers.
2nd Field Regiment Royal Artillery.
12th (Air Defence) Regiment Royal Artillery.
26th Field Regiment Royal Artillery.
32nd Heavy Regiment Royal Artillery.
39th Heavy Regiment Royal Artillery.
40th Field Regiment Royal Artillery.
1st Battalion Coldstream Guards.
1st Battalion The Royal Scots (The Royal Regiment).
3rd Battalion The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers.
1st Battalion The Royal Highland Fusiliers (Princess Margaret's Own Glasgow and Ayrshire Regiment).
1st Battalion The King's Own Scottish Borderers.
1st Battalion The Staffordshire Regiment (The Prince of Wales's).

3. *Bosnia.*

1st Battalion Coldstream Guards.
2nd Battalion The Royal Anglian Regiment.
1st Battalion The Prince of Wales's Own Regiment of Yorkshire.
1st Battalion The Cheshire Regiment.
1st Battalion The Duke of Wellington's Regiment (West Riding).

4. *Northern Ireland since 1990.*

3rd Field Regiment Royal Horse Artillery.
5th Royal Inniskilling Dragoon Guards.
9th/12th Royal Lancers (Prince of Wales's).
15th/19th Kings Royal Hussars.
1st Royal Tank Regiment.
3rd Royal Tank Regiment.
2nd Regiment Royal Artillery.
4th Field Regiment Royal Artillery
16th (Air Defence) Regiment Royal Artillery.
22nd Regiment Royal Artillery.
26th Regiment Royal Artillery.
32nd Regiment Royal Artillery.
45th Field Regiment Royal Artillery.
1st Battalion Grenadier Guards.
1st Battalion Coldstream Guards.
2nd Battalion Coldstream Guards.
1st Battalion Scots Guards.
2nd Battalion Scots Guards.
1st Battalion Irish Guards.
1st Battalion Welsh Guards.
1st Battalion The Royal Scots (The Royal Regiment).
3rd Battalion The Queen's Regiment.
1st Battalion The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment.
2nd Battalion The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment.
1st Battalion The King's Own Royal Border Regiment.
2nd Battalion The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers.
1st Battalion The King's Regiment.
1st Battalion The Royal Anglian Regiment.
2nd Battalion The Royal Anglian Regiment.
3rd Battalion The Royal Anglian Regiment.
1st Battalion The Devonshire and Dorset Regiment.
2nd Battalion The Light Infantry
3rd Battalion The Light Infantry.
1st Battalion The Prince of Wales's Own Regiment of Yorkshire.
1st Battalion The Green Howards (Alexandra, Princess of Wales's Own Yorkshire Regiment).
1st Battalion The Cheshire Regiment.
1st Battalion The Royal Welch Fusiliers.
1st Battalion The Royal Regiment of Wales (24th/41st Foot).
1st Battalion The King's Own Scottish Borderers.
2nd Battalion The Royal Irish Rangers.
1st Battalion The Gloucestershire Regiment.
1st Battalion The Worcestershire and Sherwood Foresters Regiment (29th/45th Foot).
1st Battalion The Royal Hampshire Regiment.
1st Battalion The Staffordshire Regiment (Prince of Wales's).
1st Battalion The Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment).
1st Battalion The Duke of Edinburgh's Royal Regiment (Berkshire and Wiltshire).
1st Battalion the Queen's Own Highlanders (Seaforth and Camerons).
1st Battalion The Gordon Highlanders.
1st Battalion The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders (Princess Louise's).
1st Battalion The Parachute Regiment.
2nd Battalion The Parachute Regiment.
3rd Battalion The Parachute Regiment.
1st Battalion The Royal Green Jackets.
2nd Battalion The Royal Green Jackets.

3rd Battalion The Royal Green Jackets.

Notes:

1. The list for Northern Ireland covers resident battalions and major roulements only and does not include Royal Marines deployed in the infantry role and Royal Irish Home Service Battalions.
2. Details for the Falkland Islands only given up to 1991 when reduction to Company strength was made.

Iraq (Friendly Fire)

Mr. John Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has yet received the results of the United States board of inquiry into the shooting down of two Black Hawk helicopters over northern Iraq on 14 April; if the bereaved families have been informed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The United States Government have today announced the results of their board of inquiry. I have placed a copy of the executive summary, summary of facts and United States news release in the Libraries of both Houses. The board of inquiry concluded that a combination of human error and organisational failures led to a tragic sequence of events resulting in the shooting down of the two Black Hawk helicopters. The bereaved families visited the Adjutant General and myself at the Ministry of Defence this afternoon, before receiving a briefing at the United States embassy from the ambassador and a representative of the United States air force in Europe.

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OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Russia

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consideration Her Majesty's Government and other Group of Seven nations gave to a Marshall-aid type programme to Russia; and what were the reasons for their decision.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: When they met in Tokyo last year, G7 leaders agreed a package of assistance to the Russian Federation worth $43·4 billion. They discussed progress on implementing this package in Naples on 8 to 10 July. A copy of the summit communiqué has been placed in the Libraries of the House.

World Health Organisation

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the World Health Organisation about the improvement of its performance in crisis situations in developing countries.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We welcome the World Health Organisation's increasing role in emergency situations and have supported its emergency work in a number of countries.

The United Kingdom, through its official representatives to WHO, maintains a continuing dialogue with the division of emergency and humanitarian action on how best the division should develop its activities in providing assistance in emergency situations. We have fully supported the recent setting up, by WHO, of a task force to examine this role. It is still working on its recommendations which we will examine carefully when they are released.

Aid and Development Targets

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the targets on aid and development co-operation established by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, by the United Nations and by its agencies, including targets established at the world summit for children, Jomtien education-for-all conference, United Nations conferences on the least developed countries and the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development; which of these targets the United Kingdom has accepted; and what progress towards these targets has been made by the United Kingdom to date.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: There are three United Nations targets, accepted by the United Kingdom, for resource transfers to the developing countries. These are:

(i) The United Nations Target for total net official development assistance (oda) to all developing countries equal to 0·7 per cent. of GNP. In 1993 United Kingdom net oda totalled £1·9 billion, equivalent to 0·31 per cent. of GNP;

(ii) the United Nations target for total official and private flows to developing countries equal to 1 per cent. of GNP. In 1992, the United Kingdom spent 0·89 per cent. of GNP on total flows; and

(iii) the United Nations Target for net oda to Least Developed Countries (LLDCs) equal to 0·15 per cent. of GNP. In 1991-92 the United Kingdom spent an average of 0·10 per cent. on net oda to LLDCs. (United Kingdom aid to India and Pakistan, two of our largest country programmes, does not score against this target even though both countries are poorer than many LLDCs).

The world summit for children did not establish specific targets. It did, however, identify goals in such areas as child survival and development; child health; basic education, and the protection of children living in difficult circumstances. We were one of the first industrialised countries to publish its national report in response to the summit. The report, published in July 1992 by Command 1984, contains detailed information on the help we are giving to assist children in developing countries through our aid programme. Our commitment to the declaration and plan of action agreed at the summit is borne out in the pattern of activity supported by the aid programme. This programme benefits children directly, through health and education, and indirectly through safe water projects. In the financial year 1992-93 over £180 million or more than 31 per cent. of that part of our bilateral aid which can be allocated by sector, was spent in the social sectors such as education, health care, clean water and safe sanitation.

No new targets were set at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. We have, however, taken an active part in the successful fulfilment of the agreements at UNCED, as expressed in Agenda 21, to restructure the global environment facility, to agree a convention on desertification and to hold a conference on the sustainable development of small island developing states, which adopted an action plan.

We support the shift to basic education for all children, youth and adults which was adopted by the Jomtien conference in 1990. The Jomtien declaration reaffirmed the right of all people to education—and urged countries and

donors to allocate more resources to primary education, literary programmes and basic training. The amount we allocate to basic education has increased from £6 million in 1991-92 to around £15 million in 1992-93.

Bangladesh

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Government aid policy with regard to Bangladesh.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Mr. Parry) on Thursday 23 June 1994, *Official Report*, column 272.

Bosnia

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consultations he has had with his European counterparts to improve the delivery of humanitarian aid in Bosnia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply he received from my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary on 27 June 1994, *Official Report, 411.* We are playing an active part with EU partners in the EU administration of Mostar.

Indonesia

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy for aid to Indonesia, indicating whether such aid is to be targeted in the future; and what arrangements Her Majesty's Government are making for its independent monitoring.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 11 July 1994]:* Her Majesty's Government provide assistance for Indonesia because it is still a relatively poor country, is pursuing sound economic policies, has an impressive record of poverty reduction and is generally an effective user of aid. In agreement with the Indonesian Government, the United Kingdom aid programme is focused on natural resources including forestry, education, public administration, energy efficiency and transportation. We monitor the progress of projects through regular reports from the project authorities and through monitoring visits by ODA staff. The overall programme is reviewed every two years by ODA senior management.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Medical Referrals

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claims for sickness and invalidity benefit were referred to the regional medical services in each quarter since September 1993; how many of these cases resulted in a medical examination; and what were the outcomes *(a)* where examinations took place and *(b)* where they did not.

Mr. Scott: The administration of sickness benefit and invalidity benefit is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Keith Bradley, dated 12 July 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question asking how many claims for sickness and invalidity benefit were referred to the regional medical services in each quarter since September 1993; how many of these cases resulted in a medical examination; and what were the outcomes *(a)* where examination took place and *(b)* where they did not.

Figures are not yet available for the quarter ending 30 June 1994. Those figures which are available are shown in the attached table.

I hope you find this information helpful.

Outcome of claims to Sickness/Invalidity Benefit referred to Regional Medical Services in each Quarter since September 1993

	September 1993—December 1993	*January 1994—March 1994*
Total cleared	230,000	269,000
Examination—capable of own work	5,000	5,000
Examination—capable of alternative work	25,000	28,000
Examination—incapable of all work	48,000	54,000
No examination—incapable not examined	131,000	159,000
No examination—claim terminated	3,000	3,000
No examination—failed to attend	17,000	20,000

Notes:
1. Based upon a 100 per cent. count of cases, rounded to the nearest thousand
2. Figures include severe disablement allowance references.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many referrals to the Benefits Agency medical service were made during 1992-93 and 1993-94 of claimants of *(a)* sickness benefit, *(b)* severe disablement allowance and *(c)* invalidity benefit; and what percentage of each were found (i) capable of alternative work and (ii) capable of normal occupation.

Mr. Scott: The administration of sickness benefit and invalidity benefit is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Keith Bradley, dated 12 July 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question asking how many referrals to the Benefits Agency Medical Services were made during 1992-93 and 1993-94 of claimants of *(a)* sickness benefit, *(b)* severe disablement allowance and *(c)* invalidity benefit; and what percentage of each were found (i) capable of alternative work and (ii) capable of normal occupation.

The Benefits Agency Medical Service (BAMS) are asked an opinion on incapacity in relation to Sickness Benefit, Invalidity Benefit, and Severe Disablement Allowance. I regret that the figures of cases cleared are not separated into the different benefits. The total figures for the three benefits are as follows:

	Number	*Per cent.*
1992-93		
References cleared	872,000	—
Capable of alternative work	62,000	7·1
Capable of normal occupation	38,000	4·4

	Number	Per cent.
1993-94		
References cleared	1,021,000	—
Capable of alternative work	100,000	9·8
Capable of normal occupation	22,000	2·2

Note: Figures subject to rounding to nearest thousand.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Disability (Consultation)

Mr. Alan Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will make it his policy to widen the Government's consultation on disability to include *(a)* transport, *(b)* education and *(c)* the adoption of comprehensive civil rights legislation;

(2) if he will make a statement detailing the terms of reference and time scales for the Government's consultation on disability discrimination issues;

(3) what criteria were used by his Department in determining the areas for discussion in the consultation on disability.

Mr. Scott: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister informed the House on 10 May that consultation would take place within six months on proposals in the fields of employment, access to goods and services, financial services, access to buildings, and the establishment of a new advisory body on disability. A consultation document will be issued very shortly.

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the estimated savings to his Department in *(a)* 1995-96, *(b)* 1996-97 and *(c)* 1997-98 resulting from (i) freezing the additional pension payable with invalidity benefit and (ii) abolishing the additional pension for new claimants of invalidity benefit.

Mr. Scott: It is estimated that freezing the additional pension payable with invalidity benefit will generate net savings of £30 million in 1995-96, £40 million in 1996-97 and £50 million in 1997-98.

It is estimated that abolishing additional pension for people who start receiving long-term incapacity benefit after April 1995 will generate net savings of £20 million in 1995-96, £130 million in 1996-97 and £230 million in 1997-98.

Note: Estimates are expressed in constant 1993-94 prices, are rounded to the nearest £10 million and are net of offsetting changes in expenditure on age allowances and income related benefits.

Incapacity Benefit

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the estimated administration costs of incapacity benefit for the years 1995-96, 1996-97 and 1997-98.

Mr. Scott: Information is not available in the form requested.

Forecasts of the costs of administering individual benefits are not available. It is estimated that the changes announced in the Social Security (Incapacity for Work) Act 1994 will add £40 million per annum to the Department's overall administrative costs in 1995-96 and 1996-97 and £10 million per annum from 1997-98.

Social Security (Incapacity for Work) Bill

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the estimated savings to his Department arising from each clause of the Social Security (Incapacity for Work) Bill, as amended.

Mr. Scott: The Social Security (Incapacity for Work) Bill received Royal Assent on 5 July 1994.

The estimated savings taking account of amendments passed are in the table. Sections 1 and 2 have been grouped because it is not feasible to apportion the savings further. The figures show only the savings arising out of the Act itself.

Section	1995-96 £ million	1996-97 £ million
1 and 2	–150	–335
3	n/a	n/a
4	–160	–475
5	–50	–180
6	n/a	n/a
7	n/a	n/a
8	negligible	negligible
9	n/a	n/a
10	+5	+5
11	n/a	n/a
12	–25	–90

Note: Estimates are expressed in constant 1993-94 prices and are rounded to the nearest £5 million.

Disability Working Allowance

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security *(a)* what are the estimated costs to his Department of the changes to disability working allowance and *(b)* how many people are estimated to gain, under (i) increases to the allowance for lone parents, and couples, (ii) increases to the single person's threshold and (iii) introducing a disabled child's premium.

Mr. Scott: The cost and expected number of gainers as a result of the disability working allowance changes are in the table.

Cost	1995-96 £3·25 million		1996-97 £4·25 million		1997-98 £5·25 million	
Increase allowance for couples and lone parents	gainers	4,000	gainers	5,500	gainers	6,500
	floaters on	1,000	floaters on	1,000	floaters on	1,500
Increase threshold for single people	gainers	4,500	gainers	6,000	gainers	7,000
	floaters on	500	floaters on	500	floaters on	1,000
Introduce a disabled child's premium	Gainers and floaters on	<250	Gainers and floaters on	<250	Gainers and floaters on	<250

Note: Costs are rounded to the nearest £0·25 million and are given at constant 1994-95 prices; caseloads are rounded to the nearest 500. It is very difficult to reliably estimate the behavioural consequences of these policy changes, therefore figures are not accurate to that degree.

Statistics

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of claimants receiving *(a)* severe disablement allowance, *(b)* invalidity benefit and *(c)* unemployment benefit also received (i) housing benefit and (ii) council tax benefit.

Mr. Scott: Information relating to housing benefit is in the table.

Information relating to council tax benefit is not yet available.

Benefit	*Total Beneficiaries (000s)*	*Beneficiaries also receiving Housing Benefit (000s)*	*Percentage*
Severe Disablement Allowance	302	60	20
Invalidity Benefit	1,439	336	23
Unemployment Benefit	669	154	23

Notes:

The Severe disablement Allowance and Invalidity Benefit figures are based on a 1 per cent. sample of claimants in Great Britain at 4 April 1992, and the Unemployment Benefit figures are based on a 5 per cent. sample of claimants in Great Britain at 14 May 1992. The Housing Benefit figures are based on a 1 per cent. sample of recipients at May 1992.

All figures have been rounded to the nearest thousand and percentages to the nearest whole number.

Council Tax

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the latest figures available for the level of use of *(a)* direct payments from benefits and *(b)* attachment of earnings, for each council tax collecting local authority in England and Wales.

Mr. Hague: I understand from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment that the information is not available centrally.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security why local authorities' responses to his Department's research on the amount of estimated council tax benefit local authorities were expecting to have processed by the end of March 1993 were not published in the report "Preparing for Council Tax Benefit" published in August 1993; and if he will now publish these responses.

Mr. Hague: Although the question was included in a departmental circular to local authorities giving examples of the type of information that might be required, it was not included in the research questionnaire subsequently issued. Professional advice was that responses to such a question would be inaccurate, as an estimate of council tax benefit case load assessed would have been based on an already estimated case load figure. The information is not therefore available.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the estimated cost of reducing the council tax benefit taper *(a)* from 20 per cent. to 15 per cent. and *(b)* from 20 per cent. to 10 per cent.

Mr. Hague: The cost is estimated to be £110 million and £300 million in 1994 and 1995 respectively.

Source:

Estimates use data drawn from the 1989-90-91 Family Expenditure Surveys and modelled at 1994-95 prices and benefit levels. Costs are rounded to the nearest £5 million.

Income Support

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the estimated average cost of keeping an individual on income support from the day he becomes eligible to receive it until he reaches pensionable age.

Mr. Burt: The information is not available. Such a cost would vary according to the personal circumstances of the claimant and the changes that occurred during the period on benefit.

Asbestosis

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to introduce an asbestosis compensation scheme on the same basis as the pneumoconiosis compensation scheme; and if he will give reasons for his decision.

Mr. Scott: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has no plans to introduce an asbestosis compensation scheme.

Poverty

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what definition Her Majesty's Government use of absolute poverty.

Mr. Burt: No Government in the United Kingdom have ever accepted that it is possible to identify a single simple measure to define poverty in any meaningful way. A great many methods have been used by various academics to identify a "poverty line", but none has received general acceptance.

Rather than relying on narrow arbitrary definitions this Department publishes an extensive range of analyses and information of the incomes and characteristics of people in the lower half of the income distribution. These analyses can be found in "Households Below Average Income", the latest edition of which was published on 30 June 1993 covering the years 1979 to 1990. A copy is in the Library. The next edition is due to be published on 14 July covering the years 1979 to 1991-92.

Funeral Expenses

Ms Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applications to the social fund for funeral expenses have been refused since SI 506, the social fund Maternity and Funeral Expenses (General) Amendment Regulations 1994 came into force; and how many refusals were on the grounds that the applicant is not considered a responsible person to meet the costs.

Mr. Scott: The information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Habitual Residence

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he received representations from the Irish Government regarding the proposed habitual residence regulations; what was the substance of the representations; and what plans his Department has to take action as a result of these representations.

Mr. Burt: Department of Social Security Ministers met members of the Irish Government on a number of occasions earlier this year. The regulations laid on 11 July, which introduce a habitual residence test into income support, housing benefit and council tax benefit from 1 August, enable people who are habitually resident in the United Kingdom, the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man and the Irish Republic to qualify for those benefits, subject to satisfaction of the other conditions of entitlement. This maintains the reciprocal access to benefits between the United Kingdom and the Irish Republic based upon the common travel area which has existed for many years.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he received representations from the European Commission regarding the proposed habitual residence regulation; what is the substance of the representations; if he will place them in the Library; and what plans his Department has in view of the representations.

Mr. Burt: The Commission for the European Communities wrote on 15 March drawing attention to the existence of Community law in relation to residence tests and the right of free movement. The regulations which introduce a habitual residence test into income support, housing benefit and council tax benefit, laid on 11 July, take account of the requirements of Community law.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Fur Farms

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) whether mink are currently present at Little Youlstone mink farm; and when the last licence was issued for this establishment;

(2) whether mink are currently present at Lawleys mink farm; and when the last licence was issued for this establishment;

(3) whether mink are currently present at Kelbain mink farm; and when the last licence was issued for this establishment;

(4) whether Swaslemoor mink farm is currently licensed to keep mink;

(5) whether mink are currently present at Brome mink farm; and when the last licence was issued for this establishment.

Mr. Soames: Ministry policy is not to disclose details of licences of mink farms.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) how many times officials of the State Veterinary Service have monitored the killing of arctic foxes on fur farms during each of the last five years;

(2) what method is used to kill arctic foxes in fur farms.

Mr. Soames: Officers of the State Veterinary Service monitored the slaughter of arctic fox once in the last five years. On that occasion the method of slaughter used was by lethal injection.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many welfare inspections were carried out on mink farms in 1993 by officers of the State Veterinary Service.

Mr. Soames: Officers of the State Veterinary Service carried out 13 inspections on mink farms in 1993.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the total breeding population of mink in England, by county.

Mr. Soames: The Mink Keeping Order 1992, which requires that mink farms are licensed by Agriculture Departments, does not require regular returns of the number of mink kept. However, best estimates suggest that the total number of mink being kept in fur farms in the United Kingdom has fallen from approximately 100,000 in 1987 to some 47,000 in 1992.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many mink were killed in fur factory farms in England last November.

Mr. Soames: The Mink Keeping Order 1992, which requires that mink farms are licensed by Agriculture Departments, does not require returns to be made of the number of mink killed.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many licensing applications for new mink fur factory farms have been made in each of the past five years.

Mr. Soames: In the last five years up to 30 June 1994, two licence applications have been made for new mink farms: one in 1991 and one earlier this year. All other licence applications received have been for licence renewals.

Calves' Offal

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what consideration she gave to banning the use of the brains and spinal cords of calves under the age of six months in human food equally with the intestines and thymus; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: I have considered carefully the advice of the Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee and the Government's chief medical officer and concluded that on the basis of the scientific evidence there is no justification for banning the use of brain, spinal cord, tonsils and spleen of calves under six months of age from human food.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research she is doing on the dangers of consumption of the thalamus.

Mr. Soames: The thalamus is part of the brain, and therefore from bovine animals over six months of age is a specified bovine offal which is prohibited for use in food for humans, animals and birds. The thalamus has not been

tested separately from the rest of the brain, which has been assayed on several occasions, and in which the BSE agent has been shown to be present in brains from clinically infected cattle.

The hon. Member may have in mind the thymus gland which was specifically mentioned in the reply my right hon. Friend the Minister gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Woodspring (Dr. Fox) on 30 June, *Official Report*, column *264*, about new controls on calf offals. The thymus is also a specified bovine offal and prohibited for human consumption. Thymus tissue from experimental calves orally challenged with a large dose of BSE-infected brain is being assayed for infectivity in mice under a project funded by the Ministry. This research is incomplete but so far there is no evidence of infectivity in thymus tissue.

Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the background and field of expertise of each member of the Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee.

Mr. Soames: The information requested about members of the Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee is as follows:

Dr. David A. J. Tyrrell: CBE, FRS. (Chairman)—Physician and Virologist. Former Director of the Medical Research Council (MRC) Common Cold Unit and Deputy Director of the MRC Clinical Research Centre.

Dr. Robert G. Will (Deputy Chairman)—Consultant Neurologist at the Western General Hospital, Edinburgh and Head of the National Creutzfeldt Jakob Disease Surveillance Unit.

Professor Ingrid V. Allen—Professor of Neuropathology at the Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast.

Professor Fred Brown FRS—Virologist. Former Deputy Director (Scientific) Animal Virus Research Institute (Pirbright).

Dr. William D. Hueston—Veterinary Epidemiologist, United States Department of Agriculture.

Dr. Richard H. Kimberlin—Independent Consultant on Scrapie and Related Diseases.

Mr. David B. Pepper—Veterinary Surgeon in Private Practice (Retired).

Dr. William A. Watson—Veterinary Surgeon. Former Director of the Central Veterinary Laboratory.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what financial allowance is given to members appointed to the Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee.

Mr. Soames: All members of the committee receive reimbursement of necessarily incurred travel and subsistence expenses. The chairman and four members of the committee also receive a daily fee for attendance at meetings in accordance with provisions set out in Treasury guidelines. The fee is £165 per meeting for the chairman and £131 for those members who receive a fee.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement about the supply of green top milk from dairy herds where BSE has been identified.

Mr. Soames: Green top milk from dairy herds where BSE has been identified is safe. Indeed, there is no evidence to indicate that milk will transmit any of the spongiform encephalopathies. Nevertheless, as part of the Government's ultra-cautious approach to BSE, the use of milk from BSE suspects is prohibited unless fed to their own calf, and all suspect BSE cattle are slaughtered and incinerated.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many cases of BSE have been reported in each region of Britain in *(a)* beef cattle and *(d)* dairy cattle in each of the last five years.

Mr. Soames: The information requested is as follows:

	Region						
	Northern	*Mid/West*	*Eastern*	*South East*	*South West*	*Wales*	*Scotland*
1989							
Beef	31	31	43	36	102	64	47
Dairy	365	886	326	1,017	3,050	374	124
1990							
Beef	119	88	59	92	179	145	165
Dairy	882	2,027	678	1,655	4,935	760	242
1991							
Beef	226	213	127	146	423	293	260
Dairy	1,544	3,566	1,108	2,262	8,852	1,604	378
1992							
Beef	521	602	290	356	847	647	634
Dairy	2,740	6,147	1,669	3,009	11,223	2,578	831
1993							
Beef	782	761	438	498	952	852	1,043
Dairy	2,920	6,537	1,989	3,014	10,093	2,634	1,007
1994[1]							
Beef	406	329	189	248	400	363	497
Dairy	1,284	2,951	1,050	1,470	4,069	1,161	437

[1] As at 11 July 1994.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list all research projects related to BSE which have been supported by Government in the last three years; and which projects are currently under consideration for future financial support.

Mr. Soames: The titles of research projects that, for the last three years, have been and are currently being supported by Government funding are shown in the table. Research on bovine spongiform encephalopathy is also supported by the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council, but this Ministry does not hold detailed information on these.

As new research projects are submitted by potential contractors "in confidence" for consideration by officials of this Ministry details of these projects are unavailable.

Research projects related to bovine spongiform encephalopathy
Supported by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in the last three years

Project title	*Contractor*	*Start date*	*Proposed end date*
Infectivity of various tissues from animals with BSE	Royal Veterinary College, Veterinary Pathology	1 January 1989	30 June 1993
Evidence for the inheritance of susceptibility to BSE	Dr. W. V. S. Wijeratne	1 July 1990	30 June 1993
Experimental transmission of feline spongiform encephalopathy to mice	Bristol University, Pathology and Microbiology	29 August 1990	28 August 1993
Large scale isolation of abnormal prion protein from BSE-infected tissue	Birmingham University, Chemical Engineering	1 June 1991	31 May 1993
BSE deactivation studies (part of EC project)	IAH, Compton Laboratory	1 October 1991	11 October 1994
Bovine gene mapping with particular reference to BSE	Roslin Institute, Edinburgh	1 October 1991	30 September 1994
Further studies on oral transmission of BSE to mice	Royal Veterinary College, Veterinary Pathology	30 January 1992	29 January 1995
Investigation of the role of the embryo in maternal transmission of scrapie in sheep	IAH, Neuropathogenesis Unit	1 July 1992	30 June 1995
Potential role of anti-PrP in BSE	Central Veterinary Laboratory	1 April 1992	31 March 1994
Transferrin ion binding in normal and abnormal plasma	UL, UCL, Medical Microbiology	1 November 1992	31 October 1993
Genetic susceptibility of cattle to BSE	Reading University, Department Applied Statistics	1 July 1993	30 June 1994
Continued large scale isolation of abnormal PrP from BSE affected tissues	Birmingham University	1 June 1994	31 May 1995
BSE: Epidemiological studies	Central Veterinary Laboratory	1 April 1988	31 March 1996
BSE: Study to determine occurrence and incidence of maternal transmission	Central Veterinary Laboratory	1 October 1990	31 March 1997
Longitudinal studies of the brain pathology of BSE	Central Veterinary Laboratory	1 January 1992	30 June 1996
Brain pathology of clinical BSE in cattle born subsequent to exclusion of ruminant protein in ruminant feed	Central Veterinary Laboratory	1 April 1992	31 March 1993
Clinical and epidemiological correlates of the vacuolar profile in BSE	Central Veterinary Laboratory	1 April 1992	31 October 1993
Correlation of the histopathological diagnosis of clinically suspect but histopathologically unconfirmed BSE	Central Veterinary Laboratory	1 April 1992	31 December 1993
Comparative neuropathology of recently recorded scrapie-like encephalopathies in animal species other than cattle	Central Veterinary Laboratory	1 April 1992	31 March 1998
Identification of BSE infection in cattle tissue	IAH, Neuropathogenesis Unit	1 April 1990	31 March 1996
Transmission of BSE and natural scrapie into sheep and goats by intracerebral and oral routes	IAH, Neuropathogenesis Unit	1 April 1990	31 March 1996
Strain typing of BSE pathogens in mice, and comparison with strains from natural sheep scrapie	IAH, Neuropathogenesis Unit	1 April 1991	31 March 1999
Susceptibility of BSE and scrapie isolates to laboratory facsimilies of rendering practices	IAH, Neuropathogenesis Unit	1 April 1990	31 March 1997
Susceptibility of BSE agent to chemical and physical inactivation procedures applicable to the field/ laboratory	IAH, Neuropathogenesis Unit	1 April 1990	31 March 1996

Project title	Contractor	Start date	Proposed end date
PrP gene variants and their potential as markers for natural and experimental scrapie susceptibility in sheep	IAH, Neuropathogenesis Unit	1 April 1990	31 March 1994
Analysis of neuclic acid and differences between control and scrapie/BSE infected animals	IAH, Neuropathogenesis Unit	1 April 1990	31 March 1994
Diagnosis of BSE by detection of abnormal deposits of PrP and other BSE-infection specific antigens	IAH, Neuropathogenesis Unit	1 April 1990	31 March 1994
Development of an antemortem test for BSE and natural scrapie infection through the detection of abnormal deposits of PrP	IAH, Neuropathogenesis Unit	1 April 1994	31 March 1997
Sheep PrP gene studies	IAH, Neuropathogenesis Unit	1 April 1992	31 March 1993
Further analysis of nucleic acid differences between control and scrapie/BSE infected animals	IAH, Neuropathogenesis Unit	1 April 1994	31 March 1997
Identification of genetic markers for susceptibility of sheep to scrapie	IAH, Neuropathogenesis Unit	1 April 1994	31 March 1997
Evaluation of electrophysiological methods for the study of BSE	Central Veterinary Laboratory	1 April 1992	31 March 1993
A study of the diagnostic potential of behavioural abnormalities in BSE	Central Veterinary Laboratory	1 April 1992	31 March 1993
Diagnostic potential of the pharmacologial manipulation of clinical signs of BSE	Central Veterinary Laboratory	1 April 1992	31 March 1993
Electrophoretic analysis of body fluids to identify diagnostic markers in BSE and scrapie	Central Veterinary Laboratory	1 April 1992	31 March 1996
Identification of BSE and scrapie infected animals by the detection of a urinary metabolite	Central Veterinary Laboratory	1 April 1992	31 March 1995
Sensitivity studies of fibril detection techniques used in Electron Microscopy for the diagnosis of scrapie	Central Veterinary Laboratory	1 April 1991	30 September 1996
Biochemical approaches to the differential diagnosis of BSE in the live animal	Central Veterinary Laboratory	1 November 1992	31 March 1995
Sensitivity of scrapie-associated fibrils from different breeds of sheep to proteinase K digestion	Central Veterinary Laboratory	1 July 1992	31 March 1994
TSE fibril immunolabelling studies	Central Veterinary Laboratory	1 July 1992	31 March 1994
Establishment of in-vitro culture of bovine cells for veterinary research	Central Veterinary Laboratory	1 January 1993	31 March 1994
Production of sera suitable for the development of immunodiagnostic tests for transmissible spongiform	Central Veterinary Laboratory	1 April 1992	31 December 1993
Gain information on use of resistant rams as method of controlling or eradicating scrapie	ADAS	1 April 1992	31 March 1999
Scale up of isolation of abnormal PrP from BSE infected tissue	Birmingham University	1 June 1993	31 May 1994
Molecular characterisation of a single stranded (SS) DNA observed in scrapie infected hamster and mouse brain—*Jointly funded by MAFF and BBSRC*	London Hospital Medical College	1 August 1993	31 July 1994
Studies of PrP gene of species naturally and experimentally infected with transmissible spongiform encephalopathies	Central Veterinary Laboratory	1 April 1992	31 March 1995
Significance of PrP and putative anti-PrP genes on susceptibility to transmission of spongiform encephalopathies	Central Veterinary Laboratory	1 April 1992	31 March 1994
Transcriptional control of the PrP promotor	Central Veterinary Laboratory	1 April 1994	31 March 1997

Project title	Contractor	Start date	Proposed end date
Antibodies against the BSE agent	Reading University, Department of Microbiology	1 February 1994	31 January 1995
Molecular characterisation of bovine PrP	IAH, Compton Laboratory	1 April 1994	31 March 1995
BSE: Embryo transfer studies	Central Veterinary Laboratory	1 October 1989	30 September 2000
Transmissibility of BSE to pigs by injection with brain homogenate	Central Veterinary Laboratory	1 April 1989	31 March 1998
Transmissibility of BSE to pigs by oral exposure to brain homogenate	Central Veterinary Laboratory	1 April 1990	31 May 1999
Transmissibility of BSE to cattle by oranasal exposure to placentae of affected cattle	Central Veterinary Laboratory	1 April 1992	31 May 1998
Transmissibility of BSE to domestic fowl by injection with brain homogenate	Central Veterinary Laboratory	1 April 1992	31 May 1999
Transmissibility of BSE to domestic fowl by oral exposure to brain homogenate	Central Veterinary Laboratory	1 April 1992	31 May 1999
Transmissibility of BSE to mink by intracerebral and by oral exposure to brain homogenate	Central Veterinary Laboratory	1 April 1992	31 December 1993
Transmissibility of BSE and natural scrapie to marmoset by stereotoxic intracerebral inoculation of brain homogenate	Central Veterinary Laboratory	1 April 1992	31 March 1993
Comparative efficiencies of the bioassay of BSE infectivity in cattle and mice	Central Veterinary Laboratory	1 April 1992	31 March 2006
Peripheral tissue distribution of the agent of spongiform encephalopathy in kudu	Institute of Zoology	1 June 1993	31 May 1996
Injection of bovine embryos with BSE/PrP infectivity	Central Veterinary Laboratory	1 April 1993	31 March 1994
BSE: Transmissibility to cattle by injection with brain homogenate	Central Veterinary Laboratory	1 April 1993	31 March 1994
Transmissibility of scrapie to pigs by oral exposure to brain homogenate	Central Veterinary Laboratory	1 April 1993	31 December 2005
Pathogenesis of experimental BSE in cattle	Central Veterinary Laboratory	1 April 1992	31 July 1998
Effect of oral innoculation dose on attack rate and incubation period of BSE in cattle	Central Veterinary Laboratory	1 April 1992	31 March 1996
Targeting of PrBSE: Immunohistological localisation	Central Veterinary Laboratory	1 April 1992	31 December 1995
Spinal cord pathology in BSE	Central Veterinary Laboratory	1 April 1992	31 March 1993
Extraneural pathology of natural and experimental BSE in cattle	Central Veterinary Laboratory	1 April 1992	31 March 1993
Neuronal morphology in BSE	Central Veterinary Laboratory	1 April 1992	31 May 1995
Morphometric and immunohistochemical studies of BSE	Central Veterinary Laboratory	1 April 1992	31 March 1993
Ultrastructural morphological and immunocylochemical studies of transmissible degenerative encephalopathies	Central Veterinary Laboratory	1 April 1992	31 March 1996
Potential role of anti-PrP in BSE	Central Veterinary Laboratory	1 January 1992	31 March 1993
Aetiological studies of brainstem neuronal chromatolysis; a disorder clinically similar to BSE	Central Veterinary Laboratory	1 October 1992	31 October 1997
Sequential observations of neurological signs in BSE	Central Veterinary Laboratory	1 April 1992	31 December 1995
Magnetic resonance of imaging bovine brains	Animal Health Trust	1 December 1993	31 January 1994
Morphometric evaluation of scrapied mice	Central Veterinary Laboratory	1 May 1994	31 August 1995
Scrapie infection of sheep neural and extraneural cell lines	Moredun Research Institute	1 January 1994	31 December 1996

Project title	Contractor	Start date	Proposed end date
For BSE work with ADAS	ADAS	1 April 1991	31 March 1995

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list the projects which have been funded in the last three years; and which are under consideration for funding, that are related to establishing a live BSE identification test for cattle.

Mr. Soames: The table lists those research projects on bovine spongiform encephalopathy supported by Government during the last three years, which are related to establishing methods for diagnosing BSE in the live animal. Some of the other research projects funded by Government may also contribute to the developments of diagnostic methods, in as much as they contribute to knowledge about the nature of the infectious agent and the response of the infected animal.

Research projects concerned with the diagnosis of BSE in live animals supported by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food

Project title	Contractor	Start date	Proposed end date
Large scale isolation of abnormal prion protein from BSE-infected tissue	Birmingham University, Chemical Engineering	1 June 1991	31 May 1993
Transferrin ion binding in normal and abnormal plasma	UL, UCL, Medical Microbiology	1 November 1992	31 October 1993
Continued Large scale isolation of abnormal PrP from BSE affected tissues	Birmingham University	1 June 1994	31 May 1995
PrP gene variants and their potential as markers for natural and experimental scrapie susceptibility in sheep	IAH, Neuropathogenesis Unit	1 April 1990	31 March 1994
Analysis of neuclic acid and differences between control and scrapie/BSE infected animals	IAH, Neuropathogenesis Unit	1 April 1990	31 March 1994
Diagnosis of BSE by detection of abnormal deposits of PrP and other BSE-infection specific antigens	IAH, Neuropathogenesis Unit	1 April 1990	31 March 1994
Development of an antemortem test for BSE and natural scrapie infection through the detection of abnormal deposits of PrP	IAH, Neuropathogenesis Unit	1 April 1994	31 March 1997
Sheep PrP Gene studies	IAH, Neuropathogenesis Unit	1 April 1992	31 March 1993
Further analysis of neuclicc acid differences between control and scrapie/BSE infected animals	IAH, Neuropathogenesis Unit	1 April 1994	31 March 1997
Evaluation of electrophysiological methods for the study of BSE	Central Veterinary Laboratory	1 April 1992	31 March 1993
A study of the diagnostic potential of behavioural abnormalities in BSE	Central Veterinary Laboratory	1 April 1992	31 March 1993
Diagnostic potential of the pharmacologicial manipulation of clinica; signs of BSE	Central Veterinary Laboratory	1 April 1992	31 March 1993
Electrophoretic analysis of body fluids to identify diagnostic markers in BSE and scrapie	Central Veterinary Laboratory	1 April 1992	31 March 1996
Identification of BSE and scrapie infected animals by the detection of a urinary metabolite	Central Veterinary Laboratory	1 April 1992	31 March 1995
Sensitivity studies of fibril detection techniques used in Electron Microsocopy for the diagnosis of scrapie	Central Veterinary Laboratory	1 April 1991	30 September 1996
Biochemical approaches to the differential diagnosis of BSE in the live animal	Central Veterinary Laboratory	1 November 1992	31 March 1995
Sensitivity of scrapie-associated fibrils from different breeds of sheep to proteinase K digestion	Central Veterinary Laboratory	1 July 1992	31 March 1994
TSE fibril immunolabelling studies	Central Veterinary Laboratory	1 July 1992	31 March 1994
Establishment of in-vitro culture of bovine cells for veterinary research	Central Veterinary Laboratory	1 January 1993	31 March 1994
Production of sera suitable for the development of immunodiagnostic tests for transmissible spongiform	Central Veterinary Laboratory	1 April 1992	31 December 1993

Project title	Contractor	Start date	Proposed end date
[illegible]n information on use of resistant ram[illegible] as method of controlling or eradicating scrapie	ADAS, Redesdale	1 April 1992	31 March 1999
Scale up of isolation of abnormal PrP from BSE infected tissue	Birmingham University	1 June 1993	31 May 1994
Molecular characterisation of a single stranded (SS) DNA observed in scrapie infected hamster and mouse brain	London Hospital Medical College	1 August 1993	31 July 1994
Studies of PrP gene of species naturally and experimentally infected with transmissible spongiform encephalopathies	Central Veterinary Laboratory	1 April 1992	31 March 1995
Significance of PrP and putative anti-PrP genes on susceptibility to transmission of spongiform encephalopathies	Central Veterinary Laboratory	1 April 1992	31 March 1994
Transcriptional control of the PrP Promotor	Central Veterinary Laboratory	1 April 1994	31 March 1997
Antibodies against the BSE agent	Reading University, Department of Microbiology	1 February 1994	31 January 1995
Molecular characterisation of Bovine PrP	IAH, Compton Laboratory [FPC]	1 April 1994	31 March 1995
Scrapie infection of sheep neural and extraneural cell lines	Moredun Research Institute	1 January 1994	31 December 1996

Bovine Immunodeficiency Virus

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to her answer of 22 June *Official Report,* column *168* what assessment she has made of the risk to humans posed by bovine immunodeficiency virus.

Mr. Soames: Bovine immunodeficiency-like virus, which was first identified in 1969, is one of a group of viruses that make up the lentivirus—slow virus—group. There is no evidence that it affects humans whether through contact with animals, drinking milk or eating meat. Experimental efforts to grow the virus in human cells have failed. Two United States laboratory personnel who had accidentally had needle stick injuries with BIV-infected cell culture material some five years ago have shown no signs of illness. Cattle with BIV antibodies have been identified in a number of countries and the virus is thought to have a worldwide distribution. No country as far as we are aware has considered it necessary to impose restrictions on known positive cattle herds in order either to protect the public or to prevent spread to other herds. It is characteristic of the lentiviruses to be highly species specific and it is important to note that mankind for generations has been in contact with horses, sheep, goats and cats many of which will have been infected with lentiviruses.

Racing Pigeons

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many cases of paramyxovirus infection in commercial poultry have been attributed to racing pigeons for each year since 1987.

Mr. Soames: The virus which causes paramyxoviruses in pigeons causes Newcastle disease in poultry. The last confirmed outbreak of Newcastle disease in commercial poultry was in 1984, when racing pigeons were implicated.

Durum Wheat, Italy

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to her answer of 27 June, Official Report, columns *401-2* what were the areas and discrepancies of durum wheat measured by remote sensing in Italy; what subsequent action was taken by the Italian authorities; and what evidence she has on whether such action has been effective.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 30 June 1994]:* The information requested is not held by my Department. Further details of the results and the nature of the action taken by the Italian authorities can be obtained from the European Commission in Brussels.

Recycled Paper

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what percentage of her Department's *(a)* press releases and *(b)* written answers are printed on recycled paper.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 4 July 1994]:* Although the paper used for MAFF press releases and written answers is not at present recycled, they are all printed on an environmentally friendly paper made from pulp obtained from sustainable and managed forests. Tests of recycled paper on the high-speed and high-volume printing machines used to produce press releases and written answers have so far been unsuccessful. MAFF does use recycled or environmentally friendly paper wherever this is available, of adequate quality and represents value for money. Later this year, another type of paper is to be used which has been subject to an environmental audit and awarded an "Eco-check" four-star rating. Ministers' correspondence, which is not copied in large quantities, is printed on recycled paper.

Privatisation

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which organisations, agencies and other bodies relating to her departmental area of responsibility have been privatised since 1990; and what plans she has for further privatisation.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 12 July 1994]:* In March this year, the status of the former Agricultural Training Board was changed from that of a statutory, controlled non-departmental public body to a non-statutory private sector organisation with charitable status. The new organisation is known as ATB-Landbase. In 1990, it was announced that the Government intended to dispose of the assets of the Covent Garden Market Authority when legislative time permits. My right hon. Friend has taken no decisions regarding the transfer to private ownership of any other organisation of which she is owner or joint owner.

Bovine Somatotropin

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which interested parties she has written to on the licensing of BST; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames *[holding answer 12 July 1994]:* Following the announcement of my intention formally to consult all interested parties about BST I wrote on 28 April to 173 organisations, including welfare interests consumer organisations and industry bodies. A copy of the consultation package, including a list of those consulted, was placed in the Library of the House on 9 June.

Up to 7 July, copies had also been sent to a further 38 members of the public, hon. Members and organisations, a list of which has been placed in the Library of the House today.

Comfrey

Mr. Tredinnick: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether her Department will make a grant to the Society for the Promotion of Nutritional Therapy to fund the undertaking of further research into the safety of comfrey and comfrey products.

Mr. Soames: The Ministry will shortly publish its "Food Research Requirements Document 1995-96" which describes the research topics that the Ministry is prepared to fund in the next financial year. These topics include research on the toxic properties of natural constituents of food which may cover the research requirements of the Society for the Promotion of Nutritional Therapy. The society is therefore welcome to submit its proposal for research in this area which will be assessed for its suitability for funding against the selection criteria listed in the document.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Police Computers (Misuse of Information)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Attorney-General how many police offices have been prosecuted for misusing personal information from police computers in the last year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I have been asked to reply.

The information held centrally on prosecutions under the Data Protection Act 1984 and the Computer Misuse Act 1990 does not include the profession of the defendant. But I understand that the Association of Chief Police Officers is aware of two cases during 1993 of police officers being prosecuted for offences arising from the misuse of computer-held information.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Firearms

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many murders were committed in England and Wales in each of the last three years for which figures are available, and, of these, how many were persons killed by *(a)* shotguns, *(b)* handguns and *(c)* other firearms.

Mr. Maclean: The available information which relates to homicide is published in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales", copies of which can be found in the Library, latest edition, 1992, Cm 2410, table 3.4.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will show for each of the last three years *(a)* the total number of crimes reported to the police, *(b)* the number of crimes which were believed to involve firearms, *(c)* the categories of crimes in which firearms were used, *(d)* the type of firearms used, *(e)* the number of persons charged with using firearms in the commission of crime, and *(f)* how many of those persons had authority to possess the firearms.

Mr. Maclean: The available information is published in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales", copies of which can be found in the Library—latest edition, 1992 Cm. 2410, table 2.1—for total offences recorded by the police; table 3.1 for offences in which firearms were used; table 3.3 for the type of firearm involved; and table 3.13 for persons found guilty.

Figures for 1993 are not yet available.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people charged with causing the death of another person by the use of a firearm of any description in England and Wales had authority to possess that firearm, in each of the last three years.

Mr. Maclean: The information requested is not available centrally.

Vehicle Emissions

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions have taken place in respect of vehicle exhaust emissions in each of the last five years from *(a)* freight vehicles, *(b)* other vehicles and *(c)* in total; and how many have resulted in conviction.

Mr. Maclean: The information requested is not available centrally.

Red Routes

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment has been made by his Department of the effect of the introduction of red routes in parts of London on the incidence of crime locally.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 5 July 1994]:* I have been asked to reply.

No specific assessment has been made, but there is no reason why red route controls should lead to any increase in crime whatever.

Private Prisons

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what services are provided to his Department by *(a)* Wackenhut and *(b)* Wackenhut Corrections Corporation other than running prisons.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The named companies are not under contract with the Home Office to provide any services other than running prisons.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in what circumstances there is a bar on awarding contracts for private prisons to companies whose parent companies, subsidiaries or consortium partners have been in breach of the criminal law in the United Kingdom or elsewhere.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Philippa Drew to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 13 July 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about whether any bar exists on awarding contracts to private companies whose parent companies, subsidiaries or consortium partners have been in breach of the criminal law in the United Kingdom or elsewhere.

The Prison Service awards contracts in accordance with the Public Services Contracts Regulations 1993 Section IV, paragraph 14(1)(d) of the Regulations, amongst other matters, provides that a contracting authority may treat a services provider as ineligible to tender for, or to be included amongst those persons from whom it will make the selection of persons to be invited to tender for or to negotiate a contract, on the grounds that the services provider has been convicted of a criminal offence relating to the conduct of his business or profession.

An assessment of whether a services provider should be treated in this way would include considering the nature of the service to be provided to the Prison Service and the nature of the business that led to a conviction for a criminal offence.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what security checks and clearances were made by his Department on *(a)* Wackenhut and *(b)* Wackenhut Corrections Corporation prior to the award of the contract to manage Doncaster prison;

(2) what checks were made on *(a)* Wackenhut and *(b)* Wackenhut Corrections Corporation by his Department prior to the award of the contract to manage Doncaster prison to Premier Prison Services.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for these matters has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Philippa Drew to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 13 July 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Questions about security checks and clearances made by his Department on *(a)* Wackenhut and *(b)* Wackenhut Corrections Corporation prior to the award of the contract to manage Doncaster Prison.

Checks were carried out in accordance with Part IV, paragraph 14(1) of the Public Services Contracts Regulations 1993 (SI 1993 No. 3228).

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many staff at Blakenhurst prison have *(a)* resigned and *(b)* been dismissed since the prison opened.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Philippa Drew to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 13 July 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about the number of staff at Blakenhurst Prison who have *(a)* resigned and *(b)* been dismissed since the prison opened.

42 staff have resigned and six have been dismissed.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department who is the Crown monitor at Doncaster Prison; and at what grade is the post.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Brian Landers to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 13 July 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about who is the Crown Monitor at Doncaster Prison; and at what grade is their post.

The controller at Doncaster prison, who is a Crown servant, is a Governor Grade 2.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many managerial staff working at *(a)* Blakenhurst prison and *(b)* Doncaster prison are former employees of the Prison Service.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Brian Landers to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 13 July 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about the number of managerial staff working at Blakenhurst and Doncaster prisons who are former employees of the Prison Service.

There are nine former employees of the Prison Service working at Blakenhurst prison and eight at Doncaster prison. All are employed in senior or middle management positions.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what trade unions are recognised by Premier Prison Services Ltd. at Doncaster prison.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Brian Landers to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 13 July 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about which trade unions are recognised by Premier Prison Services Ltd at Doncaster Prison.

It is Premier Prison Services' company policy to allow the staff in each establishment, on a site-by-site basis, to decide whether they wish to be represented by a trade union in discussion on conditions of employment.

However, during the start up of a new operation, representation will be by way of a locally elected staff association. Such a staff association is in the process of being established at Doncaster Prison.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what trade unions are recognised by United Kingdom Detention Services Ltd., at Blakenhurst prison.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Brian Landers to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 13 July 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about which trade unions are recognised by United Kingdom Detention Services Ltd. at Blakenhurst Prison.

It is not UKDS' current intention to recognise any particular union for negotiation of terms of employment for any individual employee or groups of employees. A Staff Consultative Committee has been established to enable representative staff members to meet with senior management on a regular and formal basis.

Prison Service (Performance Bonuses)

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many performance bonuses have been awarded to Prison Service agency officials in 1994 to the latest available date;

(2) if he will list the Prison Service agency officials who received performance bonuses in 1993.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Director General of the Prison Service has received performance bonuses in respect of the periods 6 January 1993, when he was appointed, to 31 March 1993 and 1 April 1993 to 31 March 1994. Other members of the Prison Service have received performance pay increases, where appropriate, in accordance with the arrangements for the civil service generally.

Emergency Arrangements

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the steps being taken to ensure the introduction of a uniform national early warning public alert system of a kind urged by the Association of County Councils and the professional organisations concerned with civil protection.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: At this stage we are not persuaded that a uniform national public alert system can be justified on threat or cost grounds.

Future national arrangements for warning the public of an air attack will be based around the use of radio and television broadcasts.

Peacetime Disasters

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action is being taken to enhance the arrangements for the designation of Government Departments and the precise allocation of responsibilities in response to major peacetime disasters in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The designation of Government Departments to take the central Government lead in response to a major peacetime disaster is the responsibility of the Cabinet Office civil contingencies unit. The designations are kept under constant review, as are the responsibilities to be discharged by Departments. The Home Office publication "Dealing with Disaster" explains the role of the lead Government Department and which Departments have been pre-nominated for particular disasters. A copy is in the Library of both Houses.

Obscene Publications Branch

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to receive the recommendations of the Metropolitan police review of specialist units in relation to the future of the obscene publications branch.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I refer my hon. and learned Friend to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) on 26 May, col. 265.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to amend the Data Protection Act 1984 to reduce the bureaucratic burden associated with compliance with the data protection principles; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We shall consider what amendments may be needed to the Data Protection Act 1984 when the outcome of the negotiations on the draft EU directive on data protection is known.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will list those who contributed to his paper "Costs of Implementing the Data Protection Directive"; and if he will place in the Library the answers to his Department's questionnaires from data user organisations, if necessary in a form which would not breach confidentiality.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have placed in the Library of the House a list of those from outside the Home Office who responded to the costings questionnaire. It would not be possible to anonymise all the responses as many of these contain comments which indicate their source. The hon. Member may wish to approach the respondents direct, to ask them for a copy of their response.

Juvenile Crime

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the reoffending rate for young people who complete their sentence in an institution compared with that of young people who undertake community service in the community in the last four weeks of their sentence.

Mr. Maclean: The information requested is not centrally available.

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the estimated cost to the Exchequer of the average young person under 24 years who completes a youth custody sentence from the known commencement of his criminal career.

Mr. Maclean: I regret that the available information does not allow any such estimate to be made.

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the comparable reoffending rate for young people sentenced to a young offenders institution and young people sentenced to work in the community.

Mr. Maclean: The available information is given in the table. The comparison reflects not only the effectiveness of the sentences involved but the different characteristics of offenders receiving the sentences. Research to be published shortly by the Home Office has shown that the criminal history, age and sex of the offender are associated with re-offending. Furthermore, the statistics of reconvictions contain a proportion of convictions relating to additional offences committed before the current sentence was passed.

Percentage of offenders aged under 21 commencing Community Service Orders in 1987 or discharged from prison in 1987 who were reconvicted of a 'standard list' offence[3] within two years.

	Those discharged from prison service establishments[1] Per cent.	*Those commencing a community service order[2] Per cent.*
Males	71	65
Females	51	43

[1] *Source:* Prison Statistics England and Wales 1992 (Cm. 2581 HMSO).
[2] *Source:* Home Office Statistical Bulletin "Reconvictions of those given Probation and Community Service Orders in 1987" (Issue 18-93).
[3] Reconviction statistics relate to "standard list" offences as defined in Appendix 4 of "Criminal Statistics England and Wales, 1992" (Cm. 2410).

Money Laundering

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what arrangements have been made with the Governments of the Isle of Man and Jersey to harmonise procedures to prevent money laundering.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Isle of Man and Jersey—and Guernsey—have all endorsed the 40 recommendations of the financial action task force against money laundering, established at the G7 summit in Paris in 1989, and have formally agreed to undergo an evaluation exercise, similar to that carried out by the task force in the United Kingdom in 1992, which will submit their anti-money laundering systems to a thorough examination. They have all also issued anti-money laundering notes for guidance to their financial institutions, similar to those issued in the United Kingdom. In addition, all three have criminalised drug money laundering in legislation modelled on the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986.

Immigration

Mr. Duncan Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people have chosen to be voluntarily repatriated under the scheme in the Immigration Act 1971, in each year from 1974 to 1986.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The voluntary repatriation scheme established under section 29 of the Immigration Act 1971 is operated by the International Social Service of the United Kingdom on behalf of the Home Office. During the financial years 1973-74 to 1986-87 the number of people repatriated under the scheme is as follows:

Year	*Number*
1973-74	239
1974-75	156
1975-76	219
1976-77	110
1977-78	130
1978-79	178
1979-80	131
1980-81	142
1981-82	218
1982-83	152
1983-84	144
1984-85	81
1985-86	72
1986-87	65

Firearms Certificates

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he now has any firm proposals for increases in the cost of firearm and shotgun certificates; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The fees for the grant and renewal of firearm and shot gun certificates are currently under review. An announcement will be made as soon as possible.

Official Cars

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the value of his official car.

Mr. Howard: The Home Office provides three official cars for the Secretary of State's use. Two were purchased in 1988 at a cost of £27,000 each. A replacement third car was purchased earlier this year at a cost of £19,000.

Uninsured Drivers

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of those convicted of driving without insurance received fines of more than £1,000 in each of the past three years.

Mr. Maclean: Information available to me indicates that five convictions for driving without insurance in 1990 in England and Wales resulted in fines of over £1,000 being imposed, six in 1991 and 25 in 1992.

Figures for 1993 are not yet available.

Contracts

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on what occasions in the last 10 years he or a Minister in his Department has given a direction to civil servants to award a contract against the advice of the civil service; what was the subject matter of the contract and its value; and when it was awarded.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 8 July 1994]:* There are no known instances during the last 10 years of Ministers in

the Home Office issuing written instructions in pursuance of paragraphs 13 or 14 of section 6.1.5 of "Government Accounting".

SCOTLAND

Asbestosis

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the incidence and geographical distribution of deaths in Scotland from asbestosis and related diseases for the last 10 years.

Mr. Stewart: The information requested is given in the tables.

Asbestos-related deaths and disorders

Table 1—Deaths from asbestosis without mention of mesothelioma for each region and health board area of Scotland, 1984-93

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
Scotland	12	22	16	12	17	19	17	18	13	16
Borders	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Central/Forth Valley	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Dumfries and Galloway	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fife	1	2	2	3	2	3	2	2	3	1
Grampian	0	1	1	0	3	0	1	1	1	1
Highlands	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
Lothian	2	4	2	2	0	1	1	3	0	2
Strathclyde	8	13	10	5	11	13	12	10	8	10
Tayside	0	1	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	1
Orkney Islands Area	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Shetland Islands Area	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Western Isles Islands Area	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0

Table 2—Deaths from asbestosis mentioning mesothelioma for each region and health board area of Scotland, 1984-93

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
Scotland	3	4	4	7	7	2	6	0	5	4
Borders	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Central/Forth Valley	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dumfries and Galloway	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fife	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Grampian	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Highland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lothian	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Strathclyde	2	3	3	7	7	2	4	0	5	3
Tayside	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Orkney Islands Area	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Shetland Islands Area	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Western Isles Islands Area	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Scottish Enterprise and Scottish Development Agency

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many legal actions were initiated by Scottish Enterprise and the Scottish Development Agency which were *(a)* discontinued and *(b)* settled out of court for each year in the period 1983 to 1993.

Mr. Stewart: Decisions to initiate, discontinue or settle legal actions are operational matters for Scottish Enterprise and I have asked its chairman to write to the hon. Member. I understand that the Scottish Development Agency did not maintain a record of cases discontinued or settled out of court.

Council Tax

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the Government's policy on allowing council tax bands to be used as a basis for charging by third parties.

Mr. Stewart: Information on council tax bands in Scotland is publicly available under the provisions of section 91 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992. Charging methods used by third parties should be appropriate to their circumstances.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State (1) for Scotland how many households in Scotland, by region, receive the 25 per cent. discount on council tax charges;

(2) what percentage of people in Scotland are in each of the council tax bands, nationally and by region.

Mr. Stewart: Council tax banding relates to dwellings and statistics are maintained only on that basis. The table shows the total number and percentage of dwellings by band, and the number of dwellings where there is an entitlement to a single discount, nationally and by region.

Number of dwellings by band and single discounts

	Band A	Band B	Band C	Band D	Band E	Band F	Band G	Band H	Total
Borders									
Number of chargeable dwellings[1]	15,040	11,693	5,491	4,407	4,482	2,652	2,321	401	46,487
Percentage of total	32·4	25·2	11·8	9·5	9·6	4·7	5·0	0·9	100·0
Number of dwellings entitled to single discount	7,399	3,087	1,309	1,003	860	399	295	52	14,404
Central									
Number of chargeable dwellings[1]	34,162	31,764	9,482	10,197	12,301	6,660	4,844	503	109,103
Percentage of total	31·1	28·9	8·6	9·3	11·2	6·1	4·4	0·5	100·0
Number of dwellings entitled to single discount	17,360	9,693	2,862	2,457	2,420	1,118	694	73	36,677
Dumfries and Galloway									
Number of chargeable dwellings[1]	10,864	21,321	9,445	8,112	8,117	3,189	1,592	156	62,796
Percentage of total	17·3	34·0	15·0	12·9	12·9	5·1	2·5	0·2	100·0
Number of dwellings entitled to single discount	5,095	5,598	2,075	1,620	1,498	501	203	19	16,669
Fife									
Number of chargeable dwellings[1]	40,124	43,509	19,199	13,701	15,322	6,584	3,637	380	142,456
Percentage of total	28·2	30·5	13·5	9·6	10·8	4·6	2·6	0·3	100·0
Number of dwellings entitled to single discount	22,029	14,241	5,003	3,191	2,932	1,026	546	63	49,031
Grampian									
Number of chargeable dwellings[1]	50,976	48,510	31,635	24,024	28,435	15,737	11,269	1,042	211,628
Percentage of total	24·1	22·9	14·9	11·4	13·4	7·4	5·3	0·5	100·0
Number of dwellings entitled to single discount	26,584	17,999	8,619	5,748	5,523	2,419	1,335	114	68,341
Highland									
Number of chargeable dwellings[1]	18,138	19,984	16,721	13,215	12,230	4,685	2,278	281	87,532
Percentage of total	20·7	22·8	19·1	15·1	14·0	5·4	2·6	0·3	100·0
Number of dwellings entitled to single discount	8,422	7,121	4,672	3,051	2,241	654	318	28	26,507
Lothian									
Number of chargeable dwellings[1]	46,782	85,710	63,520	37,479	39,300	24,095	19,673	3,366	319,925
Percentage of total	14·6	26·8	19·9	11·7	12·3	7·5	6·1	1·1	100·0
Number of dwellings entitled to single discount	23,079	37,653	24,138	12,594	10,609	5,788	3,760	498	118,119
Strathclyde									
Number of chargeable dwellings[1]	292,389	235,023	147,392	98,728	90,851	42,118	27,831	2,760	937,092
Percentage of total	31·2	25·1	15·7	10·5	9·7	4·5	3·0	0·3	100·0
Number of dwellings entitled to single discount	146,276	89,582	44,569	23,598	16,7447	6,184	3,242	232	330,427
Tayside									
Number of chargeable dwellings[1]	52,077	43,510	19,932	19,699	18,259	7,485	4,881	719	166,562
Percentage of total	31·3	26·1	12·0	11·8	11·0	4·5	2·9	0·4	100·0
Number of dwellings entitled to single discount	30,921	15,919	5,948	4,915	3,519	1,051	639	86	62,998
Orkney									
Number of chargeable dwellings[1]	2,584	2,360	1,550	1,157	608	108	13	1	8,381
Percentage of total	30·8	28·2	18·5	13·8	7·3	1·3	0·2	0·0	100·0

	Band A	Band B	Band C	Band D	Band E	Band F	Band G	Band H	Total
Number of dwellings entitled to single discount	1,214	675	348	185	65	9	3	0	2,499
Shetland									
Number of chargeable dwellings[1]	3,312	1,593	2,194	1,179	699	117	24	2	9,120
Percentage of total	36·3	17·5	24·1	12·9	7·7	1·3	0·3	0·0	100·0
Number of dwellings entitled to single discount	1,079	481	548	150	56	8	1	0	2,323
Western Isles									
Number of chargeable dwellings[1]	4,533	3,434	2,319	1,134	587	102	20	6	12,135
Percentage of total	37·4	28·3	19·1	9·3	4·8	0·8	0·2	0·0	100·0
Number of dwellings entitled to single discount	2,001	1,081	470	149	71	13	1	0	3,786
Scotland									
Number of chargeable dwellings[1]	570,981	548,411	328,880	233,032	231,191	113,532	78,383	9,617	2,114,027
Percentage of total	27·0	25·9	15·6	11·0	10·9	5·4	3·7	0·5	100·0
Number of dwellings entitled to single discount	291,459	203,130	100,561	58,721	46,538	19,170	11,037	1,165	731,781

[1] Number of chargeable dwellings after adjustment for disabled reduction.
Source: Statistical return from local authority finance departments, October 1993.

Erskine Bridge

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much money has been spent on the fabric of the Erskine bridge in each year since it opened.

Lord James Douglas Hamilton: The information is set out in the table. The amounts prior to 1989 relate to the whole Erskine complex including approach roads, Dalnottar interchange, toll booths and administration buildings. Expenditure on the cable stay bridge could be separated only at disproportionate cost.

Year	Maintenance costs
1971-72	52,458
1972-73	88,274
1973-74	100,037
1974-75	121,185
1975-76	[1]456,192
1976-77	[1]681,976
1977-78	[1]934,462
1978-79	[1]817,467
1979-80	[1]814,800
1980-81	[1]772,151
1981-82	[1]1,564,378
1982-83	[2]2,051,090
1983-84	[1]966,915
1984-85	[1]267,609
1985-86	[1]264,615
1986-87	[1]278,810
1987-88	289,941
1988-89	269,878
1989-90	40,409
1990-91	110,446
1991-92	67,157
1992-93	188,812
1993-94	134,310
1994-95	[3]5,370,000

[1] Includes £7,341,322 for strengthening superstructure to comply with new design rules for steel box bridges.

[2] Includes £5,100,000 for major but routine waterproofing and resurfacing which are currently requiring traffic management on the bridge.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the projected expenditure on Erskine bridge for each of the next five years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In addition to routine maintenance expenditure each year of £100,000 to £150,000, repainting the outside of the steel boxes supporting the carriageways will be required at an estimated cost of £2 million during the next five years. Expenditure on routine and programmed inspections and assessments will be made in line with standard practice for long-span bridges in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the condition of the Erskine and Kingston bridges and the likely disruptive effects of repairs to these bridges over the coming year.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Erskine bridge is structurally sound and only works to maintain it in good condition have been identified. These can be carried out without full closure of the bridge but may from time to time require traffic management and lane closures.

Kingston bridge in Glasgow is the responsibility of Strathclyde regional council and information on this structure can be obtained from its director of roads.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy that Erskine bridge will not be closed because of repairs this year.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Given present knowledge of the bridge and the works planned, there will be no need to close the bridge in the foreseeable future.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the early findings of the current principal inspection being carried out on Erskine bridge.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The consulting engineers carrying out the principal inspection are in general very pleased with the condition of the bridge. The final report has not yet been received. In practical terms, the inspection has confirmed that the original protective coatings to the cable stays should be replaced next year as expected after over 20 years in service.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make the findings of the present inspection being carried out on Erskine bridge publicly available.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Routine technical documents are not generally published, but there is no reason why interested parties should not have access to the principal inspection report. The report is expected towards the end of the year.

Water Charges

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if it is his policy that the new water companies should base their charges on the amount used;

(2) for how long the new water boards will be able to use rateable values as a basis for charging.

Sir Hector Monro: It will be for the new water and sewerage authorities to prepare charges schemes. These will need to be approved by the Customers Council or, failing that, by the Secretary of State before they come into effect.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what access to *(a)* the council tax banding of individuals, *(b)* income tax assessments and *(c)* DSS records the proposed new water boards will have in levying water charges.

Sir Hector Monro: There is provision in the Local Government, etc. (Scotland) Bill for my right hon. Friend to require local authorities to supply information held on the setting, levying or collection of council tax to the new water and sewerage authorities if he considers this will assist the latter either in making a charges scheme or collecting water and sewerage charges made under such a scheme. The new water and sewerage authorities will have no right of access to income tax assessments and DSS records.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how the proposed new water boards will be able to take into account ability to pay in levying charges.

Sir Hector Monro: This will be a matter for the new water and sewerage authorities to consider in preparing their charges schemes.

Medical Staff (Performance-related Pay)

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what model of performance-related pay he intends to introduce for consultants, medical academic staff and junior doctors.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 11 July 1994]:* The salary levels of hospital doctors are determined by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on the advice of the Doctors' and Dentists' Review Body. There are proposals that an element of doctors' salaries be set on the basis of performance but these have yet to be discussed in the appropriate negotiating committees prior to being put to the review body.

It is not intended, should these proposals come into being, that a model of performance-related pay schemes be introduced in Scotland. It would be a matter for determination at local level as to how a national health service employing authority rewards its employees with regard to their performance and contribution to the objective of the provision of high-quality patient care.

Privatisation

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which organisations, agencies and other bodies relating to his departmental area of responsibility have been privatised since 1990; and what plans he has for further privatisation.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 12 July 1994]:* The following organisations for which I had responsibility have been privatised since 1990:

Scottish Power;
Scottish Hydro-Electric;
Scottish Bus Group.

I announced on 24 March 1994 that the board of the Common Services Agency is taking forward proposals for privatisation of the building division of the Common Services Agency in Scotland. I will continue to keep under review all activities for which I am responsible and privatisation will be pursued wherever it is apparent that activities presently carried out by Government would be better dealt with by the private sector.

EMPLOYMENT

Cricket Professionals

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many work permits have been *(a)* issued and *(b)* refused to individuals seeking employment as cricket professionals in each of the last five years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information about the number of work permits issued and refused for cricket professionals is not available.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what restrictions exist on the appointment of West Indian cricketers as club professionals; what changes to the regulations have occurred recently; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: West Indian cricketers are treated in the same way as cricketers who are citizens of other countries outside the European Economic Area. Unless they qualify under the immigration rules to be able to take employment without restriction, they must obtain a work permit before they enter the country. Work permits are issued only for cricketers who have experience of playing first-class cricket in their own country and who it is considered will not take employment away from resident players. The minimum terms and conditions on offer to them must be equivalent to those which apply to resident players. The Department has a consistent policy with regard to the issue of work permits and there have been no recent changes to the regulations.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what cricket tournaments in the West Indies are regarded as first class for the purposes of work permits being issued by his Department.

Mr. Forsyth: The Department follows the regulations of the International Cricket Council on what cricket is regarded as first class.

In the West Indies the following qualify: matches played by teams representing Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica, Trinidad, the Windward Islands and the Leeward Islands either for the Red Stripe Cup or against other opponents adjudged first class; the final of the inter-county tournament in Guyana between Berbice, Demerara and Essequibo is also accepted.

Contracts

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment on what occasions in the last 10 years he or a Minister in his Department has given a direction to civil servants to award a contract against the advice of the civil service; what was the subject matter of the contract and its value; and when it was awarded.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 8 July 1994]:* Ministers in this Department have not issued any directions, as described in paragraphs 13 and 14 of the Treasury memorandum of the responsibilities of the accounting officer, during the last 10 years. A copy of this memorandum is available in the Library.

Earnings

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if he will provide a table indicating the average gross weekly earnings of *(a)* women and *(b)* men in (i) each standard planning region and (ii) each county area in the northern region for each year since 1979 *(a)* at current prices and *(b)* at 1979 prices;

(2) if he will provide a table indicating the number and proportion of *(a)* women and *(b)* men earning less than 68 per cent. of the national average gross weekly wage in (i) each standard planning region and (ii) each county area in the northern region in each year from 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 11 July 1994]:* Information showing the average weekly earnings of men and women in standard regions and counties is published for each year in part E of the "New Earnings Survey". Table 110 and 113 cover full-time males and females respectively.

The information on the retail prices index, all items at April needed to convert 1979 figures to 1993 prices, is published in table 6.4 of the *Employment Gazette* and in table 26 of the annual supplement to "Economic Trends" for April of earlier years.

Estimated numbers of employees earning less than specified amounts can be prepared only for full-time employees and for standard planning regions. The available information closest to 68 per cent. of average weekly earnings is given in tables which have been placed in the Library.

Copies of the publications can be found in the Library.

Employment Statistics

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the year-on-year change in employment in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* France, *(c)* the United States of America and *(d)* Japan for each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is shown in the table:

Civilian Employment: Annual Changes

Thousands

Year	United Kingdom		France		U.S.A.		Japan	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
1979	+380	+1·5	+42	+0·2	+2,776	+2·9	+710	+1·3
1980	−56	−0·2	+29	+0·1	+479	+0·5	+570	+1·0
1981	−981	−3·9	−131	−0·6	+1,094	+1·1	+450	+0·8
1982	−430	−1·8	+37	+0·2	−871	−0·9	+570	+1·0
1983	−282	−1·2	−72	−0·3	+1,308	+1·3	+950	+1·7
1984	+649	+2·8	−187	−0·9	+4,171	+4·1	+330	+0·6
1985	+285	+1·2	−66	−0·3	+2,145	+2·0	+410	+0·7
1986	+29	+0·1	+40	+0·2	+2,447	+2·3	+460	+0·8
1987	+556	+2·3	+68	+0·3	+2,843	+2·6	+580	+1·0
1988	+854	+3·4	+173	+0·8	+2,528	+2·2	+1,000	+1·7
1989	+804	+3·1	+262	+1·2	+2,374	+2·1	+1,170	+1·9
1990	+268	+1·0	+225	+1·0	+572	+0·5	+1,210	+2·0
1991	−880	−3·3	+450	+2·1	−1,037	−0·9	+1,200	+1·9
1992	−570	−2·2	−143	−0·6	+721	+0·6	+670	+1·1
1993	−392	−1·5	−286	−1·3	+1,708	+1·5	+140	+0·2

Source: OECD, except United Kingdom (Employment Department).

Trichlorethylene Poisoning

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he will take to investigate deaths by trichlorethylene poisoning; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: At those premises for which it is the enforcing authority, the Health and Safety Executive investigates all work-related deaths associated with the use of trichlorethylene. During an investigation inspectors are able to call upon medical, scientific and technical expertise in seeking to establish the cause of an incident and the degree of compliance with the relevant health and safety legislation.

Full Employment

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's current policy on achieving full employment; and when it last changed.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Government pursue policies designed to achieve high levels of employment consistent with low inflation. Their policies have not changed, and measures to make the labour market competitive, flexible and efficient continue to be essential.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Oil and Gas Exploration

Mr. Ainger: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if he will exclude from the 16th and subsequent oil and gas licensing rounds those areas which meet the criteria for designation as special areas for conservation under the European Union directive on the conservation of species and habitats;

(2) if he will make it his policy to exclude from the 16th oil and gas licensing round those United Kingdom continental shelf blocks which include, or could affect, special protection areas for birds or Ramsar sites.

Mr. Eggar: In considering whether to offer individual blocks for licensing in the 16th and subsequent rounds I will consult Departments and other relevant bodies, including the Department of the Environment and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, and take into account any environmental or other concerns which they bring to my attention including the requirements of European directives and other international obligations. If necessary, strict conditions will be attached to blocks to ensure that any environmental sensitivities in them are addressed.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if those United Kingdom continental shelf blocks that were withdrawn from the 14th and 15th oil and gas licensing rounds for environmental reasons will also be withheld from the 16th and subsequent licensing rounds.

Mr. Eggar: The circumstances surrounding the non-offer of a block in a particular round may change. We cannot therefore say that a block excluded from the 14th round of offshore licensing will not be offered in a future round. No blocks have been withdrawn from the 15th round for environmental reasons.

AEA Technology

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if he will set out the apportionment for 1994-95 of current costs, current income, historic, contingent and future liability between the faculties services, Government and commercial divisions of AEA Technology;

(2) if he will set out how current costs, historic debt and contingent and future liabilities have been apportioned between the facilities services, Government and commercial divisions of AEA Technology; who advised, and who approved such apportionment; and what external audit approval exists for such apportionment.

Mr. Eggar: The United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority's budget for 1994-95 is a management matter for the UKAEA. For internal purposes an apportionment of the UKAEA's balance sheet will be made in due course between AEA Technology and UKAEA Government division. The consolidated UKAEA balance sheet will continue to be audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General who is the UKAEA's external auditor.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the subjects on which consultants have been appointed to advise AEA Technology on all issues related to the divisional separation and sale of its businesses; what are the terms of appointment of such consultants; and whether, in all cases, they were appointed after competitive tender.

Mr. Eggar: These are management matters for the UKAEA.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how he proposes to fund pensions and redundancy liabilities consequent upon the sale of parts of AEA Technology Ltd.

Mr. Eggar: No decisions have been taken on the form or timing of the privatisation of the business activities of AEA Technology. Arrangements for dealing with pensions matters and any redundancy liabilities which might arise will be determined in the light of those decisions.

Company Investigators (Reports)

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the reports of investigators under the Companies Acts which have been completed but not published, indicating in each case the names of the inspectors, the company investigated, the section of the Act under which has been taken, the costs of the inquiry and the date of commencement of the inquiry.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The table covers all Companies Act inspections where the inspection has been announced and the report completed but not yet published.

Company	*Inspectors*	*Companies Act Power*	*Date of Appointment*	*Cost of inspection £ (000's)*
Graylaw Holdings Ltd.	Miss E. Appleby QC and Mr. P. Foss FCA	S165 CA 1948	11 March 1983	474
Link Service Station Ltd.			11 March 1983	
British Anzani plc			11 March 1983	
Bank Street Securities Ltd.	Miss E. Appleby QC and Mr. P. Foss FCA	S165 CA 1948	4 October 1983	172
Medway Secondary Metals Ltd.		"	16 February 1984	100
Consolidated Gold Fields plc	Mr. P. Heslop QC Mr. R. Lewis FCA	S442 CA 1985	10 December 1986	3,799

Company	Inspectors	Companies Act Power	Date of Appointment	Cost of inspection £ (000's)
Atlantic Computers plc Atlantic Computer Systems plc	Mr. E. Hamilton QC Mr. J. Scott FCA	S432 CA 1985	15 June 1990	6,492

Exports

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will place in the Library tables showing the total value of United Kingdom exports to Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Syria and Oman and also the values of each of the broad category titles of the standard international trade classification for *(a)* 1971 to 1980 and *(b)* 1981 to 1990.

Mr. Needham: The information is given in the table.

United Kingdom exports to Iraq
(£ million, current prices)

Section	Description	1971-80	1981-90
0	Food and live animals	20·0	174·0
1	Beverages and tobacco	64·5	196·1
2	Crude materials, inedible, except fuels	5·9	13·6
3	Mineral fuels, lubricants and related materials	5·3	19·0
4	Animal and vegetable oils, fats and waxes	1·0	5·1
5	Chemicals and related products	121·2	549·9
6	Manufactured goods classified chiefly by material	286·2	694·8
7	Machinery and transport equipment	708·6	2,369·5
8	Miscellaneous manufactured articles	113·8	517·9
9	Commodities and transactions not classified elsewhere	8·4	17·0
	Total	1,334·8	4,557·0

United Kingdom exports to Saudi Arabia
(£ million, current prices)

Section	Description	1971-80	1981-90
0	Food and live animals	202·3	1,050·4
1	Beverages and tobacco	164·6	556·2
2	Crude materials, inedible, except fuels	5·9	37·1
3	Mineral fuels, lubricants and related materials	112·9	123·7
4	Animal and vegetable oils, fats and waxes	3·8	14·1
5	Chemicals and related products	352·0	2,030·6
6	Manufactured goods classified chiefly by material	662·6	1,516·0
7	Machinery and transport equipment	2,190·6	8,484·8
8	Miscellaneous manufactured articles	410·9	1,273·0
9	Commodities and transactions not classified elsewhere	84·6	1,169·8
	Total	4,190·2	16,255·9

United Kingdom exports to Kuwait
(£ million, current prices)

Section	Description	1971-80	1981-90
0	Food and live animals	77·4	221·5
1	Beverages and tobacco	45·8	127·5
2	Crude materials, inedible, except fuels	2·4	8·8
3	Mineral fuels, lubricants and related materials	14·9	17·5
4	Animal and vegetable oils, fats and waxes	2·0	1·3
5	Chemicals and related products	137·2	424·0
6	Manufactured goods classified chiefly by material	236·0	387·6
7	Machinery and transport equipment	666·8	1,110·7
8	Miscellaneous manufactured articles	166·1	371·3
9	Commodities and transactions not classified elsewhere	135·3	100·5
	Total	1,484·0	2,770·7

United Kingdom exports to Syria
(£ million, current prices)

Section	Description	1971-80	1981-90
0	Food and live animals	10·2	14·1
1	Beverages and tobacco	8·5	9·6
2	Crude materials, inedible, except fuels	4·5	11·8
3	Mineral fuels, lubricants and related materials	14·3	6·6
4	Animal and vegetable oils, fats and waxes	2·9	0·6
5	Chemicals and related products	63·9	132·2
6	Manufactured goods classified chiefly by material	88·3	101·6
7	Machinery and transport equipment	188·1	259·5
8	Miscellaneous manufactured articles	28·1	54·5
9	Commodities and transactions not classified elsewhere	3·6	19·5
	Total	412·3	610·0

United Kingdom exports to Oman
(£ million, current prices)

Section	Description	1971-80	1981-90
0	Food and live animals	23·6	59·7
1	Beverages and tobacco	23·1	103·6
2	Crude materials, inedible, except fuels	1·6	4·9
3	Mineral fuels, lubricants and related materials	11·2	18·9
4	Animal and vegetable oils, fats and waxes	0·4	0·7
5	Chemicals and related products	45·3	207·5
6	Manufactured goods classified chiefly by material	98·7	303·6
7	Machinery and transport equipment	518·5	1,689·7
8	Miscellaneous manufactured articles	103·1	645·7
9	Commodities and transactions not classified elsewhere	49·1	296·6
	Total	874·6	3,330·9

Note: Totals may not equal the sum of component parts due to rounding.
Source: Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom.

National Environment Technology Centre

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what were the costs of providing *(a)* a visitors' dining suite, *(b)* the refurbishment of toilets, *(c)* the refurbishment of the entrance foyer and *(d)* the car park extension at the national environment technology centre prior to its opening on 10 June.

Mr. Eggar: These are matters for the UKAEA.

Competition White Paper

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what progress has been made in implementing each of the proposals in "Competitiveness: Helping Business to Win".

Mr. Sainsbury: Progress on implementing the proposals in "Competitiveness: Helping Business to Win", will be carefully monitored by the ministerial group on competitiveness.

Children's Homes

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 1 July, *Official Report*, column *748*, what aspects of the Children Act 1989 and the Registered Homes Act 1984 the inter-departmental scrutiny team is looking at other than fire safety; and what recommendations the team has made.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: As I made clear in my earlier response on 1 July 1994, *Official Report*, column *748*, the report of the inter-departmental review makes a number of recommendations regarding fire safety legislation and enforcement which may affect the operation of the legislation mentioned or premises covered by them. The report, copies of which are in the Library of the House, does not deal with any issues other than fire safety and is now the subject of consultation.

Questions about other aspects of the legislation and its enforcement should therefore be addressed to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health.

Deregulation

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will set out the terms and conditions of those appointed to the deregulation task force.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade to my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, East (Mr. Ainsworth) on 6 July 1994, *Official Report*, column *224*, which set out the terms of reference of the deregulation task force. Members of the task force have been appointed for an initial period of two years. Individuals will not receive payment for their work as members of the deregulation task force.

Mr. Spellar: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what will be the remuneration for members of the deregulation task force.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. Burden), on 25 May 1994, *Official Report*, column *174*.

Contracts

Mr. Byers: To ask the President of the Board of Trade on what occasions in the last 10 years he or a Minister in his Department has given a direction to civil servants to award a contract against the advice of the civil service; what was the subject matter of the contract and its value; and when it was awarded.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 8 July 1994]:* From records currently available, there have been no such occasions.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

East Timor

20. **Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what initiative he is proposing to assist the inhabitants of East Timor, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The best assistance we can render the East Timorese people is to continue to support the current dialogue between the Indonesians and the Portuguese, under the auspices of the United Nations Secretary-General, the aim of which is to seek a solution on East Timor acceptable to all concerned.

Cyprus

23. **Dr. Spink:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Secretary-General of the United Nations regarding recent developments in respect of the confidence-building measures for the Cypriot communities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary met the United Nations Secretary-General in New York on 21 June and discussed the prospects for agreement on the confidence-building measures for Cyprus. He reaffirmed our continuing support for the Secretary-General's efforts to make progress on these measures and on an overall settlement.

35. **Mr. Waterson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to mark the 20th anniversary of the Turkish invasion of Cyprus; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: There are no plans to mark the 20th anniversary of the Turkish intervention in Cyprus in 1974.

27. **Ms Janet Anderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the possibility of the accession of Cyprus to the European Union.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Corfu Council confirmed that the next phase of enlargement will involve Cyprus. The Council will review progress in the inter-communal process, and Cyprus's readiness for accession, in January 1995.

European Commission

24. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the latest situation over the position of the presidency of the European Union Commission.

36. **Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the Government's position concerning candidates for President of the European Commission.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The German presidency is consulting other member states to find a candidate for the next president of the Commission who meets with the common accord of all 12 member states. We are playing a full part in those consultations.

European Union (Enlargement)

25. **Mr. Bates:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will outline the benefits to the United Kingdom of the accession of four new member states expected on 1 January 1995.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The accession of these states will fulfil in part the Government's vision of an EU more widely representative of the peoples of Europe. Their membership will consolidate the benefits to United Kingdom business and consumers already flowing from the European Economic Area. Three of the four will be net contributors to the Community budget, and all are likely to share the United Kingdom's concern for budget discipline. Their accession will add extra weight to the group of member states which favour free trade over protectionism, and subsidiarity over centralism.

28. **Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the current situation regarding the enlargement of the European Union.

30. **Mr. Keen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the current situation regarding the enlargement of the European Union.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: A treaty of accession to the EU was signed with Norway, Austria, Sweden and Finland at the Corfu European Council on 24 June. Provided that referendums in the Nordic countries are positive—the Austrian people have already voted in favour of membership—all four will accede to the Community on 1 January 1995. The Corfu European Council conclusions included the statement that the next phase of enlargement will involve Malta and Cyprus. The Commission has been asked to prepare opinions on recent Polish and Hungarian applications for EU membership.

Rwanda

26. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the impact of French troops on the situation in Rwanda.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: As I said today, we have supported the French initiative to send a humanitarian mission.

EU Intergovernmental Conference

29. **Mr. Lidington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the Government's preparations for the 1996 intergovernmental conference of the European Union.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We will participate in the study group which will convene in mid-1995 to prepare for the conference.

Iraq

31. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the effect of sanctions on Iraq.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Sanctions are imposed on Iraq in order to ensure that the regime meets its international obligations. Iraqi co-operation with United Nations weapons inspectors resulted from sustained international pressure including the determined application of sanctions.

We are concerned by reports of suffering among the civilian population. For that reason food and medicines are exempt from sanctions and we have contributed over £66 million to international relief efforts since April 1991.

We call on the Iraqi regime to make the purchase of humanitarian supplies a priority, to lift the internal embargo on northern Iraq and accept United Nations offers to allow a limited sale of oil in return for further aid.

Sir Michael Neubert: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has received about the continued detention of Kuwaiti prisioners in Iraq; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I met a delegation from the Kuwaiti National Assembly on 29 June to discuss this issue. We raise the plight of Kuwaiti and other missing persons at the United Nations at every possible opportunity, for example when the Security Council last reviewed sanctions against Iraq on 17 May. Our acting head of mission at the United Nations told the Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister in New York on 12 July that British Ministers remained seriously concerned about the detainees and expected Iraq to produce information on all the outstanding files. The International Committee of the Red Cross chaired a meeting of the tripartite commission —coalition countries, Iraq and the ICRC—in Geneva on 1 July at which the Iraqi delegation gave its initial response to 71 out of the 609 inquiry files passed to Iraq by the ICRC over 18 months ago. We are demanding that Iraq offer information on the other files very soon. A further tripartite commission will be held in two months' time to review progress.

Middle East

32. **Mr. Cyril D. Townsend:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Britain's support for the Washington accord on resolving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We announced last week an extra £5 million of assistance for the new Palestinian Administration, £3 million for immediate running cost needs and £2 million for bilateral technical assistance. Much of these funds will be for the Palestinian police force. All this is in addition to the £70 million we have already pledged in aid to the Palestinians over the next three years, through bilateral and multilateral channels.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the Ministers who have visited *(a)* Bahrain, *(b)* Egypt, *(c)* Iran, *(d)* Iraq, *(e)* Israel, *(f)* Jordan, *(g)* Kuwait, *(h)* Lebanon, *(i)* Oman, *(j)* Qatar, *(k)* Saudi Arabi, *(l)* Syria, *(m)* the United Arab Emirates and *(n)* the Yemen since 1979, together with the purpose of each visit; and which Ministers they met.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: No central record is kept in the FCO of overseas travel by Ministers from other Government Departments.

Since June 1983 Foreign and Commonwealth Office Ministers have made the following visits to these countries:

Information about visits prior to June 1983 and information about Ministers met during the the visits could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Country/Minister	Date	Purpose of visit
Bahrain		
Mr. Luce	January 1985	Bilateral
Mr. Renton	March 1986	Bilateral
Mr. Mellor	February 1988	Bilateral
Mr. Waldegrave	February 1989	Bilateral
Secretary of State	March 1989	Bilateral
Secretary of State	January 1991	Bilateral
Mr. Hogg	October 1991	Bilateral
Mr. Hogg	May/June 1994	Bilateral
Egypt		
Mr. Luce	November 1983	Bilateral
Secretary of State	January 1984	Bilateral
Mr. Luce	May 1985	Bilateral
Mr. Renton	September 1986	Bilateral
Secretary of State	November 1987	Bilateral
Mr. Waldegrave	December 1988	Bilateral
Mr. Patten	March 1989	Bilateral
Mr. Waldegrave	November 1989	Bilateral
Secretary of State	October 1990	Bilateral
Secretary of State	February 1991	Bilateral
Mr. Hogg	December 1991	Bilateral
Secretary of State	May 1992	Bilateral
Mr. Hogg	May 1993	Bilateral
Baroness Chalker	November 1993	Bilateral
Mr. Lennox-Boyd	May 1994	Middle East Peace Treaty
Iran		
Mrs. Chalker	April 1991	Bilateral
Iraq		
Mr. Luce	November 1984	Bilateral
Mr. Mellor	February 1988	Bilateral
Mr. Waldegrave	February 1989	Bilateral
Israel		
Mr. Luce	November 1983	Bilateral
Secretary of State	October 1984	Bilateral
Mr. Renton	December 1985	Bilateral
Mr. Mellor	December 1987	Bilateral
Mr. Waldegrave	February 1989	Bilateral
Secretary of State	October 1990	Bilateral
Mr. Hogg	May 1991	Bilateral
Mr. Hogg	July 1993	Bilateral
Secretary of State	January 1994	Bilateral
Jordan		
Mr. Luce	November 1983	Bilateral
Mr. Luce	March 1984	Bilateral
Mr. Renton	September/ October 1986	Bilateral
Secretary of State	November 1987	Bilateral
Mr. Mellor	February 1988	Bilateral
Mr. Waldegrave	February 1989	Bilateral
Secretary of State	May 1990	Bilateral
Secretary of State	September 1990	Bilateral
Mrs. Chalker	September 1990	Bilateral
Secretary of State	January 1991	Bilateral
Mr. Hogg	March 1991	Bilateral
Mr. Hogg	July 1993	Bilateral
Secretary of State	January 1994	Bilateral
Kuwait		
Mr. Luce	December 1983	Bilateral
Mr. Luce	April 1985	Bilateral
Secretary of State	January 1986	Bilateral
Mr. Mellor	December 1987	Bilateral
Secretary of State	January 1989	Bilateral
Mr. Waldegrave	February 1989	Bilateral
Mr. Hogg	February 1992	Bilateral
Secretary of State	May 1992	Bilateral
Mr. Hogg	May/June 1994	Bilateral
Lebanon		
Mr. Luce	September 1983	Bilateral
Secretary of State	October 1984	Bilateral
Mr. Renton	December 1985	Bilateral
Mr. Hogg	June 1991	Bilateral
Secretary of State	January 1994	Bilateral
Oman		
Mr. Luce	December 1983	Bilateral
Mr. Luce	January 1985	Bilateral
Secretary of State	January 1986	Bilateral
Mr. Renton	February 1987	Bilateral
Mr. Mellor	November 1987	Bilateral
Secretary of State	January 1989	Bilateral
Mr. Waldegrave	December 1989	Bilateral
Secretary of State	March 1990	BC/GCC
Secretary of State	September 1990	Bilateral
Qatar		
Mr. Luce	April 1984	Bilateral
Mr. Luce	April 1985	Bilateral
Mr. Renton	March 1986	Bilateral
Mr. Waldegrave	October 1988	Bilateral
Secretary of State	March 1989	Bilateral
Secretary of State	January 1991	Bilateral
Mr. Hogg	October 1991	Bilateral
Mr. Hogg	May/June 1994	Bilateral
Saudi Arabia		
Secretary of State	January 1984	Bilateral
Mr. Luce	March 1985	Bilateral
Secretary of State	January 1986	Bilateral
Mr. Renton	February 1987	Bilateral
Mr. Mellor	December 1987	Bilateral
Mr. Waldegrave	October 1988	Bilateral
Secretary of State	January 1989	Bilateral
Secretary of State	May/June 1990	Bilateral
Secretary of State	September 1990	Bilateral
Secretary of State	February 1991	Bilateral
Mr. Hogg	February 1992	Bilateral
Secretary of State	September 1993	Bilateral
Mr. Hogg	May 1994	EU/GCC Ministerial
Syria		
Mr. Luce	December 1983	Bilateral
Secretary of State	January 1984	Bilateral
Mr. Renton	December 1985	Bilateral
Mr. Hogg	March 1991	Bilateral
Mr. Hogg	June 1991	Bilateral
Secretary of State	October 1993	Bilateral
United Arab Emirates		
Mr. Luce	December 1983	Bilateral
Mr. Luce	March 1985	Bilateral
Mr. Renton	March 1986	Bilateral
Mr. Mellor	November 1987	Bilateral
Mr. Waldegrave	October 1988	Bilateral
Secretary of State	January 1989	Bilateral
Mr. Waldegrave	May 1989	Bilateral
Secretary of State	September 1990	Bilateral
Secretary of State	January 1991	Bilateral
Mr. Hogg	October 1991	Bilateral
Mr. Hogg	December 1992	Bilateral
Secretary of State	September 1993	Bilateral
Yemen		
Mr. Renton	February 1987	Bilateral
Secretary of State	January 1989	Bilateral
Mr. Waldegrave	December 1989	Bilateral
Mr. Hogg	December 1992	Bilateral

38. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current progress in the middle east peace process.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I welcome Mr. Arafat's return to Gaza and Jericho which symbolises progress in the peace process. We will continue to provide assistance to his new administration. We welcome recent progress on the Jordanian track of the peace process and hope for progress on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks.

Unemployment

34. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what measures to reduce unemployment were decided by the European Council at Corfu.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The European Council discussed the follow-up to the action plan to reduce unemployment which was agreed at Brussels. They endorsed the Commission's decision to set up a group of independent experts to examine the burden of Community and national legislation on business. They agreed a list of 11 priority trans-European network transport projects. They also received a report from the Bangemann group with recommendations for action to exploit opportunities in the field of information technology and agreed to follow up the issues raised in the report.

Germany

37. **Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next plans to meet his German counterpart to discuss Anglo-German relations.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: When Dr. Kinkel and my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary meet regularly, as they do on both bilateral and multilateral occasions, they review our bilateral co-operation. I met my German counterpart for talks yesterday and my right hon. Friend will be meeting Dr. Kinkel at the special European Council on 15 July.

Sierra Leone

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress is being made in the trial of four British passport holders being tried for subversive activities in Sierra Leone.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: A magistrate has decided that there is a case to answer and the men are scheduled to appear before a jury in the High Court in September. They enjoy regular consular visits from the British high commission and are in good health.

Liberia

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports are sent to the European Union about the operation of the Economic Community of West African States monitoring group initiative in Liberia; to what are the reports mainly directed; and if they are publicly available.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The United Nations Secretary-General's progress reports on the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia, UNOMIL, include reference to the ECOWAS monitoring and observing group, ECOMOG, and provide comprehensive accounts of political, military and humanitarian developments. These reports are available to all member states, including the European Union and are also available publicly in London from the United Nations information centre. A copy of the fifth progress report has been placed in both Libraries of the House.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if proposals exist for a European Union mission in Liberia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: No.

Nigeria

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Nigerian Government about its failure to obey a Federal High Court order to produce Chief Abiola in court on 30 June.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Chief Abiola was finally arraigned in court in Abuja on 6 July. Together with our EU partners, we have made clear to the Nigerian Government the importance we attach to the rule of law, and respect for human rights. Putting Chief Abiola on trial cannot resolve Nigeria's political problems.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 16 June, *Official Report*, column *640*, whether he will describe, in each case, the specific inconsistency which obliged the United Kingdom Government to enter a derogation from the first sentence of paragraph 2.4, the second sentence of paragraph 3.1, and from the whole of paragraph 3.3 of Council of Europe recommendation R(85)20; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The reservation on the first sentence of paragraph 2.4 was made because the Government did not believe that individual notification of data subjects at the time of collection should always be required.

The reservation on the second sentence of paragraph 3.1 was made because United Kingdom law does not require an individual's consent to be obtained before data about him are disclosed.

The reservation on paragraph 3.3 was made because in the Government's view it is impracticable for controllers of marketing files to know to whom their lists have been provided by the original recipients of the lists.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 16 June, *Official Report*, column *640*, whether he will in each case describe the specific inconsistency which obliged the United Kingdom Government to enter a derogation from principles 6.2 and 6.3 paragraph 2 of Council of Europe recommendation R(91)10; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The reservations on principle 6.2 and principle 6.3, paragraph 2, were made because these provisions go beyond what is required by United Kingdom data protection legislation.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 16

June, *Official Report*, column *640*, whether he will in each case describe the specific inconsistency which obliged the United Kingdom Government to enter a derogation from principles 2.2 and 2.4 of Council of Europe recommendation R(87)15; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The reservation on principle 2.2 was made because in the Government's view it would be undesirable to provide the information in question in some circumstances.

The reservation on principle 2.4 was made because in the Government's view this principle could seriously inhibit the police in preventing and detecting crime.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 16 June, *Official Report*, column *640*, whether he will, in each case describe the specific inconsistency which obliged the United Kingdom Government to enter a derogation from the second sub-paragraph of 1.2, the second sentence of paragraph 3.3, and from paragraph 5 of Council of Europe recommendation R(86)1; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The reservation on the second sub-paragraph of paragraph 1.2 was made to ensure that the recommendation did not apply to occupational pensions schemes in the United Kingdom.

The reservation on the second sentence of paragraph 3.3 was made because United Kingdom law does not require consent before personal data may be obtained from third parties.

The reservation on paragraph 5 was made because the United Kingdom does not have legislation governing the use of the national insurance number.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 16 June, *Official Report*, column *640*, whether he will describe the specific inconsistency which obliged the United Kingdom Government to enter a derogation from extending the Council of Europe recommendation R(83)10 to manually processed data; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The reservation was made because United Kingdom data protection law does not apply to manually processed data.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 16 June, *Official Report*, column *640*, whether he will in each case describe the specific inconsistency which obliged the United Kingdom Government to enter a derogation from paragraphs 3.3, 3.4, 5.1c, and 7.1 of Council of Europe recommendations R(90)19; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The reservations on paragraphs 3.3 and 5.1.c were made because these paragraphs depend upon the individual's consent which is not required under United Kingdom law.

The reservation of paragraph 3.4 was made because in the Government's view the paragraph is unnecessarily restrictive on businesses which use non-cash means of payment.

The reservation on paragraph 7.1 was made because the paragraph could require the data subject to be given access to security information.

Hong Kong

33. **Mr. Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the progress of recent discussions on the future of Hong Kong.

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the proegress of recent discussions on the future of Hong Kong.

Mr. Goodlad: The 29th plenary session of the Sino-British joint liaison group was held in Hong Kong in June. Full agreement was reached, after seven years of negotiations, on the future of the military estate in Hong Kong. Agreement was also reached, among other things, on the continued application to Hong Kong of nine multilateral treaties on merchant shipping, the text of two new bilateral treaties on extradition and investment and the localisation of three more items of United Kingdom legislation.

Poland

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his policy in respect of Poland's borders.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We fully respect Poland's sovereignty, territorial integrity and the involability of her borders, in accordance with United Nations and Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe principles.

GATT Headquarters

Sir John Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will support the retention of the headquarters of GATT, now to become the World Trade Organisation, at Geneva; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Swiss and German Governments have put forward generous and attractive offers of sites for the headquarters of the World Trade Organisation in Geneva and Bonn respectively. The British Government could support a consensus in favour of either place; but we see some advantage in the WTO remaining in Geneva to avoid the disruption of a move.

Gas-related Deaths (Spain)

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make joint representations with the Irish Foreign Secretary to the Spanish authorities about further gas-related deaths of British and Irish citizens in Spain.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: No. There is no evidence that the recent deaths in the Canary Islands from carbon monoxide poisoning were connected. Nor is there any evidence that a criminal offence was committed in connection with the death of the British national. If they wish the family can make a claim for compensation through the civil courts.

Macedonia

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the EC's policy on trade with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Trade is a key way of promoting prosperity and stability. We hope to see the early lifting of Greek trade restrictions with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the resolution of their bilateral dispute.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 14 July 1994

HOME DEPARTMENT

Sri Lankan Tamils

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many Sri Lankan Tamils currently in the United Kingdom have not yet been notified of their status; and if he will break down the figures for those arriving before and after the passing of the Immigration Appeals Act 1993;

(2) how many Sri Lankan Tamils who have fled Sri Lanka have been held in detention centres *(a)* since the passing of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1993 and *(b)* since 1990 and before the passing of that Act.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Information on Sri Lankan Tamils are not separately indentifiable in the statistics. Considering all Sri Lankan nationals as at 30 June 1994, an estimated 2,680 are awaiting an initial decision on their application for asylum. Of this, an estimated 860 applied for asylum after the introduction of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993.

The number of asylum seekers from Sri Lanka being detained on 11 July 1994 is 22. Of these detainees, none entered detention before the implementation of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993 on 26 July 1993.

Money Laundering

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what extra resources he proposes to allocate to the National Criminal Intelligence Service to pursue cases of suspected money laundering.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Funding of the National Criminal Intelligence Service is settled as part of the annual public expenditure survey. It is for the director general of NCIS to decide how best to allocate the resources available to him to deal with the range of criminal intelligence matters which fall to the organisation.

Racial Attacks

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what support is currently provided for victims of racially motivated attacks and their families.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Victims of racially motivated crime are given help and advice, as are other victims of crime, through the network of local victim support schemes.

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide figures of the number of incidents recorded by the police as being racial or racially motivated for each year since 1974.

Mr. Maclean: The available information relates to reported racial incidents as defined by the Association of Chief Police Officers. Figures from 1985 are given in the table. Information prior to 1985 is not available.

Number of racial incidents reported in England and Wales

Year	*Number of incidents*
1985	5,900
1986	6,566
1987	5,305
1988	4,383
1989	5,044
1990	6,359
1991	7,882
1992	7,734
[1]1993-94	9,762

[1] This information is now collected on a financial year basis.

ACPO definition: Any incident in which it appears to the reporting or investigative officer that the complaint involves an element of racial motive, or any incidents which include allegations of racial motivation made by any person.

Zoos and Circuses

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the legislation governing the welfare of circus animals.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave on 29 April 1994 to a question from the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile), at column *341*.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set out the legislation governing the welfare of zoo animals.

Mr. Atkins: I have been asked to reply.

The Zoo Licensing Act 1981 requires that all zoos in Great Britain are licensed and regularly inspected. Under the terms of the Act, the Secretary of State has issued standards covering care and accommodation of animals, and public safety in zoos, and maintains a list of authorised inspectors. Zoo licensing and inspection under the Act is carried out by local authorities.

Police Review

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the review of police core and ancillary tasks is confined to England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Home Office review of police core and ancillary tasks applies to England and Wales only. I understand that separate consideration is being given to such issues in Northern Ireland and Scotland.

Firearms

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how the current charge for a firearms certificate is derived.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The current fees for firearm certificates introduced in 1990 are based on the previous level of fees set in 1986, which were intended to achieve the recovery of police costs in administering the firearms licensing system, uprated to take account of increases in police pay since that time.

Mr. Day: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will lay before Parliament the fifth report of the Firearms Consultative Committee.

Mr. Howard: I have placed a copy of the annual report of the Firearms Consultative Committee in the Library of the House today.

Asylum

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many applications for political asylum have been received in each year since 1979 to date; of these, how many have been approved; and how many individuals, including dependants, have been granted leave to remain in the United Kingdom;

(2) how many applications for asylum have been rejected in each year since 1979; of these applicants, how many have been deported, and of how many the Home Office has confirmation on their departure, in respect of each year.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Information covering the years 1979-1993, for applications for asylum and on decisions made, is given in table A.

Information on asylum seekers removed in 1992 and 1993 under the Immigration Act 1971 is given in table B. These are all confirmed departures. Corresponding information for years prior to 1992 is not available.

Table B

Removals and voluntary departures of asylum applicants, excluding dependants, 1992 and 1993

	1992	1993
In-country asylum applicants removed under the deportation process	70	92[1]
In-country asylum applicants removed as illegal entrants	317[1]	491[1]
Port asylum applicants removed	959[2]	1,236[2]
Grand Total	1,346	1,819

[1] Includes voluntary departures.

[2] Includes any voluntary departure up to and including notification of the decision on the asylum application but excludes any subsequent departure.

Table A

Applications received for asylum in the United Kingdom and decisions, 1979 to 1993

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	[1]1989	[1]1990	[1]1991	[1,2]1992	[1,2]1993
EXCLUDING DEPENDANTS															
Applications received[3]	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	2,905	4,389	4,266	4,256	3,998	11,640	26,205	44,840	24,605	22,370
Decisions[3,4]															
Total	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1,431	2,635	2,983	2,432	2,702	6,955	4,025	6,075	34,900	23,405
Recognised as a refugee and granted asylum[5]	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	453	574	348	266	628	2,210	920	505	1,115	1,590
Not recognised as a refugee but granted exceptional leave	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	631	1,559	2,102	1,531	1,578	3,860	2,400	2,190	15,325	11,125
Refused asylum and exceptional leave[6]	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	347	502	533	635	496	890	705	3,380	18,465	10,690
INCLUDING DEPENDANTS[7]															
Applications received[3]	1,563	2,352	2,425	4,223	4,296	4,171	6,156	5,714	5,863	5,739	16,775	38,195	[8]73,400	[8]32,300	[8]28,000
Decisions[3,4]															
Total	949	1,797	2,358	2,942	2,950	2,011	3,802	4,045	3,479	3,888	10,270	6,055	[8]9,140	[8]59,050	[8]36,890
Recognised as a refugee and granted asylum[5]	525	1,147	1,473	1,727	1,185	689	915	543	464	975	3,335	1,590	[8]800	[8]1,900	[8]2,860
Not recognised as a refugee but granted exceptional leave	215	238	278	311	939	802	2,156	2,815	2,229	2,289	5,840	3,610	[8]2,950	[8]21,680	[8]15,480
Refused asylum and exceptional leave[6]	209	412	607	904	826	520	731	687	786	624	1,095	855	[8]5,390	[8]35,480	[8]18,550

n/a = Not available.

[1] Figures rounded to the nearest 5.

[2] Provisional figures.

[3] Figures exclude information on applications made overseas.

[4] Decision figures up to and including 1991 may understate.

[5] Excluding South East Asian refugees.

[6] Includes refusals on safe third country grounds, and those under paragraph 180F (paragraph 101 prior to 26 July 1993) of the Immigration Rules for failure to provide evidence to support the asylum claim within a reasonable period, including failure to respond to invitation to interview to establish identity.

[7] Including dependants who applied with the principal applicant and those who arrived subsequently but before the principal application was decided.

[8] Estimated figures.

Private Prisons

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration was given by his Department, prior to the award of the contract to manage Doncaster prison, to the conclusions of the United States Congressional Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs report, "Alyeska Pipeline Service Company Covert Operation", published in July 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 13 July 1994]:* Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from B. Landers to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 14 July 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about what consideration was given by his Department, before the award of the contract to manage Doncaster prison, to the conclusions of the US Congressional Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs report on the Alyeska Pipeline Service Company Covert Operation, published in July 1992.

The two reports, whose conclusions conflicted, concerned Wackenhut Corporation, against whom no charges were laid. The contract for Doncaster prison was signed with Premier Prison Services Ltd which is a 50/50 joint venture wholly owned by Serco Ltd and Wackenhut Corrections Corporation. Wackenhut Corrections Corporation, a subsidiary of Wackenhut Corporation, was not involved in the matter that was investigated by the US Congressional Committee.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many managerial staff working at *(a)* Blakenhurst prison and *(b)* Doncaster prison are from the United States of America.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 13 July 1994]:* Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Philippa Drew to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 14 July 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about how many managerial staff working at *(a)* Blakenhurst Prison and *(b)* Doncaster Prison are from the United States of America.

Neither of these prisons has any managerial staff from the United States of America.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people employed by the Prison Service or seconded to the prisons inspectorate have worked simultaneously or subsequently for private sector companies who *(a)* operate and *(b)* have tendered to operate prisons.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 13 July 1994]:* No one employed by the Prison Service or seconded to the prisons inspectorate has worked simultaneously for a private sector company operating or tendering to operate prisons. Thirty-three former Prison Service employees subsequently worked for such companies. Of these, three were former governors who had been seconded to the inspectorate.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is the Prison Service agency's policy in respect of the recognition of trade unions by operators of contracted-out prisons;

(2) what account he takes of trade union recognition in the tender evaluation process conducted by his Department when awarding the contracts to manage *(a)* the Wolds prison, *(b)* Blakenhurst prison and *(c)* Doncaster prison; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answers 13 July 1994]:* Responsibility for these matters has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from B. Landers to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 14 July 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your two recent Questions about trade union recognition at contracted out prisons.

Whether or not a trade union is recognised at a contracted out prison is a matter for the contractor. In evaluating tenderers, the evaluation panel looks for evidence that a tenderer is a good employer with employment policies and conditions of service that are likely to recruit and retain staff of a suitable calibre to carry out the task. The evaluation includes consideration of the tenderer's industrial relations policy including how staff are consulted and what grievance procedures are in place.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many staff will be employed by Premier Prison Services Ltd., at Doncaster prison; at what grades; and at what rates of pay.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 13 July 1994]:* Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Philippa Drew to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 14 July 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about the number of staff employed by Premier Prison Services Ltd. at Doncaster Prison; the grades; and the rates of pay.

Premier Prison Services Ltd. expects to employ 365 staff. Of these about 219 will be prisoner custody officers (PCO). The operational grades are PCO, Unit Manager, Operations Manager, two of the Assistant Directors, and the Director, all of whom have to be certificated as PCO, as they have custodial contact with prisoners. There are also a number of administrative grades.

The rates of pay are a matter for the company.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Land Registry

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department whether, following its establishment as a next steps executive agency in 1990, the triennial evaluation of performance has been carried out for Her Majesty's Land Registry; and, if so, what conclusions were drawn.

Mr. John M. Taylor: An evaluation of the performance of Her Majesty's Land Registry during its first three years as an executive agency was carried out by the Lord Chancellor's Department and a report was completed in January 1994.

The report concluded that the Registry had benefited considerably from its move to agency status which had been a major enabling factor in promoting sound public sector management in the Registry. By the achievement of progressively improving performance targets and the early completion of its computerisation programme, the Registry had made a major contribution to the simplification on conveyancing in England and Wales, particularly through the development of faster and easier access to the public land register.

The general summary and conclusions of the report will be reproduced in the Registry's annual report and accounts for 1993-94 due to be published shortly.

Divorce

Mr. Bates: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what plans he has to implement the recommendations in the Law Commission's report, "Effect of Divorce on Wills" Law Com. No. 217.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Government have decided to accept the Commission's recommendations in its report on this topic and will introduce legislation to implement them when a suitable legislative opportunity occurs.

HEALTH

Children

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much was spent in the last available year in each Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development country on children's health.

Mr. Sackville: Comparable figures are not available. There is no internationally accepted definition of health spending on specific health services.

NHS Supplies Authority

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether she has produced or has commissioned any assessment of the relative cost savings likely to accrue to service providers if the NHS Supplies Authority's warehousing and distribution Information Technology and purchasing functions were *(a)* separately market tested or *(b)* run by the private sector as an integrated body under principles of integrated supply chain management; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Our current assessment is that in present circumstances the National Health Service Supplies Authority seems best placed to deliver the necessary planned improvements in the national infrastructure of NHS procurement services over the next few years without loss of momentum on service levels and performance standards, and where appropriate with use of market testing or other collaboration with private sector partners. The authority plans to market test its logistics services in the context of a strategy planned to save at least £5 to £10 million a year, when fully implemented, for a more efficient and flexible service. In developing its information technology strategy it will continue to make use of market testing wherever this can add value and/or choice. In 1992-93 the value of its contracted-out computer services and equipment was £2·7 million. It achieved purchasing savings of over £71 million in 1993-94 on behalf of NHS customers, but all NHS trusts remain free on a value for money basis to make their own direct procurement arrangements or to market test all or part of such services as alternatives to using NHS Supplies as their contracted purchasing agent.

Patients Charter

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what proportion of in-patients in *(a)* England, *(b)* each regional health authority and *(c)* each hospital or trust in January and March had a named qualified nurse or midwife who was responsible for their care;

(2) what proportion of patients attending out-patient clinics in *(a)* England, *(b)* each regional health authority and *(c)* each hospital or trust between January and March were given (i) a specific appointment time and (ii) a named qualified nurse, midwife or health visitor who was responsible for their care.

Mr. Sackville: This available information on patients charter standards was published in the 1993-94 hospital and ambulance services comparative performance guide, copies of which are available in the Library.

Benzene

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what research has been conducted into the effects on the environment and health of the increase in use of benzene in motor fuel; and if she will make a statement.

(2) what evidence she has as to any link between benzene and causes of leukaemia; and if she will make a statement;

(3) what evaluation she has made of the genotoxic nature of benzene in the atmosphere; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Benzene is classified by the International Agency for Research on Cancer as a human carcinogen. The Department of Health's Committee on Carcinogenicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment has advised that benzene is a genotoxic carcinogen. In certain occupational groups, prolonged exposure to levels of benzene many times greater than those present in ambient air has been associated with an increased risk of leukaemia. This evidence was considered carefully by the Department of the Environment's expert panel on air quality standards when they recommended an air quality standard for benzene of five parts per billion, rolling annual average concentration and a further target standard of one part per billion.

Research and Training

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many NHS patients declined to take part in *(a)* medical research and *(b)* medical student training in January to March.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available centrally.

Medical Records

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many complaints were received by NHS patients between January and March about *(a)* their own access to their medical records and *(b)* their medical records being divulged to a third party;

(2) how many NHS patients asked to see their medical records between January and March.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally. Patients have a legal right to see their own medical records. For records held on computer, access is provided for by the Data Protection Act 1984. For records kept on paper, access is under the Access to Health Records Act 1990, which came into force on 1 November 1991 and applies to records compiled on or after that date. Access under both Acts is subject to safeguards.

Ambulance Staff

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of ambulance staff are trained paramedics in each ambulance service in England.

Mr. Sackville: The table shows the unconfirmed results of an informal survey of numbers of paramedics and other front-line staff in each ambulance service in England at the end of 1993.

Ambulance Service	*Total front-line staff (including Paramedics)*	*Paramedics*
Cumbria Ambulance NHS Trust	180	96
Durham County Ambulance Service NHS Trust	159	54
Northumbria Ambulance Service NHS Trust	357	188
Humberside Ambulance Service NHS Trust	285	85
North Yorkshire Ambulance Service NHS Trust	183	61
Derbyshire Ambulance Service	232	73
Leicestershire Ambulance and Paramedic Service	214	60

Ambulance Service	Total front-line staff (including Paramedics)	Paramedics
Lincolnshire Ambulance and Health Transport NHS Trust	200	80
Nottinghamshire Ambulance Service NHS Trust	250	84
Cambridgeshire Ambulance Service	166	62
Norfolk Ambulance NHS Trust	246	89
Suffolk Ambulance Service	145	36
Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Ambulance and Paramedic Service NHS Trust	278	133
Essex Ambulance Service NHS Trust	377	174
East Sussex Ambulance Service	235	90
Kent Ambulance Service	375	138
West Sussex Ambulance Service	175	68
Dorset Ambulance Service NHS Trust	178	134
Hampshire Ambulance Service NHS Trust	321	134
Wiltshire Ambulance Service NHS Trust	156	77
Isle of Wight Ambulance Service	48	31
Royal Berkshire Ambulance NHS Trust	168	61
Two Shires Ambulance NHS Trust	290	101
Oxfordshire Ambulance Service	134	62
West Country Ambulance Services NHS Trust	752	206
Gloucestershire Ambulance Service NHS Trust	165	84
Hereford and Worcester Ambulance Service	182	108
Shropshire Ambulance Service	125	45
Staffordshire Ambulance Service NHS Trust	276	98
Warwickshire Ambulance Service	113	63
Lancashire Ambulance Service	368	142
Cleveland Ambulance Service NHS Trust	134	69
West Yorkshire Metropolitan Ambulance Service NHS Trust	450	122
South Yorkshire Metropolitan Ambulance and Paramedic Service NHS Trust	250	101
Surrey Ambulance Service	288	124
London Ambulance Service	1,485	394
Avon Ambulance Service NHS Trust	190	84
West Midlands Ambulance Service NHS Trust	523	181
Mersey Regional Ambulance Service NHS Trust	552	183
Greater Manchester Ambulance Service	585	204

Day Surgery

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures she will be taking to ensure that British companies benefit from the expected growth in techniques of minimally invasive surgery and day case by the turn of the century.

Mr. Sackville: National health service purchasing policy for purchase of innovative equipment of this kind is based on securing best value for money for the NHS and on encouraging through competition on equal terms all its suppliers to become more competitive on price, quality and service in both United Kingdom and world markets. Further measures to stimulate innovation are set out in the White Paper, "Competitiveness: Helping Business to Win".

Cycling

Mr. Robathan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions she has had with his colleagues at the Departments of Transport, Education and the Environment about encouraging children to bicycle to school, in order to reduce pollution and congestion, whilst encouraging health.

Mr. Sackville: These Departments are represented on multi-agency working groups established under "The Health of the Nation" initiative through which we are encouraging children to take up cycling, provided that they take appropriate safety precautions.

Hospital Births

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of babies were delivered in hospital in each health authority area in the most recent year for which figures are available.

Mr. Sackville: This information will be placed in the Library.

Locum Doctors

Mr. Heald: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were the total amounts of money spent in the national health service for the most recent year in which records are available on locum hospital doctors engaged *(a)* through private locum agencies and *(b)* through NHS locum agencies; and if she will list the above amounts in each category by region.

Dr. Mawhinney: Data held centrally are not broken down into these two categories.

Cancelled Operations

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what number and proportion of patients in *(a)* England, *(b)* each regional health authority and *(c)* each hospital or trust had an NHS operation cancelled between January and March.

Mr. Sackville: The available information on the number of patients who had their operations cancelled twice at the last minute and who were then not treated within a month was published in the 1993-94 hospital and ambulance services comparative performance guide, copies of which are available in the Library.

Accident and Emergency Services

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of patients attending accident and emergency departments in *(a)* England, *(b)* each regional health authority and *(c)* each hospital or trust between January and March had treatment which began with in (i) five minutes, (ii) 15 minutes, (iii) 30 minutes and (iv) one hour.

Mr. Sackville: Information on when treatment begins for patients attending an accident and emergency department is not available centrally. In England 88 per cent. of patients attending accident and emergency departments were seen and assessed within five minutes of arrival. Figures for trusts and hospitals were published in

the 1993-94 hospital and ambulance services comparative performance guide, copies of which are available in the Library.

Hartley Hospital Colne

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the selling price of Hartley hospital, Colne.

Mr. Sackville: Details of individual land and property sales are commercially sensitive and confidential. It is for the regional health authority managing the transaction to determine, with their professional advisers, if the sale price can be released after completion.

Commissioning Agencies

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she is taking to ensure that commissioning agencies involve their public health physicians in the commissioning process, both as adviser on the health priorities for their populations and as co-ordinators of medical advice from provider unit clinicians.

Dr. Mawhinney: Health authorities need a range of professional and other advice if they are to discharge their purchasing role effectively. The national health service executive has discussed with representatives of the medical professions how health authorities might secure sound medical advice. As a result of these discussions EL(93)60, entitled "Medical advice to purchasers", was issued on 2 July 1993. In addition, a task force including representatives from the professions has been established to examine clinical involvement in contracting from both commissioning and provider unit perspectives. Copies of EL(93)60 are available in the Library.

Mental Health Act Commission

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she will publish her response to the Mental Health Act Commission's fifth biennial report.

Mr. Bowis: The Department of Health response to the Commission's fifth biennial report has been placed in the Library today.

Psychiatric Services

Mr. Mark Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she intends to publish the reports of the working groups on high security psychiatric services and on psychopathic disorder.

Mr. Bowis: The reports of both working groups, which were chaired by Dr. John Reed of the Department, are being published today. Copies have been placed in the Library.

The working group on high security and related psychiatric provision was established to consider the most effective provision of services for patients requiring psychiatric treatment in conditions of high security in England and Wales, and the relationship between such service and the secure and related services provided within national health service regions and the Prison Service, in the light of earlier reports including those of the review of services for mentally disordered offenders and in response to the report of the committee of inquiry into complaints at Ashworth hospital. The report provides a clear analysis of the pressures and chllenges facing the services and their relationship with the wider NHS. It makes a number of recommendations on the objectives of high-security care, standards of services and the development of stronger links with related agencies which we fully endorse. It rightly emphasises the overriding importance in any future development of maintaining public confidence and public safety.

The report also recommends radical changes in the present funding and management arrangements for high security psychiatric services. These proposals require very careful consideration in relation to our objectives for high security care and the important responsibilities which my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary bears in this field. I have instructed my officials to examine these matters further with the Special Hospitals Service Authority and Home Office and to report back to me within six months. I will announce my conclusions when I have considered their advice.

We are also publishing today, for consultation, the report of a separate working group on services for people with psychopathic disorder. The report puts forward a number of ideas relating to the law and service provision in this area, on which we are inviting comments by 31 October.

Dental Amalgam

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment has been made by her Department of the long-term safety of dental amalgam; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Committee on Toxicity advised in 1986 that the use of dental amalgam is free from the risk of systemic toxicity and that only a few cases of hypersensitivity occur. The subsequent research findings, and recent evaluations by several authoritative national and international expert committees are consistent with that advice. The Department of Health will continue to assess and evaluate all research in this area.

Dental Health

Mr. Congdon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what arrangements she intends to make to inform the dental profession of the publication of the Government's response to the Bloomfield report; what her policy is in respect of a comprehensive dental health service within the NHS; and when she intends to produce an oral health strategy for England.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I am publishing today a consultative document called *"Improving NHS Dentistry."* Copies of the document itself and a summary have been placed in the Library and are available in the Vote Office. They are a response to the report of Sir Kenneth Bloomfield, published in January 1993, and to that of the Health Select Committee.

The Government's purpose in putting forward these proposals for consultation is twofold. First, we wish to strengthen and improve national health service dentistry, maintaining a high-quality service available and accessible to all and one which responds to the modern needs of patients. Secondly, we wish to build on the excellent improvements to oral health of recent years and, in particular, to improve further children's oral health and

address regional variations. We are also publishing today proposals for an oral health strategy for England. Copies have been placed in the Library and are also available in the Vote Office.

The Government are determined that all patients will continue to have access to an NHS dentist; under the proposals, this would be the case. The Government propose to develop and strengthen the community dental service to ensure that there is an effective safety net where necessary. NHS treatment would continue to be available free or at reduced cost to those currently exempt or remitted from charges and all children would continue to receive free NHS treatment. The Government will also consult on improvements to the system of charging to encourage examination and routine treatment along the lines proposed by the Health Select Committee. One possibility is a reduced examination charge.

The proposals would provide a more flexible system better able to match dental treatment to the varying needs of patients. There would be incentives to encourage a greater emphasis on the quality of care and prevention rather than the number of patients treated. The system for paying dentists would be simpler to operate and provide better overall financial control for the taxpayer. The Government also believe it would be fairer to dentists.

The Government believe that, in the longer term, there is a case for moving towards a system in which local family health services authorities, or health commissions, are responsible for purchasing dental services for their area, taking full account of local need and the state of oral health. This would represent a significant change. The Government therefore believe it would require careful piloting and evaluation before any change were made. The Government propose to invite FHSAs to volunteer to participate in pilots.

The Government also believe that the current system of remuneration for dentists should be improved. It is consulting on two options. One is for a sessional fee model which would link payment to dentists to the time spent treating NHS patients rather than the number and type of treatments carried out. An alternative approach would be a modified fee-per-item system. In both these options the emphasis would be on linking payment to the quality of care and prevention.

These proposals follow the dental profession's request for a fundamental review of the dental remuneration system which is largely unchanged since the foundation of the NHS. We have consulted widely with the profession and taken full account of Sir Kenneth Bloomfield's report. We have also taken on board a number of the recommendations from the Health Select Committee. The Government note that, while there is consensus on the need for change, there is no consensus on the best way forward. The options set out for further consultation offer the opportunity of a simpler, more flexible system which responds to the needs of patients and reflects the great improvements in oral health of recent years and the changing nature of dentistry. The Government now seek the views of dentists and their patients on the best way forward.

Supra-regional Services

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make available a summary of the funding and levels of activity agreed for 1994-95 with centres designated to provide supra-regional services.

Mr. Sackville: A summary of this information has been placed in the Library as an addendum to the document "Supra-regional services 1994-95: announcement by the Secretary of State for Health".

Carers

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether she will give the latest figures for the number of carers in *(a)* Coventry, *(b)* the west midlands and *(c)* nationally.

Mr. Bowis: The general household survey findings indicate that 15 per cent. of adults living in private households—approximately 6·8 million people—were carers in Great Britain in 1990. Estimates are not available for the number of carers in Coventry, or in the west midlands.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Sports Ground Safety

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what estimate he has made of the cost of necessary ground safety work in *(a)* Rugby League, *(b)* Rugby Union, *(c)* cricket and *(d)* non-league football.

Mr. Sproat: None. I have, however, received estimates of the likely costs of implementing ground safety work from the Rugby Football League and the GM Vauxhall Conference.

Royal Parks (Cycle Routes)

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans he has to introduce more cycle routes in the royal parks.

Mr. Sproat: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Royal Parks Agency, under its chief executive, Mr. David Welch. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from David Welch to Mrs Barbara Roche, dated 8 July 1994:

The Secretary of State for National Heritage has asked me to reply to your Question about providing more cycle routes in the Royal Parks.

We currently have a cycle lane that runs around three sides of Hyde Park and joins Knightsbridge by the Albert Memorial. Apart from being able to use the Park roads, in Richmond Park cyclists may also use roads that are closed to other vehicular traffic.

We shall be issuing a paper on cycling in the Royal Parks to interested parties for discussion later this month. This will propose a range of measures to improve arrangements for cyclists in the Royal Parks. Amongst other things, it will propose the following additional cycle lanes:

In Hyde Park, north/south from Albion Gate, roughly following the route of the horseride, then across the Serpentine Bridge and alongside West Carriage Drive to join the current cycle lane opposite Coalbrookdale Gates;

In Green Park/St. James's Park, from Hyde Park Corner, parallel to Constitution Hill, behind Canada Gates and alongside the Mall;

In Regent's Park, one way advisory cycle lanes from Macclesfield Bridge, either side of the Outer Circle and Park Square, to Marylebone Road;

In Richmond Park, a purpose-built off-road track to allow cyclists to travel around the perimeter of the park.

We propose that all cycle lanes in the parks will be specially marked in a different colour to pedestrian paths and will improve safety provision for cyclists at those points where they cross roads carrying vehicular traffic.

Entertainment Agencies

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what consultation has been held between his Department and the Department of Employment on the effects of clause 25 and schedule 9, of the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill on the licensing of entertainment agencies.

Mr. Sproat: The Secretaries of State for Trade and Industry and for Employment are in the lead on this matter. But my officials have kept in touch with their opposite numbers in these Departments and have ensured that they are aware of representations made to me.

Grace and Favour Accommodation

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how much has been spent and remains to be spent on restoring, refurbishing and decorating *(a)* the grace and favour accommodation occupied by Mr. Peat at Kensington palace and *(b)* that to be occupied by his assistant; how much has been spent on furnishing each; and what accommodation is in each residence.

Mr. Sproat: Fitting out apartments at Kensington palace for the director and deputy director of property services is estimated to cost £120,000 each excluding VAT and fees. This cost includes the provision of kitchen and bathroom fittings, flooring, doors, lighting, cupboards, tiling and decoration.

The director of finance and property services is a head of department and furnished accommodation is provided. The maximum budget provision for the furniture and furnishings is £98,000 excluding VAT. No furniture or furnishings will be provided for the apartment to be occupied by the deputy director of property services.

A substantial amount of essential structural, fire protection and other repair work estimated to cost £450,000 excluding VAT and fees has also being carried out in this area of the palace to prevent further deterioration of the fabric and to meet Bailey inquiry recommendations. Most of this work would have been necessary whether the area was to provide residential accommodation or not. It was occupied by Princess Alice, Countess of Athlone without major refurbishment from 1923 to 1981 and has remained unoccupied and uninhabitable since then.

Structural and fitting-out costs reflect the special requirements of historic buildings, as advised by English Heritage. Reductions in salaries take account of the value of the accommodation.

One apartment will have five bedrooms, four bathrooms, a sitting room, dining room, study, kitchen and utility room, basement room and two separate lavatories. The other will have four bedrooms, two bathrooms, a sitting room, dining room, study, kitchen and utility room, basement room, shower room and a separate lavatory.

Channel 5 Television

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he expects to announce the results of his consideration of the results of the recent consultation about the future of Channel 5 national television channel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The Government have considered whether it would be possible both to proceed with an analogue Channel 5 service and to provide sufficient frequencies for digital terrestrial television services. I am writing today to the chairman of the Independent Television Commission to tell him of the Government's decisions.

The Radiocommunications Agency has examined a range of options, and has been helped by receiving technical proposals from a number of organisations, including the Independent Television Commission, National Transcommunications Ltd. and the BBC.

As a result, the Government have concluded that they should amend the current assignment of frequencies to the Independent Television Commission, for the provision of Channel 5. Frequency channel 37, and a number of other frequencies will now form the basis of an analogue Channel 5 service giving coverage of about 60 per cent. of the population. It would be open to a successful applicant for the licence to simulcast the service digitally to at least 80 per cent. and possibly over 90 per cent. of the population, when the Commission has new powers to license digital terrestrial television services.

In addition to the analogue Channel 5, as many as 12 digital terrestrial television services could be provided: up to four would be broadcast as a single frequency network, using frequency channel 35, with coverage of more than 95 per cent. of the population; an interleaved network of up to four more services could have 90 to 95 per cent. coverage, and there could be up to four more interleaved services with 80 per cent. coverage. Regional variations would be possible on the interleaved services, but not for the single frequency network.

Digital terrestrial television would provide new and enhanced services for audiences, as well as opportunities for programme-makers, broadcasters, advertisements and the manufacturers of transmitting and receiving equipment. The frequency allocations for both Channel 5 and the digital television services will need international clearance with neighbouring countries. Technical standards for digital television in Europe are already under consideration.

No decisions have been made about the allocation of the frequencies for digital terrestrial television to either the BBC or the Independent Television Commission, but the Government's plans allow both for the introduction of new services and for the four existing analogue services to be simulcast digitally for some years. This will encourage people to buy new digital receiving equipment. If sufficient numbers of people move over to digital equipment, it may be possible, after a transitional period of perhaps 15 years, for television signals to be transmitted in digital format only. This would allow the spectrum currently used for analogue transmission to be put to other uses. If used for mobile communications, this spectrum could support an annual level of economic activity equivalent to £5 billion in today's money.

The Government believe that this plan will create greater choice and diversity for viewers by combining the

advantages of an increased number of television services, initially through Channel 5, with opportunities for new and enhanced services using digital transmission.

Sports Council

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement about the future structure of the Sports Council.

Mr. Sproat *[holding answer 11 July 1994]:* The Government announced their proposals for the future of the Sports Council on 8 July.

Contracts

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage on what occasions in the last 10 years he or a Minister in his Department has given a direction to civil servants to award a contract against the advice of the civil service; what was the subject matter of the contract and it value; and when it was awarded.

Mr. Sproat *[holding answer 8 July 1994]:* Following the establishing of my Department in April 1992 no such direction has been given.

Running Costs

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will provide a table showing the running costs of his Department in each region for each year since 1992.

Mr. Sproat *[holding answer 11 July 1994]:* The information requested is as follows: all costs relate to the London region.

Department for National Heritage (including the Historic Royal Palaces Agency and Royal Parks Agency)

£ millions

1992-93 outturn	*1993-94 estimated outturn*	*1994-95 plans*
32	37	38

Royal Palaces

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what accommodation is provided in which occupied royal palaces for employees of KPMG Peat Marwick.

Mr. Sproat *[holding answer 11 July 1994]:* None.

Privatisation

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage which organisations, agencies and other bodies relating to his departmental area of responsibility have been privatised since 1990; and what plans he has for further privatisation.

Mr. Sproat *[holding answer 12 July 1994]:* No organisations, agencies or other bodies relating to my area of responsibility have been privatised since 1990 and no such privatisations are currently planned.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Export Licences

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether export licences for tanks and other armoured vehicles are granted on a general, or an individual, export licence basis; and under what circumstances any exceptions to this rule can be made.

Mr. Needham: When it is appropriate for a licence to be granted for the export of these categories of defence equipment such licences are normally issued on an individual basis; I am not aware of any exception.

Trade Statistics (Korea)

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) how many cars and other vehicles manufactured in the United Kingdom have been exported to Korea for each year since 1987;

(2) how many cars and other vehicles manufactured in Korea were imported into the United Kingdom in each year since 1987.

Mr. Needham: United Kingdom export statistics do not distinguish between products manufactured in the United Kingdom and those manufactured elsewhere but exported from the United Kingdom. The available information, on a country of consignment basis, is as follows:

United Kingdom trade with South Korea in cars and other vehicles (numbers).

Year	*United Kingdom exports*	*United Kingdom imports*
1987	6	5,861
1988	13	10,209
1989	8	15,424
1990	68	4,690
1991	121	9,027
1992	68	15,531
1993	29	13,689

Source: Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom

Nuclear Fuel Assemblies

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what notification his Department received from British Nuclear Fuels before the recent export of mixed oxide nuclear fuel assemblies by air to Switzerland.

Mr. Needham: It has been the policy of successive Administrations not to disclose details about export licences that have been issued. Any such transfers would require advance notification, also made in confidence, through my Department to the Euratom safeguards directorate.

Zangger Committee

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what criteria must be met by countries wishing to be eligible for membership of the Zangger committee on nuclear export controls; and what information he has on refusals to countries applying to join the Zangger committee.

Mr. Needham: The main criteria for membership of the Zangger committee are accession to the treaty on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons; potential to supply material or equipment of concern as defined in article III.2 of the NPT; and adherence to the committee's agreed conditions of supply for such items of concern. In recent years the committee has actively sought new members and refusals of applications have not arisen.

Supplementary Protection Certificates

Mr. Wilson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many supplementary protection certificates have been granted under the terms of EC Regulation 1768/92/EEC; and what is their average duration.

Mr. McLoughlin: As at 14 July 1994 the number of supplementary protection certificates granted by the United Kingdom Patent Office, in accordance with Council Regulation (EEC) No. 1768/92, is 138. The average duration is three years two months.

Anglia Television

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if the inspectors appointed by him to investigate possible insider dealing contraventions in certain transactions of Anglia Television shares have concluded their inquiries; whether they have had any informal discussions with his Department on their findings; and when he expects to receive their formal report.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The inspectors appointed to investigate possible insider dealing contraventions with regard to the shares of Anglia Television Group plc have completed their inquiries and are expected to present their report shortly. It is normal practice for inspectors and departmental officials to have progress meetings during the course of an investigation.

UKAEA

Mr. Bates: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish the BZW report on the future of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority.

Mr. Eggar: The full report contains a large amount of commercially senstive information which it would not be appropriate to place in the public domain. However, in accordance with the Government's commitment to open government, I asked BZW to produce a summary of its report for publication outlining its recommendations and the thinking behind them. Copies of the summary have been placed in the Library of the House. BZW's study was carried out last summer and obviously precedes the reorganisation of the AEA which took effect on 1 April. The summary should therefore be read in conjunction with the AEA's annual report, which was published earlier this week.

Petroleum Licences

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how he will ensure that environmental considerations are taken into account when deciding on the award of petroleum licences in areas around the United Kingdom coast.

Mr. Eggar: At my initiative, which has the full agreement of the United Kingdom Offshore Operators Association, UKOOA will fund the preparation and publication of a series of 16 United Kingdom continental shelf coastal directories regional reports.

This work will be done in conjunction with a consortium, co-ordinated by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, and composed of local authorities, central Government Departments, countryside agencies and the private sector.

Those reports covering areas likely to be of interest to companies in the 16th round will be available in draft by the end of December, and published in final form in June 1995. Prospective licensees will be expected to show that they have taken this information into account in their environment management systems for activities in the block to be awarded.

There is concern, which I share, about the impact on the environment of licensing inshore blocks. At present there is not enough agreed data on any sensitive areas in blocks on offer.

This collaborative project, which will take over two and a half years to complete, shows that the oil and gas industry and environmental organisations can work together for their mutual benefit. The reports will build on work already carried out by the JNCC, individual oil companies and the bodies already mentioned, as well as data contributed by knowledgeable environmental groups. This will provide valuable knowledge about the coastal and marine environment for the whole of the United Kingdom coastline which will greatly assist me in my decision making in the 16th and subsequent licensing rounds. The initiative will help environmental groups, local authorities and oil companies to discuss the issues in a more informed and co-operative way.

Regional Challenge

Ms Coffey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what discussions he has had with the European Commission about Regional Challenge;

(2) who will judge projects applying for funding for Regional Challenge;

(3) what factors led to the exclusion of Thanet, Plymouth and West Cumbria from Regional Challenge;

(4) when the criteria for bids for Regional Challenge will be published;

(5) what consultations have taken place; on what dates and with whom to ascertain the news of national and local agencies about Regional Challenge.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answers 13 July 1994]:* My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has discussed Regional Challenge with Commissioner Millan twice and has exchanged correspondence. We intend that Regional Challenge grant decisions will be taken by the Government on the basis of recommendations from the monitoring committees. Thanet, Plymouth and West Cumbria were not included because of their small population.

Guidance on applications will be issued in due course. Officials have held discussions with local authority associations on various dates. My right hon. Friend and I have received a number of letters from hon. Members and others.

Ms Coffey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the total allocations of objective 1 and 2 structural funds to Regional Challenge areas; and what percentage will be top-sliced for Regional Challenge per area.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 13 July 1994]:* The structural funds objective 1 allocations were announced in the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Sir J. Hannam) on 27 July 1993, *Official Report*, column *497*. The objective 2 allocations were announced in the answer given by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade to my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) on 13 April 1994, *Official Report*, column *230*. On those occasions the allocations were given in ecu—for convenience I repeat them here in sterling for the areas eligible for Regional Challenge.

	[1] *£ million*
Objective 1 (1994-1999)	
Merseyside	628
Objective 2 (1994-1996)	
North East England	237
Yorkshire and Humberside	241
East Midlands	61
West Midlands	285
Greater Manchester, Lancashire, Cheshire	253
Greater London	57
South Wales	145

[1] £ million, 1994 prices (£1 = 1.3 ecu).

The White Paper on competitiveness referred to total prize money for the first round of Regional Challenge competitions of £150—£200 million across the eligible English and Welsh areas, which also includes some classified under objective 5(b). The term top-slicing is misleading.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 14 July.

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 14 July.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Intelligence Service

Sir John Hunt: To ask the Prime Minister if he will indicate the extent to which following the passing of the Intelligence Services Act, the Government are prepared to make available to the House information on the activities of the security and intelligence agencies.

The Prime Minister: This Government have taken a series of significant steps in its policy of greater accountability and openness, wherever possible, in security and intelligence matters. All three security and intelligence agencies are avowed and have now been put on a statutory basis. The figure for the aggregate expenditure of the agencies is published annually. In addition, the expenditure, administration and policy of all three agencies will be subject to scrutiny by a committee of Parliamentarians—the Intelligence and Security Committee.

It is important to draw a line between proper accountability for the agencies and the continued need for secrecy regarding operational matters. Successive Governments have refused to provide information on the operations of the security and intelligence agencies, including matters which will fall within the scrutiny of the Intelligence and Security Committee. Comment on these matters, either by what is or is not said, could have a bearing on the effectiveness of the agencies, and the safety of their staff and those who co-operate with them. I made clear to the House on 6 May 1992—*Official Report*, column *65*, that the Government will maintain this policy.

Ex-service People (Welfare)

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Prime Minister if he will be meeting representatives of the Royal British Legion to discuss the approval by the House on 1 July of the resolution on the welfare of ex-service people; and what representations he has had from the Legion in regard to a meeting.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 13 July 1994]:* We welcome continuing close contact with the Royal British Legion and other service organisations. A request for a meeting has been received form the Royal British Legion and is being considered at present.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Fur Farms

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many officials of the State Veterinary Service observed the killing of mink on fur farms in November 1993; and what method of killing was used.

Mr. Soames: Officials of the State Veterinary Service did not observe the killing of mink on any fur farm in November 1993.

Beef Exports

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what actions she has taken to limit the effects of the Franco-German beef embargo on the British agricultural industry.

Mr. Jack: The German Government have proposed unilateral restrictions on British beef imports. These would be illegal under EC rules, and my right hon. Friend the Minister has kept in touch with the European Commission on this matter. Mr. Steichen has written to the German Government to warn them that the Commission will take legal action if Germany puts its proposed restrictions into effect.

The French Government have not made any proposals for unilateral action against British beef imports.

Livestock Allowances

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the cost in 1993 for each county in England, and in total, of payments under *(a)* the

sheep annual premium, *(b)* the suckler cow premium, *(c)* the beef special premium and *(d)* the hill livestock compensatory allowance; and what is her estimate of the cost in 1994.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The information requested by the hon. Member cannot be given except at disproportionate cost. However, the expected value of 1993 scheme payments in each MAFF administrative region in England for the four schemes is detailed in the table.

£ million

Region	*Sheep Annual Premium Scheme*	*Suckler Cow Premium Scheme*	*Beef Special Premium Scheme*	*Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowance*
South West	26·1	6·9	14·0	4·7
Wessex	10·7	4·6	7·7	1·0
Anglia	4·0	2·9	3·7	0·0
South Mercia	18·3	4·2	7·5	0·8
North Mercia	15·6	4·3	7·0	2·6
Northern	47·8	10·3	10·9	14·7
East Midlands	14·7	4·6	8·8	1·3
North East	31·0	7·8	9·7	8·3
South East	13·7	4·9	8·2	0·0
Total England	181·9	50·5	77·5	33·4

Estimates for the value of payments under each scheme in England for the 1994 scheme years are set out in the table. The figures are not broken down by MAFF region since for some schemes applications are still being received.

	£ million
Sheep Annual Premium Scheme	173
Suckler Cow Premium Scheme	64
Beef Special Premium Scheme	90
Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowance	26

Dietary Statistics

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is her latest assessment of the consumption in the United Kingdom diet of fat, saturated fat, salt and non-milk extrinsic sugars; and what change there has been in the figures from those prepared by her Ministry and used to enable production of the 1991 Committee on Medical Aspects of Food Policy report, "Dietary Reference Values".

Mr. Soames: The information requested, obtained from the national food survey, is in the table. The figures in parentheses take into account the contribution from alcoholic drinks and confectionery brought into the home, which were not recorded in the survey before 1992.

	1990	*1991*	*1992*		*1993*		*January-March 1994*	
Fat, as percentage of energy	41·60	41·40	41·70	(40·1)	41·30	(39·7)	40·40	(39·2)
Saturated fatty acids, as percentage of energy	16·60	16·40	16·30	(15·3)	16·10	(15·6)	15·60	(15·3)
Sodium, grams per day	2·50	2·49	2·51	—	2·50	—	2·54	—
Non-milk extrinsic sugars, as percentage of energy	11·40	11·80	10·70	(13·4)	10·70	(13·3)	10·30	(12·6)

Comfrey

Ms Corston: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many representations she has received from right hon. and hon. Members about the ban on comfrey products since the ban was announced; and how many of those representations were in support of the ban.

Mr. Soames: There is no ban on comfrey products generally, but those likely to contain the highest concentration of toxic alkaloids have been withdrawn from the market. Of 90 Members of this House who have raised the matter formally with my right hon. Friend, 22 have asked for these products to be reintroduced and 68 have expressed no opinion.

Rabbits

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement on the welfare of rabbits being transported across Europe.

Mr. Soames: The welfare of rabbits during transport is covered by provisions of directive 91/628/EEC on the protection of animals during transport. In Great Britain the directive is implemented by the Welfare of Animals during Transport Order 1992 (S.I. 1992 No. 3304).

Arable Area Payments Scheme

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the total areas claimed by arable farmers in England for crops and set-aside under the arable area payments scheme in 1994; how those figures relate to the baseline areas declared to the European Commission; what estimate she has made of the overshoot; and if she will make a statement on the scale of penalty that is likely to arise from such an overshoot.

Mr. Jack: This information will not be available until all the 1994 area aid applications have been processed. An announcement will be made as soon as possible.

Agricultural Wages Board

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make an announcement on the future of the Agricultural Wages Board for England and Wales; and if she will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: We had hoped to be able, before now, to make a statement on the Government's plans for the future of the Agricultural Wages Board arrangements. Since last year's substantial consultation exercise, there have been two significant and new factors which the Government must consider. Employers in a number of sectors of the industry are now questioning the value of keeping the present arrangements for statutory wage determination across the agriculture sector, and have raised concerns about the size of this year's minimum wage awards. They have also acknowledged that the two International Labour Organisation conventions covering the terms and conditions of agricultural workers should now be denounced by the United Kingdom. Those conventions place constraints on the industry and prevent the introduction of the flexible working arrangements required by the modern labour market. Secondly, employees' representatives are seeking leave in the courts to bring judicial review proceedings against the board on the ground that its Wages Order determinations are indirectly discriminating against part-time agricultural workers. The board met on 24 June to consider this legal challenge and we understand that employers' and employees' representative are consulting over the summer. There are some substantial and complex issues on employment and equal opportunities law which need examination.

In view of these developments, I believe that we must pause and take stock before making our decision, so that we can take account of the result of these developments, the board's decision, and of course the views expressed during and since the consultation exercise. However, to ensure that we are free to make the arrangements that the industry will need, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment will be making an announcement shortly on the ILO conventions Nos. 99 and 101.

TRANSPORT

Departmental Information Systems Committee

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 20 June, *Official Report*, column *48*, if the policy arising from the DISC network policy project is currently being used by his Department; and if he will list the agencies which are using it.

Mr. Key: All data communications services currently in use in the Department and its agencies are consistent with the policy. The Central Transport Group, Marine Safety Agency and Transport Research Laboratory have commenced the procurement of common data communications services in accordance with the furtherance of the policy. The Highways Agency and Vehicle Inspectorate executive agency are currently conducting wide-ranging reviews of their requirements, including data communications, and are using the policy in assessing and selecting options. The remaining agencies will use the policy similarly in considering their on-going and future requirements.

Private Detective Firms

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what fees have been paid to Brays Detective Agency in respect of its work at the Batheaston bypass to date;

(2) what sum has been set aside in the budget for the Batheaston bypass for employing Brays Detective Agency or firms conducting similar work.

Mr. Key: These questions are an operational matter for the Highways Agency. The chief executive, Mr. Lawrie Haynes, is writing to the hon. Member.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Mr. Don Foster, dated 12 July 1994:

A4/A46 Batheaston Swainswick Bypass

I am writing in response to your two recent Parliamentary Questions to the Secretary of State for Transport about the cost of employing Brays Detective Agency to monitor events at the Batheaston/Swainswick Bypass. This is an operational matter for which the Highways Agency is responsible.

As I have explained in response to your Parliamentary Question, PQ 2694, Brays are employed by our solicitors to support them in connection with possible legal action to gain control of the land on which the Batheaston Bypass is being built. A sum of £100,000 has been provisionally set aside in the budget for the Bypass to cover our solicitors' costs in employing Brays. To date, our solicitors have paid no fees to Brays in respect of their work at the Bypass; however, a payment of around £21,000 (including VAT) is about to be made.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what controls or guidelines exist within his Department regarding information on protestors gathered by private detectives.

Mr. Key: The information collected by private detectives on behalf of the Department's Highways Agency includes photographic and video records and written evidence of observations made. All are required to be carefully collated and catalogued to ensure that they would be acceptable before a court and would assist in the preparation of legal proceedings against trespassers.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what central records are kept by his Department of protestors against road schemes; and how information gathered by private detectives is collated centrally by his Department.

Mr. Key: Neither the Department nor the Highways Agency keeps central records of protestors against road schemes. Nor do they collate centrally information gathered by private detectives.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport to which part of his Department private detectives gathering information on protestors are responsible.

Mr. Key: The private detectives gathering information on protestors are responsible to the Highways Agency.

Road Schemes

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 30 June, *Official Report*, column *703*, if he will list the three other locations at which

arrangements have been made for the gathering of information about protestors; which agency was used; and what was the cost.

Mr. Key: This question relates to operational matters of the Highways Agency. I have asked the chief executive, Mr. Lawrie Haynes, to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Lawrie haynes to Mr. Harry Cohen, dated 12 July 1994:

I have been asked to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about the three other locations at which arrangements have been made for the gathering of information on protestors. This is a matter for which the Highways Agency is responsible.

The trunk road schemes involved are the A12 Hackney Wick-M11 Link (Contract 4), the A11 Besthorpe-Wymondham scheme in Norfolk and the A4/A46 Batheaston Bypass in Avon.

In all cases Brays Detective Agency have been used. Expenditure to date has been around £50,000 for the A12 contract, £450 for the A11 contract and £21,000 at Batheaston.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the order in which the road schemes costing over £1 million will be constructed in each of the regions of the Highways Agency.

Mr. Key: As announced in March of this year, the following 22 new contracts for schemes over £1 million are due to start in the current financial year. These are listed by Government office region:

Northern
A19 Norton—Parkway Interchange Imp
A1 Shotton Slip Road
A19 Arcot Hall—Moor Farm

North Western
M6 J20-21A Bridge Renewal
M66 Denton-Middleton Con 2
M65 Blackburn Southern Bypass Con 2
A568 Windnes Eastern Bypass South
A66 Lamplugh Junction Improvement

Yorkshire and Humberside
A621/M1 Link Road
A59 Skipton to Low Lodge

East Midlands
M1 J21-21A Widening Phase 1
A564 Derby Southern Bypass and Derby Spur
A564 Doveridge Bypass

West Midlands
A50 Blythe Bridge—Queensway Phase 2
M5 Junction 3-4 Lighting

Eastern
M40 J1A-3 Widening
A1(M) Alconbury—Peterborough Con 1
A13 Wennington—Mar Dyke Imp
A428 Bedford Southern Bypass

South Eastern
M25 J8-10 Widening
A34 Chieveley/M4 J13 Imp
A34 Newbury Bypass
A249 Brielle Way
M4 Junction 10 Lighting
M40 Banbury Maintenance Compound
A2 Lighting
M27 Junction 4 Lighting

South Western
M5 J18-19 Widening
A30 Honiton—Exeter Imp

London
A12 Hackney—M11 Link Con 2
A12 Hackney—M11 Link Con 3
A406 Silver Street—Fore Street Imp

The order in which these will start, and decisions on starts in future years is subject to the successful completion of statutory and contractual procedures, and availability of resources.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many studies on the economic impact of road building his Department has *(a)* carried out itself or *(b)* commissioned in the last 10 years.

Mr. Key: None.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which road schemes have been authorised in the last 10 years which had a negative net present value; and which road schemes in the last 10 years have been rejected at the public inquiry stage or beyond, because they had a negative net present value.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 23 June 1994]:* As the information requested relates to operational matters of the Highways Agency, I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Mr. Simon Hughes, dated 12 July 1994:

I have been asked to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about which roads have been authorised in the last 10 years which had a negative net present value, or had been rejected at public inquiry stage or beyond because they had a negative net present value.

To the best of my knowledge, no road schemes have been authorised in the last 10 years which have a negative net present value. Neither have there been any road schemes rejected at public inquiry stage or beyond because they had a negative net present value.

Marine Safety

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he originally proposed to publish details on sub-standard ships detained in United Kingdom ports as recommended by the Donaldson inquiry; when he now proposes to do so; and what are the reasons for the delay.

Mr. Norris: In making his announcement on 17 May it was my right hon. Friend's intention that details of ships detained in United Kingdom ports should be published as soon as possible. The Marine Safety Agency is preparing the information in a format suitable for publication. The first set of results will be published shortly.

Heavy Goods Vehicles

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list by police force area the number of accidents involving heavy goods vehicles for each of the last five years.

Mr. Key: The information requested is shown in the table.

Injury involving HGVs, by Police Force Area: Great Britain 1989-1993

Accidents

Police Force Code	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
Metropolitan Police	1,733	1,684	1,302	1,169	1,195
Cumbria	165	176	154	156	159
Lancashire	220	281	213	237	281
Merseyside	255	292	283	286	281
Greater Manchester	702	667	606	573	619
Cheshire	475	403	364	339	418
Northumbria	249	255	232	184	212
Durham	112	124	120	113	118
North Yorkshire	403	347	351	312	292
West Yorkshire	464	454	499	441	453
South Yorkshire	308	292	286	269	255
Humberside	219	232	214	261	230
Cleveland	91	69	87	66	63
West Midlands	495	479	407	421	414
Staffordshire	327	355	368	363	358
West Mercia	382	366	329	290	257
Warwickshire	247	225	176	172	191
Derbyshire	316	303	277	280	256
Nottinghamshire	320	283	289	267	259
Lincolnshire	278	287	219	245	246
Leicestershire	311	315	294	269	281
Northamptonshire	331	291	263	228	218
Cambridgeshire	376	327	281	272	264
Norfolk	322	255	260	276	227
Suffolk	234	190	159	166	160
Bedfordshire	252	196	157	146	165
Hertfordshire	317	268	233	210	287
Essex	621	471	427	418	456
Thames Valley	624	517	528	508	529
Hampshire	474	440	387	362	370
Surrey	320	306	233	224	224
Kent	477	456	375	436	429
Sussex	357	321	294	283	293
City of London	22	31	9	8	7
Devon and Cornwall	365	344	289	259	293
Avon and Somerset	319	290	265	266	254
Gloucestershire	154	141	130	119	130
Wiltshire	212	211	187	193	260
Dorset	178	161	147	148	144
North Wales	210	196	212	182	159
Gwent	107	104	113	90	91
South Wales	212	228	216	225	197
Dyfed-Powys	168	207	206	197	168
Northern	78	83	43	62	60
Grampian	121	135	145	126	114
Tayside	134	133	113	105	115
Fife	68	50	52	52	47
Lothian and Borders	216	175	154	141	140
Central	79	47	58	56	50
Strathclyde	611	542	519	480	397
Dumfries and Galloway	98	89	100	73	94
Total	16,107	15,063	13,616	13,016	13,173

Vehicle Excise Offences

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 15 June, *Official Report*, column *521*, if he will provide a detailed breakdown for each NFS—no further steps—code one to eight of 492,000 vehicle excise offence reports.

Mr. Key: The information is as follows:

		Number
NFS 1	Unable to trace offender	143,643
NFS 2	No offence	40,366
NFS 3	Summons not served	21,738
NFS 4	Unable to interview	67,970
NFS 5	Prosecution discontinued	9,241
NFS 6	Specified difficulties	34,435
NFS 7	Out of time	38,401
NFS 8	Unactioned/Abandoned	106,102

Poole

Mr. Ward: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to announce the preferred route for *(a)* the new Poole harbour crossing and *(b)* the Poole-A31 link road.

Mr. Key: I expect to announce our preferred route for these schemes shortly.

London Underground Ltd.

Mr. Tracey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made in implementing the recommendations of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission of 5 June 1991, report on London Underground Ltd; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: London Underground Ltd. is today publishing its three-year response to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report, detailing the progress which has been made in implementing the report's recommendations, and the benefits which the implementation of the report has produced since it was published three years ago. This is London Underground's final response on the implementation of the report.

The programme of work set out by the MMC in 1991 was an extremely wide-ranging one, touching on all aspects of the LUL organisation. Implementation of 101 of the report's 114 recommendations is now complete—an increase of 33 since their previous progress report two years ago. Two of the recommendations will not now be completed in the manner recommended by the MMC. Work on the rest, which are of a longer-term nature, will continue.

A number of the developments which have taken place since 1991 are worthy of particular mention. In November 1991, London Underground responded to a number of the MMC's key concerns with the publication of its company plan. This set out ambitious proposals for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the business. Three years on, this initiative has delivered a reduction in staff numbers of more than 20 per cent. At the same time, the quality of London Underground's services has continued to improve, with consistently strong performance against the testing service quality targets which have been set by the Secretary of State and embodied in successive customer charters.

Nine of the recommendations in the MMC report were directed wholly or partly towards the Government. Three of these—101, 105 and 111—were about performance indicators, three—70, 71 and 77—about fares, and three —10, 97 and 98—about the financial regime under which London Underground operates.

Overall, the position on the first six of these has not altered substantively since the Government's own response of September 1991. Since 1991 we have set for London Underground three successive sets of performance indicators, increasingly based, in accordance with MMC recommendation 101, on measured customer satisfaction and on outputs rather than inputs. For the very latest set of objectives, which I announced in May this year, six out of the 10 objectives set are assessed on the basis of customer satisfaction.

On fares, we remain unconvinced of the case for a formal fares contract between the Government and a nationalised industry. However, in general terms, the Government do not dissent from London Underground's view that there should continue to be some real fare increases over the next few years.

There have, however, been two important developments on the financial side. The first has been introduction in the last few months, and consistent with the recommendation 10, of a greater degree of flexibility allowing nationalised industries such as London Transport to carry forward from one financial year to the next, any underspend, up to 5 per cent. of their external financing limit, provided that the amount carried forward is sent on investment. The second, connected with recommendation 98, has been the opening up, through the Government's private finance initiative, of a greater range of opportunities for LUL to work with the private sector. The Government welcome the fact that London Underground is currently working up a range of PFI projects, and commend London Underground for the enthusiasm and commitment with which it has responded to this important initiative.

The MMC made a number of recommendations about long-term planning for the network. The Government are continuing to work with LUL in developing a framework for strategic planning. Any such planning framework needs to be sufficiently flexible to adapt to changes in demand and other external developments, including the level of funding available. As the Government's original response made clear, it is not possible to commit public funding years in advance, because of the need for the Government to retain sufficient flexibility to deal with changes in the macroeconomic environment, and competing calls elsewhere in the public sector.

Within these constraints, London Underground is developing a more flexible approach to strategic planning, including—as recommended by the MMC—the development of a range of scenarios involving different levels of service and funding. It is also working to establish a greater understanding of the relationships between asset health, investment, and service performance. The Government welcome these steps, which will continue to be important building blocks in the evolution of future plans for the Underground.

London has the world's oldest and most complex underground network. The task of modernising and upgrading it will be a difficult and costly one, and we need to be realistic about how quickly it can be achieved. But we believe that during the three years since the MMC report, the management and staff of London Ungerground have made a worthwhile start on this proce

London Underground in 1994 is an organisation very different from that on which the MMC reported in 1991. While the Government have played their part by providing record levels of funding, the past three years have also seen substantial reforms and improvements in London Underground's own management, financial, and service performance. I would like to pay tribute to the MMC for the role which its comprehensive report played in initiating and directing this important process.

Copies of LUL's response have been placed in the Library.

Railways

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if the Rail Regulator will be undertaking consultation before approving access agreements for railway passenger services.

Mr. Freeman: The Rail Regulator has today published two consultation documents, entitled "Framework for the Approval of Railtrack's Track Access Charges for Franchised Passenger Services" and "Competition for Railway Passenger Services". I am arranging for copies of both documents to be placed in the Library.

British Rail Maintenance Ltd.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the sale of British Rail Maintenance Ltd. and the level 5 maintenance depots will commence.

Mr. Freeman: Next week British Rail will have available, for suitable prospective bidders, a detailed information memorandum offering for sale its maintenance depots at Eastleigh, Doncaster, Wolverton, Ilford, Chart Leacon and Glasgow and an Electronic Service Centre at Swindon.

For commercial and legal reasons, the memorandum will be available only to bona fide bidders who have signed a confidentiality undertaking. The principal areas covered by the memorandum are:

The nature of the businesses and the overall market in which they operate;
Future workload contracts;
Management and employees, including pensions and travel facilities;
The process for separating the businesses from British Rail;
historical financial information.

The six depots do a range of maintenance and repair work on vehicles and components such as bogies, but each tends to specialise in particular types of repair and of vehicle. The Swindon ESC repairs, produces and maintains a range of specialist equipment.

The depots are to be sold as going concerns with workload contracts in place. Their customers will be the various businesses which now own rail rolling stock, principally the three rolling stock companies—ROSCOs—which have taken over BR's domestic passenger rolling stock fleets for leasing to train operators. Other customers include the freight businesses and Rail Express Systems, which is responsible for BR's business with the Post Office.

The depots are being offered separately, though buyers will be encouraged to bid for more than one depot. In evaluating bids BR will have regard to a range of objectives, including the extent to which competition may be fostered in the heavy repair industry. I hope that bidders will include MEBO teams from the depots.

BR will seek indicative bids by the end of August. I expect the sales to be completed by the end of the calendar year.

Traffic Examiners

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the number of traffic examiners responsible for road traffic enforcement in each county.

Mr. Key: The road transport enforcement division of the vehicle inspectorate is organised by area. As the areas cover more than one county an analysis by county cannot be given.

The table details the current number of substantive traffic examiners involved directly in traffic enforcement work by area.

	Number
1. Highland, Grampian, Tayside	4
2. Strathclyde, Dumfries and Gallaway	5
3. Central, Fyfe, Lothian, Borders	7
4. Cumbria, Lancashire	7
5. Greater Manchester, Derbyshire	7
6. Merseyside, Cheshire, Clywd, Gwynedd	7
7. Staffordshire, Shropshire	9
8. West Midlands, Warwickshire, Hereford and Worcester	8
9. Gwent, Glamorgan, Dyfed, Powys	6
10. Gloucester, Avon, North Somerset, West Wiltshire	6
11. Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, West Somerset	7
12. Hampshire, Berkshire, Oxfordshire, East Wiltshire	8
13. Surrey, West Sussex	10
14. Kent, East Sussex	11
15. London	8
16. Hertfordshire, Essex	7
17. Suffolk, Norfolk	6
18. Leicestershire, Northamptonshire, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire	8
19. Cambridgeshire, Lincolnshire	5
20. Nottinghamshire, South Yorkshire	7
21. Humberside	5
22. West and North Yorkshire	9
23. Cleveland, Durham, Tyne and Wear, Northumberland	7

Rolling Stock Leasing

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the indicative rolling stock leasing charges issued by the three rolling stock companies to train operating units, indicating for each train operating unit the specification of the rolling stock leased this year and the indicative charge for its use.

Mr. Freeman: This is a commercial matter for BR.

Consultants

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) of 22 March, *Official Report*, columns *283-84*, if he will show for all consultants or other outside organisation or individuals currently or previously employed by the Office of the Rail Regulator *(a)* the name of the consultancy, organisation or individual, *(b)* the length of contract offered to each consultancy, organisation or individual, *(c)* the total amount inclusive of value added tax paid to date to each consultancy, organisation or individual, *(d)* the total amount inclusive of value added tax expected to be paid to each consultancy, organisation or individual and *(e)* the services required by the Office of the Rail Regulator from each consultancy, organisation or individual; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 5 July 1994]:* The Rail Regulator informs me that the consultants shown in the tables have been employed by his office.

A. Call-off contracts for the provision of ad-hoc advice/services on demand

Consultant	*Period*	*Paid to date*	*Services provided*
Arthur Andersen & Co	To end of July 1994	£323,125	Economic and financial analysis
W. & J. Burness WS	Ongoing	Nil	Legal advice

Consultant	Period	Paid to date	Services provided
Slaughter & May	Ongoing	£260,230	Legal advice
Sedgwick UK Ltd	Ongoing	£6,374	Advice on insurance issues affecting the privatised rail industry

Further payments will depend on future work commissioned.

B. Specific projects

Consultant	Paid to date	Further payments due	Services provided
Kinsley Lord	£18,048	[1]—	Review of organisation and structure
W. S. Atkins	Nil	£8,400	Health and Safety policy development and implementation
Information Processing Ltd	Nil	£6,000	Provision of advice and support on evaluation of IT network procurement
Central Computing Communications Agency	Nil	£25,000	Development of departmental information systems strategy
Interconnect Communications Ltd	£4,900	£2,000	Technical advice and support for purchase and installation of office telephone system

[1] This will depend upon the detailed arrangements for subsequent stages of the assignment.

In addition, Dr. Stephen Glaister and Mr. Gordon Pettitt have been appointed to provide advice as required in the fields of, respectively, transport economics and railway operational matters. It would not be appropriate to publish details of the terms of these personal appointments.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) of 22 March, *Official Report*, column *146*, if he will show for all consultants or other outside organisations or individuals currently or previously employed by his Department for advice or assistance in rail privatisation, *(a)* the name of the consultancy, organisation or individual, *(b)* the length of contract offered to each consultancy, organisation or individual, *(c)* the total amount inclusive of value added tax paid to date to each consultancy, organisation or individual, *(d)* the total amount inclusive of value added tax expected to be paid to each consultancy, organisation or individual and *(e)* the services required by his Department from each consultancy, organisation or individual; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 5 July 1994]:* Consultants currently employed by the Department, the services they provide, and payments made to date are:

		£ million
Linklaters & Paines	Legal advice	5·6
Samuel Montagu	Merchant banking	2·0
KPMG Peat Marwick	Accountancy & Taxation	3·3
Dewe Rogerson[1]	Marketing	0·7
Shandwick	Marketing	0·0
Ernst & Young	Information systems	0·8
Richard Ellis	Property matters	0·4
Sedgwick	Insurance	0·1
Brodies	Advice on Scots law	0·02
Travers Morgan	Specialist advice on BRIS contract pricing	0·0
Ernst & Young	Corporate finance advice on BRIS contract pricing	0·0

[1] Contract terminates on 12 August 1994.

Future payments to these firms will depend on work done.

Consultants previously employed by the Department, services provided and payments made were:

		£ million
Arthur D. Little	Research	0·1
Coopers and Lybrand	Access and access charging	2·3
Mercer Management	Freight and Franchising	1·2
Norman Broadbent	Recruitment	0·1
Putnam Hayes and Bartlett	Access and Access charging	0·2
Debenham Tewson and Chinnocks	Property matters	0·02
NERA	Regulatory matters	[1]—
Deloitte Haskins and Sells	Industry structure	[1]—

[1] Contracts completed prior to April 1991; information can only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Contracts for consultancy advice are normally offered on an on-going basis with provision for the Department to terminate the contract.

A number of individuals have been employed by the Department to advise on rail privatisation matters, but information on payments to such individuals is commercially confidential.

EDUCATION

Higher Education Students

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what figures are available for higher education students completing courses in the current year; and what estimates there are for how many *(a)* already have employment to go to (i) in their chosen career and (ii) in a temporary capacity and *(b)* will be claiming income support and related benefits; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: Information is not yet centrally available on the numbers of graduates completing their studies in this academic year.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what figures are available for drop-out rates in higher education for each term in the academic year for *(a)* dependent students and *(b)* independent/mature students for each academic year from 1980-81 to 1993-94; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: Estimated United Kingdom education wastage rates for full-time and sandwich students studying for first degrees are published in the Department's annual report. The figures for the academic years between 1982-83 and 1991-92 are in that table. Data are not available on a termly basis and do not distinguish between students on the basis of mode of support or age.

Academic year	*Percentage*
1982-83	13
1983-84	14
1984-85	15
1985-86	14
1986-87	16
1987-88	17
1988-89	14
1989-90	16
1990-91	15
1991-92	17

Source: Table 14: Department for Education and Office for Standards in Education: Departmental Report 1994

Mature Students

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what are the figures for *(a)* mature students returning to education and *(b)* school further education leavers continuing in further education/higher education for each academic year from 1980-81 to 1993-94.

Mr. Boswell: Numbers of mature home entrants—defined as those aged 21 and over at the start of an undergraduate course and aged 25 and over at the start of a postgraduate course—and home entrants of other ages to higher education are shown below. Data on the academic year beginning 1993 are not yet available.

Great Britain *(000s)*

Academic year beginning	*Mature entrants*	*Other entrants*	*Total*
1980	134·9	180·9	315·8
1981	139·7	189·8	329·5
1982	139·8	193·1	332·9
1983	149·7	190·9	340·6
1984	151·2	192·8	344·0
1985	168·3	192·3	360·6
1986	186·4	191·7	378·1
1987	186·6	196·0	382·6
1988	203·7	199·8	403·5
1989	216·2	217·6	433·8
1990	236·8	231·6	468·4
1991	278·2	259·3	537·5
1992	319·4	281·6	601·0

Data on entrants to further education are not available on this basis.
Sources: Mature Students in Higher Education Statistical Bulletins.

Students (Employment Statistics)

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what figures are available for students graduating in 1993 having entered *(a)* full-time careers, *(b)* temporary part-time employment, *(c)* post-graduate courses and *(d)* unemployment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: The first destinations of United Kingdom domiciled first degree students graduating in academic year 1992-93 from UFC-funded universities in England whose destinations are known are shown in the table:

	Numbers
Employment	28,700
Further study	15,500
Not available for employment	2,800
Believed unemployed	5,700

(Source: Universities' Statistical Record)

Some 9 per cent. of those identified in the answer as being employed reported themselves as being in temporary employment expected to end before 31 March 1994. In many cases these graduates continue in employment after this date. Information on the full or part-time status of employment is not centrally available.

Education Statistics

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what estimates are available for people intending to pursue *(a)* further education courses and *(b)* higher education courses for the academic year 1994-95; and of these what percentage are (i) school further education leavers and (ii) mature students returning to education.

Mr. Boswell: As at May, the number of applicants through central schemes to full-time higher education courses for admission in 1994 stood at some 378,000—virtually the same level as at May last year. This information is not broken down by the age of applicants, or their previous educational experience.

Information is not collected centrally on applicants for further education courses since there is no central admission mechanism for further education colleges.

EC Youth and Education Councils

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) of 5 July, *Official Report*, column *127*, what was the voting record of each member state at the meetings of the European Community's Council of Youth Ministers and the Council of Education Ministers held on 6 and 21 June.

Mr. Boswell: The Council of Youth Ministers and the Council of Education Ministers respectively adopted common positions on the Youth for Europe III proposal and the SOCRATES proposal by unanimity. The Council of Education Ministers also adopted conclusions on the cultural and artistic apsects of education, again by unanimity. Votes were not taken on the other matters under discussion.

TREASURY

Earnings

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will bring up to date the figures in his answer of 8 January 1990, *Official Report*, columns *555-56*, concerning real earnings after tax and child benefit, on the breakdown between manual and non-manual males to take account of the change in real earnings since April 1989 as well as changes in taxation.

Mr. Dorrell: The information is given in the table.

Increases[1] in real earnings[2] after income tax[3] and child benefit of a married man with two children[4], between April 1979 and April 1993

Point of earnings distribution	*Percentage increase*	
	Manufacturing	*Non-manufacturing*
Manual males		
Lowest decile	7	9
Lower quartile	12	15
Median	18	19
Higher quartile	23	22
Highest decile	28	26
Average earnings	20	20
Non-manual males		
Lowest decile	19	21
Lower quartile	29	30
Median	38	41
Higher quartile	47	49
Highest decile	53	57
Average earnings	45	48

Source: New Earnings Survey data and RPI (all items).

[1] The increases shown do not relate to the same individuals at the different dates.

[2] Earnings are those for full-time males on adult rates in Great Britain.

[3] For April 1979, income tax is based on the tax regime in the Finance Act 1979.

[4] Two children, both aged under 11.

Manufactured Trade

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what steps the Government take to predict the volume of imports and exports of manufactured independently of past and future movements in nominal and real exchange rates against both the ecu and non-ecu currencies;

(2) what account the Government have taken of the divergent movements in both the nominal and the real exchange rate between the ecu and non-ecu currencies in recent years in producing economic forecasts.

Mr. Nelson: The Government's forecasts, including those for export and import volumes, are given in the summer economic forecast. As discussed there, they reflect a range of influences including competitiveness, world trade and domestic demand.

Departmental Expenditure

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the entitlements for 1994-95 resulting from the carry-forward of capital and running costs underspends allowed under the end-year flexibility schemes.

Mr. Portillo: A list of entitlements totalling £523 million for capital expenditure and £269 million for running costs is shown in the following table.

Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimates, individual cash limits and running costs limits will be increased when entitlement is taken up.

The total increase in cash limits resulting from the take-up of end-year flexibility will be charged to the Reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

Entitlements for 1994-95 cash limits resulting from the carryover of capital underspends
Cash limits on Votes

Class	*Vote*	*Accounting Department*	*Description of expenditure*	*£ thousands*
II	1	Foreign and Commonwealth Office	Overseas representation	13,940
II	3	Foreign and Commonwealth Office	External broadcasting and monitoring	2,749
III	4	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	Agricultural, food and fishing services	594
III	5	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	Departmental research, advisory services and administration	358
IV	1	Department of Trade and Industry	Support for business, consumer and investor protection, energy programmes and administration	2,750
V	1	Department of Employment	Programmes and central services	2,000
V	2	Department of Employment	Employment Service	240
V	3	Department of Employment	Health and Safety Commission and Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service	654
VI	1	Department of Transport	Highways Agency	45,192
VI	2	Department of Transport	Administration and transport services	2,000
VI	4	Department of Transport	Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency	2,000
VI	5	Department of Transport	Roads and local transport	2,552
VI	8	Office of Rail Regulation	Office of the Rail Regulator	1,058
VII	5	Department of the Environment	Central environmental services, etc.	836
VII	6	Department of the Environment[1]	Property Holdings and other services to government	1

Class	Vote	Accounting Department	Description of expenditure	£ thousands
VII	10	Ordnance Survey	Ordnance Survey	1,354
IX	3	Northern Ireland Court Service	Administration of Justice	1,554
IX	5	Public Record Office	Public Record Office	2,000
IX	12	The Crown Office, Scotland	Procurator Fiscal Service and Lord Advocate's Department: administration	597
X	1	Department for Education	Schools, research and miscellaneous services	3,538
X	4	Department for Education	Administration	1,886
XI	1	Department of National Heritage	Museums and Galleries	134
XI	2	Department of National Heritage	Arts	818
XI	6	Department of National Heritage	Royal palaces, Historic Royal Palaces Agency, Royal Parks Agency, historic buildings, ancient monuments and the national heritage	998
XII	1	Department of Health[2]	Hospital, community health, family health services (part), and related services, England	236,920
XII	3	Department of Health[2]	Administration, miscellaneous health services and personal social services, England	15,898
XII	6	Office of Population Censuses and Surveys	Office of Population Censuses and Surveys	318
XIII	4	Department of Social Security	Administration and miscellaneous services	10,980
XIV	2	Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland	Agricultural services, agricultural grants and fisheries, Scotland	2,000
XIV	3	Industry Department for Scotland	Training programmes, roads and transport services and industrial support, Scotland	3,508
XIV	7	Scottish Office Environment Department	Housing and environmental services, Scotland	204
XIV	12	The Scottish Home and[2] Health Department	Law, order and miscellaneous health and social work services, Scotland	1,338
XIV	14	The Scottish Home and[2] Health Department	Hospital, community health, family health (part), and other health services and NHS trusts external financing, Scotland	22,592
XIV	17	Scottish Education Department	Education, arts and libraries, Scotland	474
XIV	19	The Scottish Courts Administration	Administration of Justice, Scotland	416
XIV	21	The Scottish Office	The Scottish Office: administration	167
XIV	22	The Scottish Record Office	The Scottish Record Office	982
XIV	23	The General Register Office for Scotland	General Register Office for Scotland	237
XV	2	Welsh Office	Agricultural support and services, fishing; regional assistance and industrial development, Wales	7,359
XV	5	Welsh Office	Tourism, roads and transport, housing, other environmental services (including civil defence), arts and libraries and health and personal social services, Wales	3,479
XV	8	Welsh Office[1]	Hospital, community health, family health services (part) and related services, Wales	5,344
XVI	1	Northern Ireland Office	Administration, law, order, protective and miscellaneous services	1,561
XVII	1	H.M. Treasury	H.M. Treasury	2,000
XVII	5	Inland Revenue	Administration	695
XVII	9	Department for National Savings	Department for National Savings	488
XVII	12	The Office of H.M. Paymaster General	The Office of H.M. Paymaster General	1,023
XVIII	1	Cabinet Office	Office of Public Service and Science	1,544
Total Voted				409,330

[1] This is a token Vote. Carryforward will be taken in the form of increased appropriations in aid of £13,642,000.
[2] Special health scheme.

Cash limits on non-voted expenditure and NHS Trusts external financing limits 1993-94

Cash block	Accounting Department	Description of expenditure	£ thousands
DOE/HC	Department of the Environment	Grants and capital expenditure financed by the Housing Corporation in England	434
DOE/NT	Department of the Environment	Net capital expenditure by the Commission for the New Towns and Letchworth Garden City Development Corporation for housing, roads, commercial and industrial investment and certain water services	1,628
DOE/UA	Department of the Environment[1]	External financing requirements of Urban Development Corporations in England, grants to local authorities and other bodies under the urban programme, the derelict land reclamation and city grant programmes (including associated LA credit approvals), grants for urban and housing projects under the City Challenge Initiative and other expenditure for inner cities initiatives	35,025
DOE/LACAP	Department of the Environment	Basic credit approvals to local authorities in England for housing, transport (except passenger transport authorities), education, health, 'other services' and Home Office (fire services in shires only). Supplementary credit approvals, specified capital grants and certain other grants to local authorities in England for housing. Supplementary credit approvals to certain local authorities for all capital purposes to offset some categories of commutation losses	530

Cash block	Accounting Department	Description of expenditure	£ thousands
DOE/OES	Department of the Environment	Supplementary credit approvals for other environmental services in England, Lee Valley Regional Park Authority and the Isles of Scilly (water and sewerage)	2,384
DOT/LACAP	Department of Transport	Supplementary credit approvals for transport in England. Basic credit approvals for passenger transport authorities	9,155
DOH/LACAP	Department of Health	Supplementary credit approvals for health in England	1,185
LCD/LACAP	Lord Chancellor's Department	Supplementary credit approvals for magistrates' courts in England and Wales	700
MAFF/LACAP	Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food	Supplementary credit approvals for flood defence and coast protection and harbour improvements in England	780
NID1	Northern Ireland Departments	Services in Northern Ireland broadly analogous to services in Great Britain covered by cash limits but including family practitioner services	12,731
SO/LA1	Scottish Office	Net capital allocations and grants to local authorities in Scotland for roads and transport, water and sewerage, police, education, social work services, general services, urban programme, river purification and civil defence	11,850
SO/LA2	Scottish Office	Net capital allocations and grants to local authorities in Scotland for housing. Capital expenditure by New Towns in Scotland for housing and other environmental services	13,215
WO/LACAP	Welsh Office	Basic credit approvals for local authorities in Wales. Supplementary credit approvals for all services (except urban programme and urban development grant) and housing capital grants	7,422
WO/UA	Welsh Office[2]	Supplementary credit approvals and grants (both capital and current) to local authorities in Wales in respect of the urban programme and Urban Development Grant. Urban Investment Grant and expenditure by Cardiff Bay Development Corporation	4,140
NHS Trusts (Scotland)	Scottish Office		7,116
NHS Trusts (Wales)	Welsh Office		5,414
Total Non Voted and NHS Trusts			113,709
Total Capital End Year Flexibility			523,039

[1] DOE/UA has been superseded by 1994-95 cash block DOE/RI, which incorporates all the elements which were included in DOE/UA as well as programmes which have been transferred from other departments and elsewhere within DOE. The EYF entitlement has been calculated on the basis of capital underspends covered by DOE/RI.
[2] Entitlement will be taken up on Class XV Vote 5 and WO/LACAP.

Entitlements for 1994-95 running costs limits resulting from the carryforward of running costs underspends

Department	£ thousands
Overseas Development Administration	860
Intervention Board—Executive Agency	1,012
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food	7,329
Trade and Industry	14,549
Office of Telecommunications	171
Department of Employment	14,961
Department of Transport	4,743
Department of the Environment	8,669
Property Holdings	1,906
Office of Water Services	1,017
Charity Commission	920
Home Office	41,543
Lord Chancellor's Department	2,177
Northern Ireland Court Service	94
Crown Prosecution Service	5,404
Public Record Office	196
Crown Office	631
Department for Education	4,061
Department of National Heritage	1,902
Department of Health	12,107
Office of Population Censuses and Surveys	1,512
Department of Social Security	66,474
Scottish Office	5,810
Scottish Courts Administration	677
Scottish Record Office	231
General Register Office	307
Office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools in Wales	95
Welsh Office	948
Northern Ireland Office and Departments	13,324
Her Majesty's Treasury	4,315
Customs and Excise	26,329
Inland Revenue	17,274
Registry of Friendly Societies	171
Department for National Savings	879
Central Statistical Office	105
Government Actuary's Department	132
Office of Public Service and Science	5,555
Cabinet Office	712
Privy Council Office	160
Total	269,262

Royal Mint

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the outcome of the triennial review of the Royal Mint.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The triennial review of the Royal Mint executive agency has now been completed, and a summary of the evaluation report has been placed in the Library.

The Mint provided United Kingdom coins in the quantities and at the times required by the public. It also maintained its position as the world's leading exporter of

coins taking more than 50 per cent. of the available market. During the three years covered by the review, the Mint achieved an average annual rate of return of 23·2 per cent. compared with a target of 12·5 per cent. and exceeded most of its other performance targets.

While I have decided that there should be no change in the Mint's status as an executive agency, I have asked officials to review the arrangements under which United Kingdom coins are purchased so as to encourage further improvements in the Mint's performance.

Procurement

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what progress has been made in improving value for money in Government procurement.

Mr. Portillo: The Treasury has today published the annual report of its procurement group on progress made in Government procurement.

The group offers advice and guidance to Departments on policy, best practice and the achievement of value for money in public procurement and the management of construction projects.

The report notes that most Departments significantly exceeded their 1992-93 purchasing savings targets. These targets are set to encourage them to seek better value for money in procurement. In the sample area, where total spending is £3·4 billion, savings of £166 million were registered. For 1993-94 Departments have set a collective savings target of 3·5 per cent. The main message of the report is that while progress continues to be made in improving performance in Government procurement, in the management of construction projects and in increasing professionalism and value for money, further work is required if procurement staff are to take full advantage of market opportunities.

Copies of the report have been placed in the Library.

Securities and Investments Board

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects to publish the annual report of the Securities and Investments Board.

Mr. Nelson: A copy of the board's report, made in accordance with section 117 of the Financial Services Act 1986, was laid before Parliament today. The report covers the period from 1 April 1993 to 31 March 1994. Copies have been placed in the Library.

EC Budget Contribution

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the principal reasons for the difference between the projected gross United Kingdom contribution after abatement to the preliminary draft budget of the European Communities for 1995 and the 1994 gross contribution; and what action he is taking on this.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 7 July 1994]:* The main reasons are the lower abatement of our VAT contributions in the 1995 preliminary draft budget relative to the 1994 Budget, because our net contribution in 1994 is relatively low; the higher rate of growth in the United Kingdom's economy relative to that of other member states; and the increase proposed by the Commission in the 1995 PDB. The latter is currently under negotiation and will be given First reading by the Budget Council on 25 July.

Privatisation

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which organisations, agencies and other bodies relating to his departmental area of responsibility have been privatised since 1990; and what plans he has for further privatisation.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 12 July 1994]:* Forward: Civil Service Catering, which was formerly part of the Treasury, was privatised in February 1994. There are no plans for any further privatisations at present.

Market Testing

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list *(a)* those contracts awarded by his Department to private sector companies as a result of the Government's market-testing policy and *(b)* the total number of bids for each contract awarded to private sector companies.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 13 July 1994]:* The information requested is as follows:

Service	*Number of contracts*	*Number of bidders*
Review of scope for market testing	1	4
Library services	2	10
Economic Model Building	1	4
Personnel Statistics[1]	1	6
Treasury Security Guard[1]	2	14

[1] Still in progress.

EMPLOYMENT

Cricket Professionals

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what decisions were made by his Department in the case of John Pollard, cricket professional for Ebenwood cricket club, and his applications for a work permit over the last three years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Employment Department has approved work permit applications by Evenwood cricket club to employ John Pollard in each of the last three seasons. The latest application was granted on appeal following confirmation of Mr. Pollard's first-class status.

School Leavers

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what estimates are available for average wages currently being offered to school leavers in *(a)* full-time permanent jobs, *(b)* part-time jobs and *(c)* temporary employment for (i) England, (ii) the north-west, (iii) Lancashire and (iv) Burnley; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information taken from the new earnings survey is given in the following table. Information is not available for the north-west, Lancashire and Burnley because the sample sizes are too small.

Average gross weekly earnings of employees on all rates—pay unaffected by absence: April 1993

England	*Including overtime* £
Aged 16—full time	97·5
Aged under 18—full time	109·6
Aged 16—part time	39·2
Aged under18—part time	44·0

Source: April 1993 New Earnings Survey.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what figures are available for school leavers unemployed *(a)* upon leaving school, *(b)* one months after leaving, *(c)* one to three months after leaving, *(d)* three to 12 months after leaving and *(e)* one to three years after leaving.

Miss Widdecombe: Information taken from the most recent youth cohort studies of England and Wales is given in the following table:

Proportion of school leavers who were out of work after leaving school

	16 and 17-year-old school leavers *Per cent.*	*18-year-old school leavers* *Per cent.*
Percentage remaining out of work immediately after leaving school	20	30
Percentage remaining out of work 1 month after leaving school	17	24
Percentage remaining out of work 3 months after leaving school	10	13
Percentage remaining out of work 12 months after leaving school	2	2

Source: The Youth Cohort Study of England and Wales. (Data for 16 and 17 year old school leavers was taken from Cohort 6 Sweeps 1 and 2 which were conducted in Spring 1992 and Spring 1993 and data for 18 year old school leavers was taken Cohort 5 Sweep 3 which was conducted in Spring 1993).

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what figures and percentage terms are available for school leavers *(a)* entering part-time employment, *(b)* entering full-time employment and *(c)* entering temporary employment.

Miss Widdecombe: The information in the following table has been taken from the youth cohort study of England and Wales. The study does not collect information on those young people who are in temporary employment.

Proportion of young people in full-time or part-time employment in the spring after leaving school

	16/17 year olds Spring 1992 *Per cent.*	*17/18 year olds Spring 1993* *Per cent.*	*18/19 year olds Spring 1993* *Per cent.*
Percentage in full-time employment	39	39	59
Percentage in part-time employment	5	10	11

Source: The Youth Cohort Study of England and Wales (Cohort 6 Sweep 1 and 2 and Cohort 5 Sweep 3).

Race Relations

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will consult local authorities before authorising any changes in the administration of the race relations employment advisory service or obliging market testing of the service.

Miss Widdecombe: There is no need for the Department to consult local authorities before making any changes to the administration of the Race Relations Employment Advisory Service or market-testing the service. RREAS is a self-contained organisation which offers advice and guidance on racial equality in employment directly to employers in the private and public sectors. There is no reason why any changes in its administration or management should impact on the work of local authorities.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what criteria his Department is using in considering whether the race relations employment advisory service should be market tested; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Government's policy, as set out in the White Paper "Competing for Quality"—November 1992, Cm. 1730—is to provide high-quality public services in the most cost-effective way.

Working Hours

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the average length of the working week for those in full-time employment in the United Kingdom and in the other countries of the European Union.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Estimates from the spring 1993 Labour Force Survey for the United Kingdom show that the average usual total weekly hours worked by full-time employees in their main job was 43·5 hours.

Most recent international comparisons of average hours worked relate to LFS results for spring 1991 and are published by EUROSTAT. These estimates are given in the table:

Employees working Full-time

	Average hours usually worked per week
United Kingdom	43·4
Portugal	41·5
Spain	40·5
Ireland	40·4
Greece	40·3
FR Germany	39·8
Luxembourg	39·8
France	39·7
Netherlands	38·9
Italy	38·7
Denmark	38·4
Belgium	38·0
EU 12 average	40·3

Source: EUROSTAT Labour Force Survey results 1991.

Unemployment

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people *(a)* joined and *(b)* left the unemployment register for each of the last 12 months for (i) Burnley, (ii) Lancashire, (iii) the north-west and (iv) England; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: Information on the numbers of people entering and leaving claimaint unemployment on the unadjusted basis can be obtained from the NOMIS database in the Library.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what figures are available for *(a)* Burnley, *(b)* Lancashire, *(c)* the north-west and *(d)* England for those unemployed by duration of (i) less than three months, (ii) three to 12 months; (iii) one to three years and (iv) three years and more; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: Information on the levels of claimant unemployment by duration is available on the unadjusted basis only, for the months of January, April, July and Otober. It can be obtained from the NOMIS database in the Library.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what response his Department is making to levels of unemployment among ethnic minorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Employment Service provides a range of specific measures aimed at helping unemployed people obtain work, including those from ethnic minorities. Training programmes administered by training and enterprise councils on the Employment Department's behalf are available to all those eligible, regardless of their racial origin. The Race Relations Employment Advisory Service, and various ED publications, help employers to provide equality of opportunity.

Training

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how he intends to ensure that adequate training provision is made for young people with special needs under the commitment to youth training made in the White Paper, "Competitiveness: Helping Business to Win".

Miss Widdecombe: The White Paper "Competitiveness: Helping Business to Win" restates the Government's commitment to the guarantee of a suitable training place to all 16 and 17-year-old school leavers who are unable to find a job and are seeking training. The guarantee is delivered locally by training and enterprise councils and meets the needs of individuals whatever their ability or training needs.

Employment Schemes, London

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) for how long unemployed people are currently waiting to attend the job search seminars at each employment centre in the London region from the date they first applied;

(2) for how long unemployed people are currently waiting to take up the new Restart courses at each employment centre in London from the date they first applied;

(3) for how long unemployed people are currently waiting to attend the job review workshops at each employment centre in London from the date they first applied.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the questions has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. G. Johnson to Mr. Jim Dowd, dated 14 July 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your questions regarding how long unemployed people are currently waiting to attend Job Search Seminars, Job Review Workshops and New Restart Courses in each employment centre in the London region from the date they first applied. I am replying in the Chief Executive's absence.

Employment Service (ES) programmes are designed to give specific help to unemployed people at certain stages of their unemployment. Job Search Seminars and Job Review Workshops are available to clients who have been unemployed for 13 weeks whereas New Restart is a mandatory programme for clients who have been unemployed for two years. The ES and the client will only gain maximum benefit from the assistance and guidance offered by any particular programme if the referral is made at the appropriate time. The ES Structure review which was implemented in April this year has placed the responsiblity on our District Managers to provide suitable ES programmes and ensure that those programmes are filled. By devolving responsibility in this way we aim to ensure that programme waiting lists are reduced and that the right provision is in the right place at the right time.

Greater London is divided into nine District Offices covering 147 Employment Service Jobcentres, Jobcentres and Unemployment Benefit Offices. In order to supply an immediate reply to your questions I have contacted a representative sample of offices in each of the nine Districts and can give you average waiting times for each of the programmes as follows:

Job search seminars. The average wait is two-three weeks north of the Thames and four weeks south of the Thames.

Job Review Workshops. The average wait is two-three weeks both north and south of the Thames.

New Restart. The average wait is three weeks both north and south of the Thames.

The above figures indicate that in London, generally, our local management policy is working but we are not complacent as we know that waiting lists for some programmes in some Districts are longer. I have asked our Programmes Manager, David Young, to review programmes provision to ensure that our clients' needs are best met in all Districts.

I hope this is helpful.

Mrs. Helen Tinney

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what action he intends to take to ensure that the Health and Safety Executive updates its practices and procedures to take account of the report of the fatal accident inquiry into the death of Mrs. Helen Tinney of Gorbals, Glasgow.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 6 July 1994]:* The Health and Safety Executive has studied the report on the fatal accident inquiry with care. The executive is promoting and participating in a revision of the British Standard, No. 5607/BS6187, which sets out the technical requirements applicable to the use of explosives in demolition. The revision will take into account the demolition by explosives of high-rise buildings.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

BBC (Security Passes)

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee (1) how many passes giving access to the Palace of Westminster, other than Lobby or Gallery passes, have been allocated to the British Broadcasting Corporation;

(2) how many Lobby and Gallery passes have been allocated to the British Broadcasting Corporation.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: I understand that the British Broadcasting Corporation has been issued with 42 photo-identity passes for the Press Gallery and Lobby, and with 102 such passes for other parts of the Palace of Westminster.

Jubilee Line Construction

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee what effect the current delays in the construction of the Jubilee line will have on the timetable for the new building for parliamentary offices.

Mr. Ray Powell: My Committee fully recognises the critical effect of the rebuilding of Westminster station on the construction programme of the new parliamentary building. It therefore recommended in its second report of Session 1991-92 (HC 358) that a steering group of officials should be established to monitor progress, to give directions to the project teams of London Underground Ltd. and the new parliamentary building on matters affecting the interface between the two schemes and to report monthly to the Committee. That group includes in its membership the managing director of LUL and the director of the Jubilee line extension project. The Committee's recommendation was subsequently incorporated into the legal agreement between the House and London Underground which now governs the development of the site.

The Committee has now considered the second of these monthly reports and has been advised by the steering group that, after four months on site, work is not proceeding as well as expected; is behind schedule; and that LUL has instructed its contractor to reprogramme the work. The Committee has been advised by the steering group that, notwithstanding these delays, LUL is confident the site will be handed back on schedule in February 1997. The Committee nevertheless remains concerned about this slippage so early in the programme and has therefore invited the managing director of LUL to complement his contribution to the steering group with regular meetings with the Committee. That invitation has now been accepted and the first of these meetings is expected to take place this autumn.

The target date for completion of the new parliamentary building remains at August 1999.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people *(a)* claimed and *(b)* were awarded non-contributory invalidity benefit following entitlement to statutory sick pay where the claimant suffered an industrial injury for the period (i) between April 1992 to April 1993, (ii) April 1993 to April 1994 and (iii) in total since April 1983.

Mr. Scott: Information from April 1992 is not yet available and figures from April 1983 can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Income Support

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what figures are available for people claiming income support by *(a)* gender and *(b)* age for (i) Burnley, (ii) Lancashire, (iii) the north West and (iv) England for the latest month for which figures are available.

Mr. Burt: The available information is in the table.

Income Support claimants by age, gender and region (thousands)

	North western region			England		
Age	*Males*	*Females*	*All claimants*	*Males*	*Females*	*All claimants*
16-19	22	22	44	137	129	266
20-29	114	110	224	712	617	1,329
30-39	74	64	138	493	999	892
40-49	52	37	89	333	224	557
50-59	39	27	66	245	152	397
60-69	37	35	72	224	192	416
70-79	19	59	79	111	339	450
80+	17	83	100	115	485	599
All ages	375	437	812	2,370	2,536	4,906

Notes:
1. *Source:* Income Support Quarterly Enquiry, August 1993.
2. All figures have been rounded to the nearest thousand.
3. The North Western Region is one of the Social Security administrative regions used by the Department prior to 1988.

Benefits Repayments

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security in what circumstances private individuals are required to repay contributory, non-means tested benefits to his Department; what plans the Government have to extend the scope of such repayments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hague: Repayments of benefit can be required when an adjudication officer decides that an overpayment

has been caused by a person's misrepresentation, or failure to disclose, any material fact; or when there has been a civil action under common law.

In certain circumstances, legislation provides for recovery of moneys paid to individual benefit claimants, thus

(1) when Income Support is paid (or paid at a higher rate) because of the late payment of a contributory or other non-means tested benefit, the sum involved may be recovered before any payment of arrears is made.

(2) an amount equivalent to the value of relevant benefits should be deducted and paid to the Department for cases which fall under the provisions of the Compensation Recovery Scheme. Normally this deduction is made by the compensator just before the personal injury damages are paid to the individual who made the claim.

We have no plans to extend the scope of these arrangements.

Household Incomes

Mr. Willetts: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when the next edition of "Households Below Average Income" statistics will be published.

Mr. Burt: The new edition of the household below average income—HBAI—statistics, covering the years 1979 to 1991-92, has been published today and copies have been placed in the Library.

The figures show that average disposable household incomes have grown in real terms by 36 per cent. between 1979 and 1991-92. Increases were not confined to a few top earners, and there have been appreciable increases in average incomes for all family types and economic status groups. Pensioners have done particularly well, with pensioner couples showing an increase in average income of up to 56 per cent. after housing costs and 46 per cent. before housing costs.

A complex picture emerges in the outcomes for the lower-incomes groups. This edition captures a particular point in the economic cycle when unemployment peaked, prior to the downward trend that followed. Interest rates had begun to fall, but were still much higher than their current levels. Another significant fctor is the potentially misleading impression given by the very low incomes reported by an increasing number of self-employed families. Analysis, in particular of the expenditure of these households reporting zero or negative incomes, shows that their spending patterns would place them in the top half of the income distribution. Indeed, there is evidence that the living standards, as measured by expenditure, of the bottom income 10 per cent. may be no lower than that of the second 10 per cent. There has also been a marked increase in their possession of consumer durables. The results shown in HBAI for the lowest income group cannot, therefore, be interpreted simply and should be treated with some caution.

The new family resources survey, which is due to replace the family expenditure survey as the data source for HBAI, will place special emphasis on gathering information from households on low incomes and so should help to improve the reliability of the information.

Carers

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what percentage of the social security budget is allocated for the financial support of carers;

(2) what was the total cost of the allowance paid to carers in the last year; and how many carers received the invalidity allowance;

(3) what proposals there are to increase that part of the social security budget applied to the carers allowance and carers invalidity allowance.

Mr. Scott: Carers may be entitled to a wide range of benefits and financial support, which are not subject to cash-limiting or budget-allocation.

Expenditure for 1994-95 on invalid care allowance, which is specifically intended for carers, is estimated to constitute 0·61 per cent. of the social security budget, excluding administration.

The estimated expenditure for invalid care allowance for 1993-94 is £433 million[1] and £510 million for 1994-95.[2]

The latest estimate of those in receipt of ICA is 249,988 as at 4 July 1994.[3]

Notes:

[1] From the Departmental Report 1994.
[2] From the Departmental Report 1994
[3] Source: the ICA Unit, based on 100 per cent. count, subject to amendment.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many carers *(a)* receive and *(b)* do not receive the invalid care allowance (i) nationally and (ii) in Coventry.

Mr. Scott: As at 4 July 1994, there were 249,988 people in receipt of invalid care allowance in Great Britain.[1] Figures are not available for numbers of carers in receipt of ICA in Coventry and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Information on the numbers of carers not in receipt nationally or in Coventry is not available.

[1] Source:—the ICA Unit, based on 100 per cent. count, subject to amendment.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what precentage of carers receive the carers invalidity benefit *(a)* in Coventry and *(b)* nationally.

Mr. Scott: No such benefit as carers invalidity benefit exists, however, it is estimated that nationally 3·7[1] per cent. of carers receive invalid care allowance. Separate figures are not available for Coventry.

Source:

[1]Based on General Household Survey 1990 estimate.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proposals he has to bring the carers allowance in line with national average earnings.

Mr. Scott: We have no plans to do so. Invalid care allowance provides a measure of income maintenance and is not intended to be a wage for carers.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what representations he has received from carers organisations regarding *(a)* the carers allowance, *(b)* the stress factor and *(c)* the carers disability allowance;

(2) if he will name the carers organisations who have made representations to him about help to carers *(a)* from Coventry and *(b)* nationally;

(3) how many individuals have made representations to him about help for carers.

Mr. Scott: In the year ending 30 June 1994 representations were received from Coventry Carers

Forum, and other organisations including Caring Costs, Carers National Association, Alzheimer's Disease Society, Oxfordshire Carers Forum, Sutton Carers Forum, Barnet Carers Forum, RADAR.

Representations were also received from 266 individuals.

Representations have been received regarding the rate at which invalid care allowance is paid and the conditions of entitlement to ICA. These sometimes refer to the stress involved in caring.

No such benefit as carers disability allowance exists.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what changes he plans to the carers allowance and carers invalidity allowance for the current year.

Mr. Scott: As a result of the European Court ruling in the case of Thomas and others, we will shortly be legislating under the European Communities Act to equalise the age limits for claiming invalid care allowance and severe disablement allowance for men and women at 65.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are his proposals for encouraging more people to become carers.

Mr. Scott: The Government recognise the contribution made by carers to society, and will continue to keep carers' benefits and other assistance under review.

Rent Rebates and Allowances

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total amount spent in each year between 1988-89 and 1993-94 on rent rebates and rent allowances both in current prices and in constant 1993-94 prices; if, following the Treasury's Summer Economic Forecast 1994, he will publish projections for each of the years from 1994-95 to 1996-97; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: The latest available information is in the table. The projections for 1994-95 to 1996-97 will be announced at the time of the Budget and will be published in due course in the departmental report.

£ million

Year	*Rent rebate*	*Rent allowance*
Expenditure in cash prices		
1988-89	2,718	1,055
1989-90	2,946	1,336
1990-91	3,345	1,579
1991-92	3,675	2,322
1992-93	4,347	3,257
[1]1993-94	5,004	3,817
Expenditure in 1993-94 prices		
1988-89	3,581	1,390
1989-90	3,629	1,646
1990-91	3,813	1,821
1991-92	3,940	2,490
1992-93	4,488	3,363
[1]1993-94	5,004	3,817

Data source: The 1994 Social Security Departmental Report.
[1] The figures for 1993-94 are estimated expenditure only.

Housing Benefit

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the average time taken to process housing benefit claims last year.

Mr. Burt: Information is not available in the form requested. Latest available data, for 1992-93, show that 75 per cent. of all claims to housing benefit were processed within 14 days of the local authority receiving all the relevant information.

Child Support Agency

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many Child Support Agency staff have received performance-related pay; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Chris Mullin, dated 13 July 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security on performance related pay within the Child Support Agency.

The Child Support Agency operates its performance related pay scheme within the terms of the national pay arrangements agreed by the Treasury and Civil Service Trades Unions.

The level of any individual's performance related progression is governed by the Agency's annual performance appraisal arrangements. Each member of staff is set a number of work and personal objectives, tailored to meet their experience and ability, which are assessed each year by their line manager. Any entitlement to performance related pay is then awarded in recognition of the level of performance achieved.

There is no direct correlation between the pay of staff employed by the Agency and the amount of maintenance they secure or the number of absent parents they locate.

The Agency now employs 5,268 permanent staff, including 488·5 in Northern Ireland, all of whom are eligible for consideration for an award of performance related pay based upon the agreed arrangements which are available for inspection in the Library.

I hope you will find this reply helpful.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Public Appointments

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how much the public appointments unit cost to run in 1993.

Mr. David Davis: The cost of running the public appointments unit in 1993-94 was £237,820.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many staff are currently employed in the public appointments unit.

Mr. David Davis: Apart from the director and deputy director, who combine these roles with other duties in the OPSS, there are nine staff, two of whom work part-time.

Citizens Charter

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether all Government Departments are subject to the citizens charter.

Mr. Waldegrave: Yes. The citizens charter applies to all public services and the regulated privatised utilities.

Civil Service College

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what key performance targets he has set for the Civil Service College executive agency for the current year.

Mr. David Davis: The key performance targets for the Civil Service College executive agency for 1994-95 are:

- to breakeven in accrual accounting terms taking into account the Central Payment from the Cabinet Office (OPSS);
- to earn £600,000 from consultancy work;
- to attract 7,800 students at Grade 7 or above;
- to attract 990 students from the private sector;
- to earn 80 per cent. of course evaluations in the two highest (of six) categories.

There is also a longer-term objective of obtaining a 10 per cent. increase in efficiency over the period 1991-92 to 1995-96.

Central Office of Information

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what targets have been set for the Central Office of Information in 1994-95.

Mr. David Davis: The Central Office of Information has five targets for the 1994-95 financial year. They are:

(i) to break even in current cost terms after recovering all costs, including interest on borrowings;
(ii) to achieve a 2 per cent. reduction in unit cost of output in real terms, while maintaining suitable levels of quality;
(iii) to equal or better the proportion of work delivered in accordance with client specification during 1993-94;
(iv) to equal or better the proportion of work delivered on time during 1993-94; and
(v) to achieve an average score of 7.7 out of 10 for the new COI customer satisfaction index.

WALES

Cardiff Bay Development Corporation

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if the legal fees incurred by the Cardiff Bay development corporation form part of its management running costs.

Mr. Redwood: Legal fees incurred are charged to the administrative running cost and programme budgets as appropriate.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list by wave the start-up costs for each NHS trust hospital.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Prior to their operational dates, the contribution made available for the shadow running period of established NHS trusts was as follows:

1992 £104,000.
1993 £215,000 (South and East Wales Ambulance £300,000).
1994 £275,000.

Welsh Consumer Council

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales who is responsible for control of the spending in Wales of the Welsh Consumer Council.

Mr. Redwood: The President of the Board of Trade is responsible for the funding of the Welsh Consumer Council, through the Department of Trade and Industry's grant to the National Consumer Council. The control of the WCC's expenditure rests with the NCC and the council itself.

Environment Agency

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in regard to the future institutional arrangements for the Environment Agency in Wales.

Mr. Redwood: Discussions on the future institutional arrangements for the Environment Agency are taking place between the Ministers involved, and at official level, on a continuing basis.

Schools (Road Safety)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish for each education authority in Wales and for Wales as a whole, the number of primary and of secondary schools operating road safety programmes in each of the last three years; and what was the percentage of such schools as a proportion of the total number of primary and of secondary schools in each case.

Sir Wyn Roberts: This information is not collected centrally.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to collect details of road safety education programmes in primary and secondary schools.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend and I have no such plans at present.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many school children were *(a)* killed and *(b)* injured in road accidents in each of the last three years for which information is available in each district and county council area and in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information requested is shown in the following table:

Numbers of school children killed and injured in Wales 1991-1993[1].

	1991		1992		1993	
	Killed	Injured	Killed	Injured	Killed	Injured
Alyn and Deeside	0	42	2	59	0	50
Colwyn	0	38	0	40	0	47
Delyn	1	78	0	65	0	52
Glyndwr	0	31	2	34	0	36
Rhuddlan	0	52	0	68	0	46
Wrexham	2	85	0	51	4	61

	1991		1992		1993	
	Killed	Injured	Killed	Injured	Killed	Injured
Clwyd	3	326	4	317	4	292
Carmarthen	1	37	0	47	0	39
Ceredigion	0	43	0	42	1	42
Dinefwr	0	22	0	25	0	24
Llanelli	1	43	1	49	0	38
Preseli Pembrokeshire	0	45	0	53	0	29
South Pembrokeshire	0	42	0	35	0	96
Dyfed	2	232	1	251	1	268
Blaenau Gwent	0	51	0	42	0	31
Islwyn	0	24	0	29	0	19
Monmouth	1	48	1	33	0	37
Newport	2	84	0	79	0	60
Torfaen	1	62	0	47	2	29
Gwent	4	269	1	230	2	176
Aberconwy	0	35	0	39	0	37
Arfon	1	43	0	32	2	121
Dwyfor	0	21	0	12	1	17
Meirionydd	0	29	0	43	0	32
Ynys Mon	1	32	0	48	0	48
Gwynedd	2	160	0	174	3	255
Cynon Valley	0	25	0	35	0	37
Merthyr Tydfil	0	34	0	46	0	35
Ogwr	0	81	1	97	1	92
Rhondda	0	61	1	70	0	64
Rhymney Valley	4	65	1	54	1	74
Taff Ely	0	69	1	68	0	68
Mid Glamorgan	4	335	4	370	2	370
Brecknock	0	31	0	33	0	22
Montgomeryshire	0	42	0	25	0	31
Radnorshire	1	10	2	17	0	7
Powys	1	83	2	75	0	60
Cardiff	1	227	2	192	1	187
Vale of Glamorgan	0	70	1	56	2	69
South Glamorgan	1	297	3	248	3	256
Lliw Valley	0	40	0	51	0	42
Neath	0	51	1	41	0	51
Port Talbot	0	44	0	46	0	35
Swansea	0	150	1	180	0	138
West Glamorgan	0	285	2	318	0	266
Wales	17	1,987	17	1,983	15	1,943

[1]The number of school children is defined as the number of school pupils under the age of 17.

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, (1) pursuant to his oral statement of 7 July, *Official Report*, column 470, on what date he made the request to the Welsh Development Agency to set up an independent investigation into the Cynon valley land deal;

(2) what consultations he has had with the chairman of the Welsh Development Agency concerning the appointment of new accountants to succeed KPMG Peat Marwick in examining the agency land deal as described in his oral statement of 7 July, *Official Report*, column 465; whether his Department's secondee from the National Audit Office Wales regional office will continue with the inquiry team; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what consultations he has had with the chairman of the Welsh Development Agency concerning *(a)* the completion of the KPMG Peat Marwick section of the investigation into the Cynon valley land deal, *(b)* the commencement of subsequent phases of the investigation and *(c)* the procedures to be used to select the company to be used to complete the investigation;

(4) on what date the secondment of the secondee from the National Audit Office Wales regional office to his Department commenced; for how long is the period of her secondment; and if he will specify what the duties of the secondee are in relation to *(a)* the investigation into the

Welsh Development Agency land assembly deal for the Tesco supermarket in the Cynon valley and *(b)* other matters contained in the job description pertaining to her secondment.

Mr. Redwood: In March this year, I asked for this and other matters concerning the agency's involvement at Aberdare to be investigated. The arrangements for handling the investigation, are a matter for the agency.

There is currently no secondment from the National Audit Office to my Department. An internal auditor from my Department was seconded to KPMG Peat Marwick to assist with the investigation and she is now assisting Grant Thornton who have been appointed to continue and complete the work.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has for strengthening the guidelines issued to the Welsh Development Agency debarring the agency from any act of discrimination in favour of one private company over another; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The management statement issued to the agency requires the agency to act in a way which promotes high standards of probity, including the promotion of regularity, propriety and value for money. I see no need for further guidance.

Public Land Sales

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the current guidelines covering the sale of public land by tender.

Mr. Redwood: The most recent guidance to Government Departments and non-departmental public bodies on the disposal of land and buildings is set out in Chapter 32 of "Government Accounting" and HM Treasury's "Dear Accounting Officer" circulars 4/88 and 13/92. Guidance on the disposal of NHS land in Wales is contained in the NHS handbook of land transactions. Guidance to local authorities is provided in Welsh Office circular 19/93.

Development Boards

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his oral statement of 7 July, *Official Report*, column *463-65*, (1) what consultations he has had with the chairman of the Welsh Development Agency concerning the appointment of Chestertons as estate agents to advise on the agency's Cynon valley land deal *(a)* by open tender and *(b)* without tender;

(2) what arrangements he is making for securing additional consultancy assistance to guide the process of transfer of Development Board for Rural Wales functions to local authorities.

Mr. Redwood: I myself have had none.

Welsh Health Common Services Authority

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what progress he has made in relation to the chairmanship of the Welsh Health Common Services Authority.

Mr. Redwood: The matter is still under consideration.

Municipal Bus Companies

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what guidelines were applicable in respect of the consents required from his Department for the disposal of municipal bus companies, their garages, fleets and miscellaneous and financial assets to private companies as applicable in 1991, 1992 and 1993; and if he will list the occasions on which such consents were sought during each of those years and the date of each of the *(a)* applications and *(b)* approvals or otherwise.

Mr. Redwood: Comprehensive guidance was issued to appropriate local authorities in December 1988.

Only one request for consent to dispose of a municipal bus company has been received since 1991. That related to Cynon Valley Transport. The request was made on 15 October 1991. Consent was denied and the Council informed on 18 November 1991.

Public Bodies

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list all the occasions on which a direction has been given by his Department to any non-departmental public body in Wales varying its powers or giving consent to a request for such a variation for each of the last five years; and what provision was made to attach a note describing such a direction to the annual accounts of *(a)* his Department and *(b)* the relevant non-departmental public body.

Mr. Redwood: No such direction has been issued in the last five years.

Health Promotion Authority for Wales

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultation he has had with the chairman of the Health Promotion Authority for Wales in relation to the publication of the district auditor's report of April 1994 on allegations of expenses irregularities by the previous chief executive of the authority.

Mr. Redwood: None. The publication of the report is a matter for the authority.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Indonesia

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the recent violent suppression of a peaceful demonstration in Jakarta and the suppression of three publications was raised at the meeting of the consultative group on Indonesia in Paris on 7 and 8 July; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Indonesian Government are well aware of the importance we attach to respect for human rights, including freedom of expression. We underlined our concern about the recent curtailment of press freedom to the Indonesian delegation in the margins of the July meeting of the consultative group for Indonesia. The revocation of publishing permits for these three publications is a retrograde step and disappointingly inconsistent with the greater spirit of openness which has prevailed in Indonesia in recent months.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the remit of the United Nations Human Rights Commission's team in Indonesia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Nations Human Rights Commission does not have a "team" in Indonesia. However, the special rapporteur on extra-judicial, summary or arbitrary executions has just visited Indonesia and East Timor at the invitation of the Indonesian Government, in compliance with the undertaking given to the Human Rights Commission in March 1994. The special rapporteur will report to the 51st session of the United Nations Commission.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government have made to the Government of Indonesia regarding the recent issue of a warrant for the arrest of Adnan Nasution; what information he has on Mr. Nasution's whereabouts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply my right hon. Friend the Minister of State gave to the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) on 6 July at column *208*.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government have made to the Government of Indonesia regarding the banning of three publications on 21 June and the violent suppression of a peaceful demonstration in Jakarta on 23 June; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Indonesian Government are well aware of the importance we attach to respect for human rights, including freedom of expression. We underlined our concern about the recent curtailment of press freedom to the Indonesian delegation in the margins of the July meeting of the consultative group for Indonesia. The revocation of publishing permits for these three publications is a retrograde step and disappointingly inconsistent with the greater spirit of openness which has prevailed in Indonesia in recent months.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what input his Department had into the first interdepartmental export promotion committee on 5 July; and if he will make a statement on the ways in which non-proliferation controls will be integrated into the export expansion strategy.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The ministerial conference on exports and trade development on Tuesday 5 July was the first meeting at ministerial level of the Whitehall Export Promotion Committee. The committee was set up in 1992 and is run by the FCO/DTI joint export promotion directorate. At present, both the chairman and secretary of the committee are members of the FCO.

The ministerial conference was chaired by the President of the Board of Trade. The Minister for Trade, spoke about DTI export promotion activity. My right hon. Friend the Minister responsible for commercial work within the FCO, gave a detailed presentation on the FCO's role in the jointly run FCO/DTI Overseas Trade Services and, in particular, on the range of commercial activity at FCO posts overseas.

Non-proliferation issues were not discussed at the conference. But my right hon. Friend the Member for Wiltshire, North (Mr. Needham) is the DTI Minister responsible both for export controls and export promotion. The DTI has a continuing awareness programme to keep exporters informed of the United Kingdom's non-proliferation obligations. Goods of proliferation concern, which are included in the Export of Goods (Control) Order 1994, may be exported from the United Kingdom only under the authority of a licence guaranteed by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to her replies to the hon. Member for Barrow, and Furness (Mr. Hutton) of 5 July, *Official Report*, column *138*, if he will place in the Library a copy of the Australian resumé paper and the draft treaty texts for a comprehensive nuclear test ban to which he refers.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I have arranged for copies of the Australian paper to be placed in the Library of the House. It is not the intention of the two working groups to make their draft treaty texts available outside the comprehensive test ban talks. These texts will form the basis of negotiation in the next session.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will place in the Library a copy of his departmental paper NPRO 29 (93-94), dated 10 February 1994, on United Kingdom policy on weapon proliferation and control.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has no record of a paper of this reference and date on this subject. I set out our policy on non-proliferation to the Foreign Affairs Committee on 6 July.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what criteria exist for eligibility of countries to join the nuclear suppliers group; and what information he has on refusals to applicant countries to the nuclear suppliers group.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: An invitation to join the nuclear suppliers group is subject to consensus decision on a case-by-case basis by subscribing Governments. Criteria for membership of the NSG include commitment to non-proliferation including being party to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty or equivalent regional arrangements; adherence to the NSG guidelines; potential to supply items controlled by the NSG; and establishment of effective controls on the export of such items. The NSG has publicly appealed to all states to adhere to the NSG guidelines and apply controls to their exports of nuclear materials and equipment.

Caspian Sea

Mr. Elletson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last discussed the Caspian sea with the Russian Government; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I have not personally discussed the Caspian sea with the Government of the Russian Federation. I have nothing to add to my answer of 8 July to the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington), at column *425*.

Mr. Elletson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will place in the Library copies of recent correspondence between Her Majesty's Government and the Russian Government on the subject of the status of the Caspian sea.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Copies of recent correspondence will be placed in the Library as soon as they are available.

Red Mercury

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will seek to obtain from his Russian counterpart a copy of the memorandum signed by President Yeltsin authorising the Russian concern Promekologiya to produce and export red mercury; and what discussions he or his Department officials have had with the Russian Foreign Ministry over the control on the proliferation of red mercury.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are approaching the Russian authorities to ascertain the authenticity of the memorandum. However, we have no evidence to suggest that a substance known as red mercury has any potential uses in nuclear weapons.

Korea

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of when the per capita income of Korea will be greater than the United Kingdom.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: According to IMF statistics, the per capita income in 1992 in south Korea was $6,747 and in the United Kingdom $18,370. In recent years, South Korea's economy has grown faster than our own. But forecasting comparative growth rates any distance into the future is an unprofitable business.

BBC Television Series

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what benefits accrued to his Department from the recent series of BBC television programmes on the work done by departmental civil servants and diplomats; and what review of the impact of the television exposure of his Department's work has been conducted.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: No review has been conducted, but comments from a wide range of sources suggest that the series has done much to extend and improve public knowledge of the work of the FCO.

Macedonia

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects the final decision of the European Court of Justice on the European Commission's action in respect of the Greek unilateral embargo on Macedonia.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Such cases can take up to two years to complete. We would expect a decision by the court towards the end of next year.

Somalia

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what changes have occurred in the relationships between the United Nations Operation in Somalia and the administration in north-west Somalia; and what effect these changes have had on the levels of resources and services in the area.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: None that we are aware of.

Yugoslavia

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what payment his Department has received from the United Nations for the deployment of British troops in the former Yugoslavia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: United Nations reimbursement received in financial year 1992-93 totalled £191,663·25, in financial year 1993-94 £20,842,552·45, and in financial year 1994-95 to date £3,158,323·10.

Nigeria

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy in respect of the chair of the United States Congress's Africa Sub-Committee's *(a)* visit to Nigeria and *(b)* initiative in respect of democracy in Nigeria.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We are not aware of any plans by a United States congressional sub-committee to visit Nigeria, or of any other United States initiative on Nigeria.

Iran-Iraq War

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what role was played by the Trafalgar House engineering subsidiary at Blockberg in South Africa during the period from 1980 to 1991 in regard to the Iran-Iraq war; and what assistance was granted by the United Kingdom in achieving that role.

Mr. Needham: I have been asked to reply.

It is for the company concerned to answer for the activities of its South African associates; I am not aware of any assistance provided by Her Majesty's Government to these associates.

SCOTLAND

Forestry Commission

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland through which legislative processes any proposed changes to the structure of the Forestry Commission will be made.

Sir Hector Monro: The legislative processes required cannot be identified in advance of decisions to make changes to the structure of the Forestry Commission.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the name, location and area in hectares of each piece of Forestry Commission land sold since 31 December 1992, indicating the date upon which the land was sold and where possible the name and address of the purchaser and the price paid.

Sir Hector Monro: Lists giving details of the areas of forest land sold by the Forestry Commission in each calendar year up to and including 1993 are held in the Library of the House. The lists show the name of the purchaser and the price paid where the purchaser has

agreed that such information can be made public. The precise date of each sale could be provided only at disproportionate cost. A list of forest land sold in 1994 will be placed in the Library early in 1995.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the future of the Forestry Commission.

Sir Hector Monro: I refer the hon. Member to the answer which I gave to him on 9 May 1994, at column *48*.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total cost of the Forestry Commission review process.

Sir Hector Monro: The estimated cost of the forest review group was £832,667.

Land Schemes

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the cost in 1993 in Scotland of payments made under *(a)* the countryside stewardship scheme, *(b)* the hedgerow incentive scheme, *(c)* the countryside premium scheme and *(d)* the wildlife enhancement scheme; and what is his estimate of the cost in 1994.

Sir Hector Monro: The schemes to which the hon. Member refers do not operate in Scotland where different schemes are available to meet different environmental concerns and circumstances.

Building Standards

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals he has to change the building regulations for houses in relation to the introduction of requirements for *(a)* level access at ground floor, *(b)* minimum sizes of rooms, *(c)* circulation space and *(d)* other barrier-free needs; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend intends to consult on a range of building regulation requirements which could be applied to the design of new dwellings for the benefit of disabled people; and we are currently considering comments from a wide range of organisations concerned with disabled people on what topics should be covered in this consultation. Any new requirements would not apply retrospectively to existing dwellings.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent discussions he has had with Scottish Homes concerning the introduction of accessible standards as a condition of the granting of housing association grants; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No specific discussions have taken place. The allocation of, and conditions for, funding to registered housing associations are matters entirely for Scottish Homes. I am, however, aware that Scottish Homes supports the barrier-free concept.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals he has to revise the design guides, known as housing handbooks; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: We are considering what action might be taken in the context of the recommendations of the Ewing committee on housing for people with physical disabilities, published earlier this year, on the handbooks for housing for elderly and disabled people. The advice contained in the handbook on local house condition surveys is being revised by Scottish Homes. There are no plans to review the remaining parts of the "Scottish Housing Handbook".

Housing (Disabled People)

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will consult Disability Scotland, its member organisations, local authorities, the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations and other interested parties on the issue of the introduction of a bill of housing of rights for disabled people; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what proposals he has to issue guidelines to Scottish Homes, the new town development corporations and local housing authorities on appropriate conditions of sale for public housing sector stock in relation to the housing needs and requirements of wheelchair users and others with similar needs; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: We are considering the recommendations of the Ewing committee on housing for people with physical disabilities, and the matters which the hon. Member has raised will be relevant to that process.

Water Authorities

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether it is Government policy that the code of practice for water and sewerage authorities and river purification authorities on conservation, access and recreation remains voluntary.

Sir Hector Monro: Yes.

Area Tourist Boards

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to reorganise area tourist boards covering central Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend on 21 March, at columns *46-47*.

Registers of Scotland

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when the annual report and accounts of the Registers of Scotland executive agency will be published.

Mr. Lang: Copies of the annual report and accounts were laid before both Houses and are published today.

Historic Scotland

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when the annual report and accounts of Historic Scotland for 1993-94 will be published.

Mr. Lang: Historic Scotland's annual report and accounts for 1993-94 are being published today. Copies have been laid before both Houses of Parliament and placed in the Libraries.

Scottish Record Office

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when the accounts statement of the Scottish Record Office executive agency will be published.

Mr. Lang: Copies of the accounts statement for 1993-94 have today been placed in the Library.

Fisheries Protection Agency

Mr. Gallie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when the annual report and accounts of the Scottish Fisheries Protection Agency will be published.

Mr. Lang: I have today published the report, copies of which have been laid in both Houses.

DEFENCE

Royal Dockyards

Mrs. Angela Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when tenders for the proposed sale of the royal dockyards will be sought.

Mr. Aitken: My Department has today invited tenders from industry for the proposed sale of the royal dockyards at Devonport and Rosyth. A memorandum of information has been issued to the trade unions, and I am arranging for copies of this to be placed in the Library of the House.

Territorial Army

Mr. John Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are his plans for the future role and size of the Territorial Army.

Mr. Rifkind: In June last year, I explained to the House that changes in the international situation had provided us with the opportunity to introduce new roles for the reserves, and I announced detailed proposals for changes to the structure of the Navy's and RAF's reserves. I said that we were also examining the operational requirement for the Army's reserves and hence the size and shape of the Territorial Army. We have now reached certain conclusions.

The role of the Territorial Army will be to act as a general reserve to the Army. It will remain an integral component of our defence forces on mobilisation, and we intend to make greater use of volunteers in peacetime. My announcement in April about the deployment of a composite TA platoon and company to the Falkland Islands was one example of this. We shall also be examining the scope to utilise the TA in new tasks, such as providing exercise opposition forces and in public duties. A specific new role will be to transfer the flying support to the Field Army currently provided by 658 Squadron Army Corps to 666 Squadron (Volunteer) at Netheravon. As a consequence 658 Squadron will be disbanded from April 1995. Two other new tasks will be to role a TA unit as the Army's Nuclear Biological and Chemical Defence Regiment equipped with the Fuchs armoured vehicle; and another as an armoured delivery regiment. These will be challenging and exciting roles for the units concerned.

The formed units of the TA will be retained at their present planned size of 59,000. The recruits pool of 4,500, which was introduced in 1992 as a margin to enable the TA to hold untrained TA personnel above its establishment, is no longer necessary because of the reduced threat to the United Kingdom and the consequent reduction in the level of readiness required of the TA. The recruits pool will therefore be abolished. The detailed structure of the TA is also being examined. This may lead to proposals for re-roling units or other changes. The TA itself will continue to be directly involved in this work, and a further announcement will be made later in the year.

Army Personnel Centre

Mr. Brandreth: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement about the Army personnel centre.

Mr. Hanley: In common with other support functions, the Army personnel centre, APC, was closely re-examined in the course of the defence costs study. This further work has confirmed that Kentigern house remains the most cost-effective solution for the APC, and work will now continue towards its establishment although we envisage that fewer staff will be required; this will be subject to consultation with the trade unions in the normal way. It is now planned that the APC will be established in May 1996 with the takeover of functions complete by early 1997, a year later than was previously intended.

MOD Police

Mr. Brandreth: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, further to his answer to the hon. Member for Dorset, West (Sir J. Spicer), of 15 December 1993, *Official Report*, columns *738-39*, whether he is in a position to publish the report of the Ministry of Defence Police study team led by Sir John Blelloch.

Mr. Hanley: Sir John Blelloch's study team was set up at the end of 1993 to review the roles, aims, objectives, structure, pay and conditions of the Ministry of Defence Police, MDP. This work has now been completed and I am placing a copy of the final report in the Libraries of the House.

The report recommends criteria for my Department's consideration for determining the circumstances in which an MDP presence at defence establishments would be likely to be justified by the MDP's constabulary capability or by its ability to meet armed tasks.

The report predicts that the MDP will continue to provide an essential in-house constabulary capability, and that if the MDP were to reduce in size, it would then focus more precisely on tasks requiring constabulary powers. It further concludes that the requirement for such powers needs to be considered on a case-by-case basis. The study team considered various alternatives to the MDP in those of its armed roles which do not require a constabulary capability, and concluded that the use of regular service personnel on new military home service engagements, MHSE, or on local service engagements, LSE, was an option which deserved further study.

Subject to further scrutiny, the report supports existing proposals to change the structure of the MDP to a two-tier one, comprising headquarters and basic command units. It recommends continued study of the MDP's headquarters arrangements, its training organisation, CID, operational support unit and dog services.

The report recommends that the MDP's pay should continue to be linked with that of the Home Department

police and that their new pay structure should be used as a basis for determining MDP pay. It also makes recommendations on how the chief constable's pay should be assessed. The report also makes proposals for overtime, rest day and public holiday working reflecting the new Home Department police arrangements, and it also recommends rostering on a "best practices" basis, and that retirement ages and pension arrangements should be reviewed in the light of any further changes to provisions for Home Department police.

Finally, the report proposes that consideration be given to extending and clarifying the MDP's jurisdiction when a suitable opportunity arises.

The report's conclusions are now being carefully considered by my Department and further work has been set in hand where this has been proposed, such as establishing the total requirement for armed guarding and armed security tasks and for a dedicated constabulary presence; completion of the validation of the MHSE/LSE concept; and to complete certain other studies which could affect the organisations dealing with policing and security within my Department.

No conclusions have been reached and further announcements will be made in due course on any proposals, which will be subject to consultation where appropriate.

Vacant Dwellings

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many vacant dwellings are owned by his Department in each parliamentary constituency in Lincolnshire and Humberside; and how many are *(a)* service married quarters, *(b)* Ministry of Defence civilian houses and *(c)* former married quarters in the process of sale.

Mr. Hanley: As at 30 June 1994, my Department owned the following vacant dwellings in each parliamentary constituency in Lincolnshire and Humberside:

Parliamentary constituency	*Service married quarters*	*Former married quarters in the process of sale*	*Total*
Lincolnshire			
East Lindsey	78	0	78
Gainsborough and Horncastle	158	0	158
Grantham	212	155	367
Holland with Boston	1	4	5
Lincoln	2	0	2
Humberside			
Beverley	20	0	20
Bridlington	7	0	7
Brigg and Cleethorpes	5	0	5

Officers' Residences

Mr. Mudie: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence under which vote head of the Appropriation Accounts the official residences of senior officers are listed in respect of *(a)* maintenance and refurbishment, *(b)* staffing and *(c)* other items.

Mr. Hanley: The running costs of official residences for senior staff are listed in the following voteheads of the appropriation accounts:

(a) Maintenance and refurbishment – Vote 4 section A.
(b) Staffing – Vote 1 section A for Navy staff, section B for Army staff, section C for RAF staff and Section D for civilian staff.
(c) Other items such as electricity and other services would fall to a variety of different voteheads.

Yugoslavia

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total of actual payments made as salaries to British troops for their service in the former Yugoslavia to 30 June.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what costs his Department has incurred through the deployment of British troops in former Yugoslavia.

Mr. Hanley: The cost of the British troop deployment in the former Yugoslavia to date is some £143 million. In accordance with long-established interdepartmental arrangements, my Department recovers the additional cost of United Kingdom participation for peacekeeping operations in the former Yugoslavia from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Colchester Training Centre

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans there are to market test the military corrections training centre at Colchester.

Mr. Hanley: A study by my Department is currently considering the feasibility of market testing the military corrective training centre at Colchester.

Woolwich (Lake Contamination)

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received from the Woolwich Garrison Angling Society and others regarding possible contamination of the lakes on his Department's land at Woolwich.

Mr. Hanley: My Department has received one letter from the hon. Member concerning the lakes and one from a local resident concerning contamination of land at the Woolwich garrison.

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about land contamination on his Department's land at Woolwich.

Mr. Hanley: A small amount of low-level radioactivity has been found in the ground in parts of the Woolwich garrison site. This has arisen from paint used in luminising operations carried out during the 1950s and 1960s in a workshop that has since been decontaminated. The full extent of the ground contamination is being assessed so that any necessary remedial action can be undertaken.

Equipment

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what additional equipment will be available to Her Majesty's forces consequent upon his decisions on "Front Line First".

Mr. Aitken: I refer my hon. Friend to the announcement made earlier today by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence.

Fighting Ships

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish a breakdown of the estimate of the amounts required to complete fighting ships on order and to be ordered as published in table 1 to class 1, vote 3 of the 1994-95 supply estimates.

Mr. Aitken: While, for internal planning purposes, programme and budgetary projections are made over a 10-year period, these lack the status of a ministerially approved programme. It is, therefore, not our practice to make available estimates of expected expenditure on individual projects beyond that approved for the current financial year.

ENVIRONMENT

Fur Trapping

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) whether his officials will vote in favour of the implementation of the EC import ban on furs from countries which continue to use the leghold trap or which do not have internationally agreed humane trapping standards from 1 January 1995;

(2) what action his officials are taking to support EC regulation No. 3254 against the Canadian Government's claims that the regulation is illegal under the GATT.

Mr. Atkins: The Government strongly support EC measures to end the use of leghold traps, laid down in regulation (3254/91) adopted by the Council of Ministers on 4 November 1991. The ban on the import of furs from countries which still use leghold traps is due to take effect on 1 January 1995. However, the regulation allows a one-year suspension of the ban for countries which have made sufficient progress towards developing alternative, humane methods of trapping. The United Kingdom supported steps by the European Commission to identify which countries had made such progress through a questionnaire. However, the Commission subsequently proposed to the management committee of officials that a one-year suspension of the ban should be offered to all countries, irrespective of the progress they had made. The United Kingdom abstained on this proposal, with the support of one other country, and made it clear that we believed that a blanket exemption exceeded the power granted to the Commission and the committee of officials by regulation 3254/91. However, the Commission's proposal was adopted by qualified majority. The United Kingdom will continue to support the objectives of the regulation.

At a preliminary GATT hearing earlier this year, the European Commission made clear its view that regulation 3254/91 was required to implement the Community's obligations under the Berne convention on the conservation of European wildlife.

Global Warming

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make representations to the intergovernmental panel on climate change to ensure that cost benefit analyses applied to the issue of global warming do not value the lives of people in different parts of the world unequally.

Mr. Atkins: The intergovernmental panel on climate change is currently preparing a revised assessment of scientific, technical and socio-economic information relevant to understanding the risks of human induced climate change, which will cover inter alia an assessment of methods for determining the costs and benefits of action to mitigate climate change. Drafts of IPCC's assessments will be subject to detailed review by experts and governments, and in reviewing the material that IPCC produces in this area, the Government will give careful consideration to the different assumptions that have been made.

Single Regeneration Budget

Ms Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many single regeneration budget outline bids have been submitted to each regional Government office; and if he will list all the organisations, by region, which have submitted an outline bid.

Mr. Baldry: Several hundred approaches, varying considerably in type and in their state for preparation, have been made to Government offices for the regions. Each regional office will make available summary information about outline bids as soon as possible.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will make a statement on existing Government policy for the disposal of radioactive waste; and if he will list the legal instruments and policy statements on which this is based;

(2) if he will make a statement on the existing Government policy for the interim storage of low-level, intermediate-level and high-level radioactive wastes; and if he will list the legal instruments and policy statements on which this is based;

(3) if his Department is considering shallow burial of radioactive waste as an option within the radioactive waste management review;

(4) when his Department has taken a decision to rule out shallow burial as an option for the disposal of low-level and short-lived intermediate level radioactive waste.

Mr. Atkins: The preliminary conclusions of the review of radioactive waste management policy will be published later in the summer as a basis for consultation. The consultation document will set out the issues covered by the review against the background of existing policies.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all the sites of special scientific interest in England, showing who has ownership or responsibility for the management of those areas and what financial support for their upkeep was given by his Department in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Atkins: Information on individual SSSI management agreements is confidential. The number of SSSIs with management agreements and the total amounts of

payments for England are detailed in the second annual report of English Nature. The total cost of these payments in 1993-94 was £7·2 million which came from the grant in aid provided to English Nature by my Department.

1-19 Victoria Street

Mr. Mudie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the terms of the lease on 1 to 19 Victoria Street.

Mr. Baldry: Following completion of the refurbishment by the Department of Trade and Industry, a new lease will be taken from Legal and General Assurance Society Ltd. for 25 years from February 1996. The agreed market rent is subject to open market reviews at the 10th, 15th and 20th years. The tenant is responsible for maintenance and insurance. The remaining terms reflect current market practice.

Lavatories

Mr. Fabricant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what measures his Department is planning to take to ensure that lavatory cisterns in the United Kingdom continue to be fitted only with flushing apparatus which prevents the waste of water;

(2) what assessment his Department has made of the increase in the amount of water wasted annually in the United Kingdom of lifting existing byelaw requirements for water waste prevention in lavatory cisterns; and what would be the effect of such an increase on the price of water to consumers.

Mr. Atkins: The Government are committed to promoting the efficient use of water. In preparing measures to replace the current water byelaws in England and Wales we will also need to have regard to the requirements of the European Union's single market legislation and to European product standards. My Department has recently invited tenders for a research project on water economy, which includes an evaluation of various flushing devices such as those commonly used in mainland Europe.

Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 29 June, *Official Report*, column *560*, if he will list the organisations or individuals from whom he has received representations on THORP, indicating in each case when he responded to the respective representations.

Mr. Atkins: Since the judgment on 4 March, the following organisations have sent letters about the environmental risks associated with the operation of THORP:

Kvennalistin Group and the Women's Alliance, reply sent on 23 March;

Trinity College Dublin Environmental Society, reply sent on 30 March;

Saffron Walden Group Against Nuclear Weapons, reply sent on 1 April;

Plutonium Action Hiroshima, reply sent on 5 April.

Greenpeace, reply sent on 29 June.

Water Charges

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the advantages of using council tax bands as a method of charging for water.

Mr. Atkins: I have considered the advantages and disadvantages of using council tax bands as a method of charging for water. I remain to be convinced that a method of charging which is not based on the amount of water used will necessarily be fairer than one based on rateable values. If, however, the industry can provide analysis that supports the view that council tax valuation bands provide a fair and reasonable basis for water charging, I would be prepared to consider that evidence.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of homes in England and Wales pay flat rate charges for water supply.

Mr. Atkins: Just under 1 per cent. of homes in England and Wales pay flat rate charges for water supply.

Habitats Directive

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the regulations to implement the EU habitats directive will be laid before Parliament.

Mr. Atkins: Draft regulations for approval under the affirmative resolution procedure were laid before the House on Monday 4 July.

Transport and Highways Authorities

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many representations he has received during the local goverment review on the responsibilities of the future unitary authorities for transport and highways, including planning; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: We have received over 10,000 letters about the review of local government in England since July 1992. Many refer to specific local authority functions. As we receive the Local Government Commission's final reports for individual review areas we are looking closely at its recommendations to ensure that they enable adequate provision to be made for all local government functions, including transport and transport planning. All representations will be considered before final decisions are made.

Business Rates, Harrogate

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many outstanding appeals there are against valuations for business rates administered by the valuation officer in the Harrogate area; and what is the average amount of time before appeals are settled for business rates.

Mr. Curry: As at 30 June there were 1,454 non-domestic rating appeals outstanding in the Harrogate district council area. The length of time taken to settle each appeal depends on the relative complexity of individual cases.

Housing Benefits

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table setting out for each year between 1988-89 and 1993-94 the amount spent by

his Department on housing-related subsidies and grants *(a)* including all expenditures related to housing benefit and *(b)* excluding all expenditures related to housing benefit; if, following the Treasury's summer economic forecast 1994, he will publish projections for each of the years from 1994-95 to 1996-97; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: Information on housing subsidies and grants for the years requested has been published in the housing chapters of the DOE reports for 1992, 1993 and 1994. Figures in the later reports supersede those for earlier years.

No revisions have been made to the estimates as a result of the publication of the Treasury's summer economic forecast. Revised estimates will be made in due course as part of the current public expenditure survey.

Vehicle Emissions

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the measures currently in use for monitoring ground level carbon monoxide emissions and other motor vehicle pollutants.

Mr. Atkins: The Government fund a network of air quality monitoring stations which measure levels of motor vehicle pollutants. This includes 48 continuous automatic sites, two of which are operated in collaboration with local authorities, of which:

30 monitor ozone,
25 monitor nitrogen dioxide,
19 monitor carbon monoxide,
12 monitor fine particles (PM_{10})
and 8 monitor hydrocarbons including benzene, 1,3 butadiene and ozone precursors.

Nitrogen dioxide is also monitored at over 1,200 sites in the United Kingdom in collaboration with local authorities using non-automatic techniques.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to achieve a 20 per cent. reduction of carbon dioxide emissions by 2005.

Mr. Atkins: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith), on 14 June 1994, *Official Report*, column *339*.

New Forest

Sir Patrick McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement regarding his future intentions for the New Forest and surrounding area.

Mr. Atkins: In September 1992, the Government published a consultation document on the future of the New Forest. The document proposed to give the wider New Forest area—the so-called New Forest heritage area —a statutory designation and to apply to it a planning regime similar to that which applies in the national parks. It also proposed to establish a statutory body, based on the existing New Forest committee, to co-ordinate the management of this wider area.

The consultation produced a very substantial response. Some 220 people and organisations gave their views to the Department, and I am today arranging for those responses and a summary of them to be made available in my Department's Library. I have continued to receive extensive representations about these matters, totalling to the present some 1,000 further letters.

The core of the forest is already well protected against inappropriate development through the New Forest Acts and the existence of that land owned by the Crown and administered by the Forestry Commission. The Government have recently reinforced this protection through the designation of the core forest area as a special protection area under the EC birds directive.

However, the New Forest lies between two of the most rapidly developing areas in the south of England. The Government therefore recognised the need to protect a wider area, where the development pressures are greatest, but which is essential if the traditional management of the forest is to be maintained.

These aspects of the Government's proposals received overwhelming support. We therefore intend to apply to the wider New Forest area, the same planning policies as would apply if that area were a national park. These policies are set out in my Department's planning policy guidance note 7 and elsewhere and I am today asking the relevant local planning authorities to ensure that in their development plans and planning decisions they apply those policies. I also intend to take early steps to amend the General Development Order to extend the scope of development control as applies in national parks to that wider area. The new planning regime will apply to the definition of the New Forest heritage area as it emerges from the current process of preparing and adopting local plans.

A number of representations have been made to include the Avon valley in the heritage area. I have therefore also today written to New Forest district council asking it to look closely at the merits of this and consider whether there is a case for incorporating the area concerned.

These measures will deliver the necessary planning protections to the wider area. They have also the advantage of being able to be implemented immediately without recourse to primary legislation for which there is little prospect of parliamentary time in the near future.

The consultation revealed far less agreement about the future of the New Forest Committee. Whilst there was acknowledgement of the need for co-ordinated management over the wider area, some considered that to turn the committee into a statutory body would merely add an unnecessary layer of bureaucracy to the administration of the forest. Some also feared that the committee would find itself in conflict with those already charged with the management of the forest and that it might ultimately seek to usurp their roles. However, the Government have always emphasised that its proposals did not envisage a new body taking over the existing powers and responsibilities of the local authorities, the Forestry Commission, the verderers or other agencies operating in the forest.

The New Forest committee emerged in 1990 following the New Forest review. The Government feel that, in the light of the reservations expressed about its role, it would be unwise to give it statutory status. They therefore do not intend to proceed with these aspects of their original proposals.

The New Forest is a unique area. Not only is it a valued part of our national heritage and an internationally important range of habitats but its character is the result of nine hundred years of distinctive management. The

Government are firmly committed to the conservation of these habitats and that traditional character. I believe the steps we have taken today will greatly contribute to these objectives.

Canada Geese

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what policies he has for controlling the Canada geese population by non-lethal means; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 12 July 1994]:* My Department has set up a working group to develop a management strategy to reduce the scale of damage caused by Canada geese.

Later this month we intend to publish a leaflet prepared by the working group giving advice to estate managers, park authorities and landowners on legal techniques for controlling Canada geese. The techniques include a variety of non-lethal methods such as scaring, habitat management, adjustment of cropping patterns, alteration of feeding areas and fencing.

The group will continue to develop a long-term management strategy.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 5 July, *Official Report,* column *131,* what information he has on exactly which method or methods have been used to kill Canada geese in London parks this year.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 11 July 1994]:* This year, action taken under licence to kill or control Canada geese has included shooting and egg pricking.

Air Pollution

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what research will be undertaken to discover the proportion of the population which *(a)* was aware of his Department's smog alerts, *(b)* took action to avoid possible health effects and *(c)* took voluntary action based on his Department's advice to minimise air pollution during the pollution episode which started on 2 July.

Mr. Atkins: My Department issued a press notice on the afternoon of Friday 1 July, warning that poor air quality was forecast. The notice was distributed to 275 media outlets and individual reporters, and resulted in over 30 press articles from 2 to 6 July. The number of phone calls to the air quality bulletin freephone line increased substantially. I drew attention to the Government's advice in the course of radio and television interviews over this period.

My Department regularly commissions, and acts upon, research on the public's response to air quality bulletins, and has already commissioned a survey on public awareness and actions during the recent episode.

Mr. Eastham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many air pollution measuring stations are in the Manchester area; where the stations are located; how the public are notified of the readings; and what measures are taken when dangerous limits are recorded.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 11 July 1994]:* The Department of the Environment monitors air pollutants in the Manchester area at one continuous automatic site, and, with the co-operation of local authorities, at 41 sites using non-automatic techniques. Details of site locations and pollutants measured are in the tables.

Information from all the Department's national automatic monitoring sites, including the site in Manchester, are used to provide air quality bulletins to the public, giving daily information on air pollution via a Freephone helpline, Ceefax and Teletext and a variety of other news media. The bulletin includes information on levels of pollutants together with a forecast and health advice on what to do should levels become high. In addition, information from the Department's non-automatic monitoring sites is published periodically.

1. Automatic Site

Pollutants Monitored	*Site Location*	*Grid Reference*
Oxides of Nitrogen, Carbon Monoxide	St. Peters Square, Manchester	SJ 838 980

2. Non-Automatic Sites

Pollutants Monitored	*Site Location*		*Grid Reference*
1. Smoke/SO_2	Bolton 24		3715 4092
	Farnworth 8		3739 4061
	Horwich 1		3637 4118
	Bury 9		3819 4116
	Manchester 11		3838 3981
	Manchester 15		3875 3985
	Manchester 21		3847 4023
	Oldham 13		3920 4057
	Middleton 3		3871 4063
	Cheadle and Gatley 6		3859 3886
	Ashford-Under-Lyne 8		3939 3992
	Trafford 1		3810 3958
	Ashford-in-Makerfield 1		3576 3991
	Leigh 4		3662 3999
	Wigan 8		3592 4056
2. NO_2 (National Diffusion Tube Survey, 4 sites in each Local Authority Area)	Manchester	1N	3846 3983
		2N	3875 3985
		3N	3867 3926
		4N	3879 3995
	Oldham	1N	3051 4933
		2N	3051 4937
		3N	3012 4889
		4N	3054 4926
	Rochdale	1N	3920 4157
		2N	3920 4157
		3N	3899 4122
		4N	3888 4135
	Stockport	14N	3922 3869
		15N	3920 3871
		16N	3928 3857
		17N	3928 3873
	Trafford	1N	3810 3989
		2N	3745 3945
		4N	3749 3879
		5N	3768 3909
	Wigan	1N	3651 4004
		2N	3662 3999
		4N	3658 4017
		5N	3656 4002
3. Toxic Organic Micropollutants	Law Courts, Manchester		3834 3982
4. Lead	Manchester		3817 3876

Development Areas

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many permanent jobs have been created in each development area in each year since 1981 net of *(A)* losses and *(b)* relocations from the adjoining localities.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 11 July 1994]:* Reliable data on net employment in urban development areas are not available. Gross jobs created by each urban development corporation up to 31 March 1994 are as follows:

	Number
Birmingham Heartlands	611
Black Country	11,397
Bristol	2,250
Central Manchester	4,677
Leeds	8,218
London Docklands	71,889
Merseyside	10,605
Plymouth	0
Sheffield	10,096
Teesside	11,469
Trafford Park	14,813
Tyne and Wear	16,242
Total	162,267

NORTHERN IRELAND

Benefit Claimants

14. **Mr. Clifford Forsythe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the total number of benefit claimants in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ancram: The latest available figures show that the number of successful benefit claims in Northern Ireland is 1,094,426. This figure will not equate to the number of individuals receiving benefit because there are claimants who receive more than one benefit.

Police

15. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he next hopes to meet the new chairman of the Police Authority to discuss the grading and pay of police officers.

Sir John Wheeler: The new chairman of the Police Authority has not requested a meeting on this subject. Were he to do so, the Secretary of State would be delighted to meet him.

Cross-border Security

16. **Lady Olga Maitland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what recent discussions he has had with the Irish Government in regard to cross-border security co-operation.

17. **Mr. Cyril D. Townsend:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on cross-border security co-operation between the United Kingdom and the Irish Republic.

Sir John Wheeler: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Mr. Spring).

18. **Mr. Robathan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to what extent the Anglo-Irish and the Downing street declaration have had a material impact on cross-border security co-operation and operations against terrorism in the Province.

Sir John Wheeler: The greatly enhanced co-operation in opposing terrorism, which is so apparent since 1985, in large part derives from the closer relations resulting from the agreement and the declaration.

Security

19. **Mr. Molyneaux:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the security situation in Northern Ireland.

23. **Rev. Ian Paisley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the security situation in Northern Ireland.

Sir John Wheeler: I refer the right hon. Gentlemen to the reply I gave earlier today to my hon. Friends the Members for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) and for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Sweeney).

Cross-border Institutions

20. **Mr. Enright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what recent discussions he has held on setting up cross-border institutions.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The British and Irish Governments have been discussing the possibility of producing a joint framework document to aid the main constitutional parties in Northern Ireland in reaching a comprehensive political settlement. "Strand Two" matters have been among those discussed.

Downing Street Declaration

22. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what recent discussions he has had about progress to peace based on the Downing street declaration of December 1993.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave earlier today to my hon. Friends the Members for Castle Point (Dr. Spink) and for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) and to the hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Hain).

One-parent Families

25. **Mr. Wicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many families with children, and what proportion of all such families, live in households headed by one parent; and what percentage of those receive income support.

Mr. Ancram: The 1991 census of population enumerated 38,060 households with dependent children headed by one parent in Northern Ireland. This represents 17·6 per cent. of all households with dependent children. The figure for the percentage of families headed by one parent in receipt of income support is not available but as at May 1992 regardless of status as head of a household or not, there were 35,380 one parent families in receipt of income support.

Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1989

26. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the current position with regard to the review of the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1989.

Mr. Ancram: The arrangements for the review are currently under consideration and an announcement will be made shortly.

Investment

21. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received about future investment intentions in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tim Smith: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's continued interest in these matters. I receive representations from many quarters and I am pleased to record that the Industrial Development Board has just completed its best-ever year of inward investment.

27. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the latest figures for business investment; and what were the figures in each of the past three years.

Mr. Tim Smith: Comprehensive information on investment in production industries for United Kingdom regions is available only from the annual census of production. The most recent figures from ACOP relate to 1991 and show that net capital expenditure by manufacturers in Northern Ireland amounted to £333·8 million. Corresponding figures for 1990 and 1989 were £330·7 million and £300·8 million respectively.

Parades

28. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement regarding the conduct of the parades on the anniversary of the battle of the Boyne.

Sir John Wheeler: Parades marking the anniversary of the battle of the Boyne were held at 19 major venues throughout Northern Ireland on 12 July, and passed off without serious incident. Policing arrangements at parades are an operational matter for the RUC who, in fulfilling their responsibility to maintain public order and safety, consulted widely beforehand with both parade organisers and local communities.

Inter-party Talks

29. **Mr. Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the progress of the inter-party talks.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given earlier today to the hon. Members for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) and for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick).

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Dr. John Catford

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Attorney-General what consultations he has had with the Crown Prosecution Service, Wales region, in relation to the decision not to proceed with charges against Dr. John Catford with respect to the allegations of expenses irregularities while chief executive of the Health Promotion Authority for Wales.

The Attorney-General: The decision to which the hon. Member refers was taken by the Crown Prosecution Service. The only involvement of my office in the case was to procure briefing for the purposes of replying to previous questions by the hon. Member.

Juvenile Criminals

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Attorney-General what steps he is taking to improve the operation of the Crown Prosecution Service in relation to juvenile criminals.

The Attorney-General: The Crown Prosecution Service continues to train lawyers as youth offender specialists with responsibility for reviewing files involving alleged offences committed by juveniles. The revised "Code for Crown Prosecutors" sets out the balance to be struck between the interests of young offenders and those of the community. Time limits in cases involving juveniles have been agreed with the police and courts to achieve swifter justice.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 15 July 1994

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Royal Courts of Justice

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how much has been spent on the new extension to the Royal Courts of Justice in the Strand; how much has been spent on facilities for *(a)* members of the public, *(b)* plaintiffs' prosecution witnesses, *(c)* defendants and defence witnesses, *(d)* solicitors and barristers, *(e)* judges and *(f)* administrative staff.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The works cost of this scheme amounted to £15·4 million including VAT. No elemental cost breakdown of the areas to which the hon. Gentleman refers can be produced without incurring disproportionate cost.

Civil Enforcement Agencies

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department when he expects to announce the findings of his Department's 1992 review of the organisation and management of civil enforcement agencies.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Dr. Jones) on 23 June, *Official Report,* column *247.* The consultation exercise raised a wide range of difficult issues. The Lord Chancellor is continuing to give consideration to these, and is not in a position to say when an announcement will be made.

Small Claims Procedure

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what plans he has to introduce paper arbitrations into the small claims procedure.

Mr. John M. Taylor: There are no plans at present to introduce paper arbitrations into the small claims procedure.

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what plans he has in this Parliament to raise the small claim court limit from its current level of £1,000.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor will review the monetary limit for automatic reference into the county court arbitration procedure later in the year. No new figure has yet been decided and no date for implementation has yet been set.

EMPLOYMENT

National Vocational Qualifications

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the consultants used by his Department on standard development work associated with NVQs in each of the years 1991-92, 1992-93 and 1993-94, together with the specific subject areas on which they worked, the cost of each contract and whether these contracts were publicly advertised and tendered.

Miss Widdecombe: The information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Travel-to-Interview Scheme

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to extend the eligibility for the travel-to-interview scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. G. Johnson to Mr. Andrew Smith, dated 15 July 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your Parliamentary Question about extending the eligibility for the Travel to Interview Scheme (TIS). I am replying in the Chief Executive's absence.

We are presently considering a package of changes to improve the working of the Scheme within available resources. In doing so we are re-examining many of the rules which cause people most concern. These include rules about the salary level cut-off point, the duration of the job applied for and help where a second or third interview is necessary for the same job. In making such changes we have first to be sure that the Scheme remains an incentive for unemployed people to widen their job search and that it does not subsidise activity which would, in any case, take place.

If it is possible to redevelop the scheme in the way we wish, we would hope to be able to introduce the changes this year.

I hope this is helpful.

EDUCATION

Special Education, Manchester

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when his Department received the city of Manchester's proposals for reorganising special education in the city; when he will be responding; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: Manchester city council notified the Department on 20 July 1993 of its intention to reorganise special education in the city. Formal proposals were submitted to the Department on 1 October.

The council was notified on 31 March 1994 of the Secretary of State's decision to approve the reorganisation of the Ewing special school. On 11 July, the council was informed that the Secretary of State had given qualified approval, subject to the satisfactory completion of building work, to the reorganisation and closure of other special schools in the city.

Nursery Education

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many nursery units and nursery schools have been granted capital funding in each of the last five years; and what was the total amount of funds granted to nursery units and nursery schools in capital allocation in each of the last five years.

Mr. Robin Squire: Nursery education does not represent a separate category in the distribution of annual capital guidelines to local education authorities. Authorities' plans for spending on nursery classes and schools are taken into account in the formula calculation of the ACG category covering improvement and replacement work. Capital spending at all county and controlled schools is entirely the responsibility of LEAs.

For voluntary aided and special agreement schools the governors are responsible for building work and may claim grant of up to 85 per cent. on their expenditure. The table sets out the number of new nursery units approved for funding since 1989-90, together with projected allocations for total governors' expenditure:

Voluntary aided and special agreement schools

Year	*Number of new units*	*Governors' Expenditure (£000)*
[1]1989-90	5	898
[1]1990-91	5	913
1991-92	13	1,109
1992-93	13	1,089
1993-94	19	1,202
[2]1994-95	10	1,023

[1] Projects flowing from statutory proposals approved after the annual capital announcement were not recorded separately and may be omitted from the 1989-90 and 1990-91 statistics.
[2] To date.

Figures are not available for funding work within existing aided school nurseries.

The allocation of capital grants to grant-maintained schools is now the responsibility of the Funding Agency for Schools. I have asked the chairman of the Funding Agency to reply to the hon. Member.

PRIME MINISTER

Mr. Gordon McNally

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 7 July, *Official Report*, column 274, (1) on what three dates he attended functions at which Mr. Gordon McNally was present; at what location he attended functions at which Mr. Gordon McNally was present; and for what purpose and in what circumstances the functions were held at which both he and Mr. Gordon McNally were present;

(2) in what official circumstances he has been photographed in a group with Mr. Gordon McNally.

The Prime Minister: The three large functions which I attended, at which Mr. McNally also attended, were on 29 September 1992, 13 November 1992 and 23 March 1993. Photographs are often taken at such events and may have been taken on each occasion.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Prime Minister whether he has sought the views of the Data Protection Registrar in relation to the possible introduction of a national identity number; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: We have no plans to introduce a national identity number. The question of a national identity card scheme is kept under review. If we decided to introduce such a scheme there would be a full consultation exercise.

Ex-service People

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 11 July, *Official Report*, column *377*, if it is his intention at present or at any time in the future to implenent the resolution of the House of 1 July on welfare of ex-service people.

The Prime Minister: We have no such plans at present.

ENVIRONMENT

Environmental Bodies

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he intends to hold further public consultation on the future of English Nature and the Countryside Commission for England.

Mr. Atkins: The public consultation which has already taken place produced well over 300 replies, which have been taken fully into account by the study group considering the possible merger of the Countryside Commission and English Nature. There are no plans at present for a further round of consultation.

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if the final report of the study group on the future of English Nature and the Countryside Commission for England will be published; and if he will also publish the evidence submitted.

Mr. Atkins: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will wish to consider the issue of the report further once he has made up his mind on the results of the study. Copies of responses to the consultation will be made available in the usual way when a decision is announced.

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if the study group on the future of English Nature and the Countryside Commission for England has completed its report; and when he expects to make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Yes. My right hon. Friend will make a statement when he has had an opportunity to draw his own conclusions from the study.

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from the London Ecology Committee in relation to the study group on the future of English Nature and the Countryside Commission for England, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The detailed submission from the London Ecology Committee was one of well over 300 responses received to the public consultation. All the views expressed have been taken fully into account by the study group.

Safer Cities

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he plans to make an announcement about proposals for further safer cities projects.

Sir George Young: I am pleased to announce that, as part of our undertaking to meet existing commitments to programmes now coming within the single regeneration budget, we propose to set up another 20 safer cities projects in this financial year.

The areas invited to participate in the next wave are:

Bolton
Bournemouth
Brighton
Camden
Easington
Great Grimsby
Hackney
Kensington and Chelsea
Lincoln
Liverpool
Newham
Norwich
Oxford
Portsmouth
Sandwell
Scunthorpe
Southwark
Wansbeck
Westminster
York

Each of these areas has above average rates of recorded crime and significant evidence of deprivation.

Subject to confirmation of support for a project from each of the key local agencies—local authorities, police and probation service—we shall shortly seek tenders for their management from organisations with experience in crime prevention and project management.

In addition to the running costs being met by the Department of the Environment, each project will have access to grant funding of up to £100,000 a year, for three years, to support local crime prevention and community safety initiatives.

We expect the projects to be set up towards the end of 1994.

Funding for these projects represents an existing commitment under the SRB, and is additional to resources set aside for initiatives starting in 1995-96, approved in accordance with the bidding guidance issued on 14 April 1994, copies of which have been placed in the Library of the House.

Building Regulations

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what changes he proposes to make to the Building Regulations 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment is today laying before Parliament the Building (Amendment) Regulations 1994. The main purpose of these amendments is to strengthen the requirements of part L of the Building Regulations 1991 for the conservation of fuel and power; to improve part F on ventilation; and to simplify part A on structural stability. They also introduce a new regulation 13A to regularise unauthorised development.

In revising part L, the aim has been to reduce CO_2 emissions from buildings by incorporating cost-effective measures, but to do so in a way which does not introduce unacceptable technical risks and maintains some flexibility for designers. The Building Research Establishment estimates that the changes will improve the energy performance of space and water heating in houses by some 25 per cent. to 35 per cent. compared with current building regulations standards, with similar improvements in the non-domestic.

The revisions to part F have been introduced to improve and simplify the current provisions for ventilation in dwellings and to provide builders with a wider range of options on how this can be achieved. Requirements for non-domestic buildings are included in building regulations for the first time to reflect the relevant requirements of the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 so that new building work should not require subsequent adaptation.

To provide sufficient time for the industry, including builders, designers and building control bodies, to assimilate the changes, parts L and F will come into force on 1 July 1995.

The revision to part A simplifes the requirement relating to disproportionate collapse of certain public buildings without detriment to safety. The new regulation 13A has been introduced to allow local authorities to certify building work which should have been subject to control but was previously unauthorised. The local authorities will be able to charge fees for carrying out this new task—fees which will be prescribed in new regulations to be laid before Parliament shortly. The revision to part A comes into force on 1 September 1994, and the new regulation 13A on 1 October 1994.

Copies of the new editions of approved documents F and L and the related cost compliance assessments have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Waste Shipments Regulation

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will issue guidance on the EC waste shipments regulation.

Mr. Atkins: The Department of the Environment has published a circular, DoE circular 13/94, giving guidance on the implementation of the EC waste shipments regulations and the associated Transfrontier Shipment of Waste Regulations 1994. The circular will assist waste regulation authorities and the waste disposal and recovery industries to follow the requirements of the new system.

The final text of the circular reflects the outcome of public consultation on a draft document issued in March, and incorporates various changes to meet the concerns and interests of industry, local authorities and the public. The circular explains the provisions and administrative procedures of the waste shipments regulations and United Kingdom regulations, describes the roles and responsibilities of the various parties involved in the shipments process, and offers guidance on issues such as the options available for the provision of financial guarantees, and local authorities' administrative charges.

A compliance cost assessment has been undertaken in relation to the Transfrontier Shipment of Waste Regulations 1994. Copies of both circular 13/94 and the compliance cost assessment have been placed in the Library.

The new system strengthens controls over transfrontier shipments of waste in the interests of protecting human

health and the environment. We are confident that the guidance in this circular will help both industry and regulators to get to grips with the demands of the new regime.

Pennine Bridleway

Mr. Brandreth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will announce his decision on the proposed Pennine bridleway.

Mr. Atkins: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has today signified that he is minded to approve the Countryside Commission's report in respect of the Pennine bridleway, with modifications to the route as submitted by the Commission.

Further consultation will now take place with the local authorities through whose areas the route passes to confirm their agreement to the modification put forward.

Coastal Zone Policies

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the recent consultation exercise on coastal zone policies.

Mr. Atkins: In October 1993, the Department of the Environment and the Welsh Office published two discussion papers on coastal issues: "Managing The Coast" and "Development Below Low Water Mark". Both papers were prepared with the full co-operation of all relevant Departments. They fulfilled the commitments made by the Government in their response, Cm 2011: July 1992, to the report from the Environment Select Committee, April 1992, on coastal zone protection and planning.

Extensive comments were received on the two papers and reflected a wide range of views. I am today arranging for those comments and a summary of them to be made available in my Department's Library.

The Government recognise the heightened importance attached to effective management of the coastal zone, and to ensuring that a balance is achieved between the commercial, environmental, leisure and other demands—for example, military needs—on such areas, in accordance with the principles of sustainable development.

Following full consideration, we remain confident that existing statutory systems—including the specialised sectoral controls which apply offshore—are the most effective means of regulating development in the coastal zone. Accordingly, in recognition of the distinct needs of land and marine environments, we believe that a case has not been made for any general extension below low water mark of the jurisdiction of town and country planning legislation. However, we shall keep under continuing review the scope for making appropriate improvements to present arrangements: for example, to ensure maximum transparency and liaison in the decision-making process. We shall also consider further the scope for addressing some more detailed points raised in responses to the recent consultation exercise.

However, we accept that there is concern in some quarters that new means of taking an overview of the impact and development of policies towards the coast are required, and that increased emphasis should be placed on the wider management of the coastal zone on the basis of defined goals and objectives.

We have already taken a number of initiatives to improve the planning and management of the coast: for example, publication of planning policy guidance note 20 on coastal planning; the launch last autumn of a strategy for flood and coastal defence in England and Wales, recent proposals for a revised regime for the dredging of marine aggregates, and more broadly, the continuing role of the interdepartmental group on coastal policy, which provides a vehicle for effective liaison on coastal zone matters within central Government.

We have also laid before Parliament regulations to implement the provisions of the EC habitats directive, which include a new approach to the conservation of certain internationally important marine areas, and have supported the work of the nature conservation agencies in promoting the drawing up of management plans in a number of important estuaries.

We now propose to take further measures to enhance the effective co-ordination of policies for the coastal zone in England. Responding to the call for clear and comprehensive objectives, we intend to publish within a year a statement of national policy guidelines for the coast. This will draw together in a convenient form policy guidance already provided on coastal issues. In turn, public and private bodies, agencies and organisations will be asked to have due regard to the principles set out in the proposed guidelines, when giving consideration to actions which may impinge directly, or indirectly, on the coastal zone.

Secondly, reflecting the priority which we attach to informed discussion on coastal issues, we intend to create by the end of this year a standing forum on coastal zone management. It will have a broad and balanced membership, including central and local government, and commercial, conservation and recreation interests. We will consult on its membership and terms of reference. Such a forum should be an effective vehicle for promoting understanding of the national guidelines and building on liaison arrangements at regional and local level already established. It will complement, but not overlap with, existing ministerial meetings dealing with specific issues such as flood and coastal defence.

Thirdly, in recognition of the growing role and coverage of coastal zone management plans, we believe there is a strong case for highlighting good practice and clarifying, where necessary, the interaction of the different elements of such management. The proposed forum will have an important role here in ensuring effective co-operation between the responsible bodies. We shall therefore set this work in hand, and, in addition, consider how best to monitor the management plans being developed locally.

Lastly, we shall proceed with the proposed review of byelaw powers relating to coastal management, and broaden its scope to look more widely at the general issue of implementing coastal zone management and the relationship between the voluntary principle and regulatory support. We shall therefore establish an interdepartmental working party to consider these matters, and in undertaking its task the group will consult widely with interested parties.

Colleagues in the Scottish Office are currently preparing a discussion paper on coastal policy which will reflect Scotland's distinctive circumstances. It is expected that this paper will be published in the autumn. Colleagues in Northern Ireland also hope to issue a consultation paper on coastal policy to interested parties later in the year, taking

into account the different local government framework which exists. The Secretary of State for Wales will consider the position in Wales.

Linked with existing initiatives and measures, we believe that these proposals offer a sound basis for achieving increased responsiveness to the specific needs of the coastal zone, and will make a major contribution to helping reconcile conflicting pressures on this vital and potentially vulnerable resource.

Procurement and Contractural Arrangements

Mr. Sims: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has received a copy of Sir Michael Latham's final report of the joint Government-industry review of procurement and contractual arrangements in the United Kingdom construction industry.

Mr. Baldry: Sir Michael Latham has now presented his final report, which was due this month, and I have received a copy. Sir Michael will publish his report on Monday 18 July and copies of the report will be placed in the Library.

Sir Michael's report contains recommendations to Government, the construction industry and its clients about practical reforms to reduce conflict and litigation, and to improve productivity and competitiveness. The Government are now considering the report and the recommendations contained in it.

A conference, organised by the industry groups involved in the review, is being held on 25 July. It will provide a platform for Government, the construction industry and its clients to give an initial response to the report's recommendations.

Water Charges

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of family expenditure in each quintile of income was taken up by water charges in 1987 and 1992.

Mr. Nelson: I have been asked to reply.

The amounts and proportions of weekly household expenditure on water and sewerage charges for each quintile of income are given in the table for the United Kingdom for 1987 and 1992. Figures are rounded to the nearest 10p.

Quintiles of gross weekly household income

	Lowest twenty per cent.	*Second quintile group*	*Third quintile group*	*Fourth quintile group*	*Highest twenty per cent.*	*All households*
1992						
Lower boundary of group (£)	—	108	213	341	515	—
Average weekly expenditure on water and sewerage charges (£)	1·90	2·30	2·70	2·90	3·60	2·70
Percentage of weekly household expenditure	2·00	1·40	1·10	0·90	0·70	1·00
1987						
Lower boundary of group (£)	—	82	162	260	381	—
Average weekly expenditure on water and sewerage charges (£)	0·60	1·00	1·30	1·60	2·00	1·30
Percentage of weekly household expenditure	0·90	0·80	0·80	0·70	0·60	0·70

Source: Family Expenditure Survey.

Environmental Protection

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposal on the costing of environmental protection arising from *(a)* the Marrakesh meeting on the implementation of the Uruguay round by GATT and *(b)* recent EU council decisions he intends to put to the forthcoming meeting of the G7 in Naples.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have been asked to reply.

At Marrakesh in April, Ministers decided that the World Trade Organisation should establish a committee on trade and environment. G7 leaders at the Naples summit welcomed the new World Trade Organisation's work on trade and the environment.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment reported the outcome of the last EU Environment Council meeting in his reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Lincoln (Sir K. Carlisle) on 17 June, *Official Report*, column *671*. G7 leaders at the Naples summit said that they supported the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development in reviewing progress in the implementation of the Rio process.

They also welcomed the restructuring and the replenishment of the global environment facility and supported its choice as the permanent financial mechanism of the biological diversity and climate change conventions.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Correspondence

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the hon. Member for Walsall, North will receive replies to his two letters of 7 June concerning constituents ref. 09/06/94 and 08/06/94.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I wrote to the hon. Member on 14 July and understand that the Minister of State, my right hon. Friend the Member for Fareham, also replied on that date.

Wheel Clamping

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement before the summer recess regarding his proposals on private wheel clamping.

Mr. Maclean: We have no plans to do so.

Asylum Seekers

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his Department's current practice in respect of immigration officials passing on details of the claims of persons seeking asylum to the embassies of countries from which asylum seekers have travelled.

Mr. Charles Wardle: It is not our practice to disclose any information about an individual asylum application to the diplomatic post of the asylum seeker's country of origin.

Immigration

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the types of personal data held by his Department which relate to the administration of immigration procedures; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I will write to the hon. Member.

Car Boot Sales

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will introduce measures to give trading standards officers the power to control car boot sales.

Mr. McLoughlin: I have been asked to reply.

Trading standards officers already have extensive powers to enforce legislation intended to protect consumers. These powers can be exercised at car boot sales.

TRANSPORT

Steel Rolls (Lorry Transportation)

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if steel rolls are required to be secured to a lorry cradle during transportation along minor roads; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: Steel rolls and the cradles upon which they are carried are both required to be secured to a lorry when they are in transit on any road.

The safety of loads on vehicles used on roads is controlled by the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986. Regulation 100(2) requires that any load carried by a vehicle be secured, if necessary, by additional restraints so that it is not likely to cause danger or nuisance by moving, falling or blowing off the vehicle. This would apply to steel rolls.

Section 8 of the Department of Transport's publication "Code of Practice on the Safety of Loads on Vehicles" advises operators of the best way to secure metal rolls to their vehicles.

Air Services (Liberalisation)

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on developments on the liberalisation of United Kingdom-United States air services.

Mr. MacGregor: I am writing today to the United States Transportation Secretary saying that I am prepared to give exceptional approval for airlines to bring in new services to replace certain transatlantic routes which have recently been or are about to be suspended. I am therefore offering United States airlines rights to serve Manchester-Los Angeles and Stansted-New York-Chicago.

I am making this offer in order to help to maintain services for consumers while we continue to seek to make progress in securing a wider liberalisation of United Kingdom-United States air services. I hope that the United States will soon be in a posiiton to return to the liberalisation negotiations. This offer is a further demonstration of my determination to secure liberal changes to the current air services agreement in the interests of consumers on both sides of the Atlantic.

Network SouthEast

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the public service obligation grant awarded to Network SouthEast in each year since 1978, in both cash and 1993-94 prices.

Mr. Freeman: The table shows the level of public service obligation grant spent on Network SouthEast since 1985-86. Figures are not readily available to split PSO by sector before 1985-86. Up to 1986-87 figures are shown for London and the south-east region.

Year	*£ million Cash*	*£ million 1993-94 Prices*
1985-86	253	388
1986-87	205	304
1987-88	230	324
1988-89	140	184
1989-90	86	106
1990-91	146	169
1991-92	355	384
1992-93	575	595
[1]1993-94	371	371

[1] Subject to audit.

Road Schemes

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what costs have been incurred by his Department in developing road schemes subsequently abandoned in respect of *(a)* Preston southern and western bypass, *(b)* Hereford bypass, *(c)* Durham western bypass, *(d)* the A40 north of Oxford and Headington bypasses and *(e)* the A40 Longford-Gorsley improvement.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 23 June 1994]:* As the information requested relates to operational matters of the Highways Agency, I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Mr. Simon Hughes, dated 12 July 1994:

I have been asked to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about the costs incurred in developing road schemes subsequently abandoned in respect of *(a)* Preston Southern and Western Bypass, *(b)* Hereford Bypass, *(c)* Durham Western Bypass, *(d)* the A40 North of Oxford and Headington Bypasses and *(e)* the A40 Longford-Gorsley Improvement.

The information is as follows:

	£ million
a. Preston Southern and Western Bypass.	1·62
b. Hereford Bypass—this scheme has not been abandoned; it is a Priority 2 scheme in the revised Roads Programme.	
c. Durham Western Bypass.	2·00
d. The A40 North of Oxford and Headington Bypasses.	2·196
e. The A40 Longford-Gorsley Improvement.	5·500

These costs include consultants' fees, preparation costs, surveys, advance land purchase and VAT.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Bilateral Aid Programme

Ms Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what amount of the United Kingdom's bilateral aid programme was spent last year in *(a)* sub-Saharan Africa, *(b)* India and *(c)* South Asia; and how much the Oversease Development Administration plans to spend in each year to 1996-97 in these places in *(a)* cash prices, *(b)* real terms and *(c)* as a percentage of the relevant year's bilateral aid programme.

Mr. Lennox Boyd: Actual expenditure figures for the last financial year, 1993-94, are not yet available. United Kingdom bilateral aid expenditure figures in 1992-93, the latest year for which actual data are available, are:

	1992-93 Prices £ million	*Percentage of Total Bilateral Aid*
Sub-Saharan Africa	509	[1]37
of which: Country Programmes	285	21
Other Bilateral Aid[2]	224	16
India	115	[1]8
of which: Country Programmes	92	6
Other Bilateral Aid[2]	23	2
South Asia (excluding India)	145	[1]11
of which: Country Programmes	99	7
Other Bilateral Aid[2]	46	4
Other Regions	439	[1]32
of which: Country Programmes	174	13
Other Bilateral Aid[2]	265	19
World Unallocated[3]	166	12
of which: Other Bilateral Aid	166	12

[1] The corresponding figures as a percentage of bilateral aid allocable by region are higher.

[2] Other bilateral aid is made up of Aid and Trade Provision, Food Aid, Disaster Relief, Debt relief, Non-Project Technical Co-operation, Drugs Assistance and CDC Investments.

[3] "World Unallocated" comprises block grants to the British Council, Natural Resources Institute, VSO, NGOs, Research Institutions and Commonwealth Organisations based in the United Kingdom.

For 1993-94 and subsequent years, no breakdown is available for sub-Saharan Africa, India or South Asia. Figures are available for Africa, including North Africa and the middle east, and for the whole of Asia and the Pacific. The table shows planning figures for bilateral country programmes only for these two areas. These figures are not directly comparable with the figures for 1992-93.

	Country programmes only Cash prices	*1992-93 prices*	*Percentage of total country programmes*
Year	*£ million*	*£ million*	
Africa (including North Africa and Middle East)			
1993-94	330	320	47
1994-95	344	324	45
1995-96	315	286	45
1996-97	284	252	44
Asia/Pacific			
1993-94	254	246	35
1994-95	248	233	33
1995-96	227	206	32
1996-97	217	192	33

These planning figures include an allowance, additional to the overall figure agreed in the public expenditure survey, to compensate for expected slippage of expenditure. For this reason, and because of the many detailed changes that take place over a period at country level in the rate of spending, actual spending will vary from the figures shown.

Aid Programme

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when Her Majesty's Government first received *(a)* a draft copy and *(b)* the final version of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development report on the United Kingdom's aid programme published on 5 July; and what plans there are to respond to the criticisms contained in the OECD report.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We received a copy of the draft version of the report on 24 February and the final version on 5 July. The intervening period was required for the OECD to circulate the draft to other members for comments, and to fit publication into its printing schedule. Overall the OECD report recognised the many strengths in the "highly concessional and business-like" United Kingdom aid programme. We are continually looking for ways to improve efficiency and in doing so we shall take into account the conclusions of the OECD review.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Japan (Technology Agreement)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) of 4 July, *Official Report*, column *80*, what discussions took place on civil nuclear science and technology co-operation during his visit to Japan in June; and if he will place a copy of the United Kingdom-Japan science and technology agreement of 13 June in the Library.

Mr. Waldegrave: My visit in June was to attend the seventh Carnegie group meeting of Science Ministers and advisers of G7 countries. This informal biannual meeting has a wide-ranging agenda and useful discussions took place on strengthening international co-operation and on progress with major science projects, including some in the field of civil nuclear research. However, no bilateral discussions took place.

I have arranged for a copy of the United Kingdom-Japan science and technology agreement to be placed in the Library.

Disabled People

Mr. Luff: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what plans he has to improve the opportunities for employment and career development of disabled people in the civil service.

Mr. David Davis: The civil service has had a code of practice on the employment of people with disabilities since 1985. The code has done much to improve the position of disabled people in the civil service, but we have recognised that still more needs to be done. For this reason, on 15 July the code will be replaced by a programme for action to achieve equality of opportunity in the civil service for disabled people.

The programme provides a framework which will help Departments and agencies recruit, retain and promote people on merit, regardless of disability. It also provides detailed action checklists to help Departments and agencies make the best possible use of their disabled employees. The programme for action is accompanied by a stand-alone support document, "Focus on Ability", which offers practical advice on how to implement the programme.

In addition, the approval of the Privy Council is currently being sought to an amendment to the civil service Order in Council, which will permit Departments and agencies to offer disabled applicants encouragement and assistance in the selection process, such as a guaranteed interview, and thus enable those Departments and agencies that wish to do so to sign up to the Employment Service's two-ticks symbol.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Planning (Ecclesiastical Exemption)

Mr. Alison: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement about the future of the ecclesiastical exemption from listed building and conservation area control.

Mr. Brooke: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I have today laid before Parliament an order under section 60(5) and 75(7) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 defining the future scope of the exemption in England and Wales.

As foreshadowed in my reply to my right hon. Friend on 17 December 1992, *Official Report*, column *370-71*, a measure of exemption will be retained only for those church buildings which are covered by denominations' own arrangements for the control of works, where those arrangements satisfy our code of practice. Statutory procedures already exist for the Church of England; other denominations which are in the process of setting up arrangements are the Church in Wales, the Roman Catholic Church, the Methodist Church, the Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Baptist Union of Wales and the United Reformed Church. Buildings of all other denominations and faiths will from 1 October 1994, when the order is due to come into force, be fully subject to normal listed building and conservation area control.

Where the exemption is retained, its scope will be reduced. Subject to what is said below, it will apply in future only to buildings whose primary use is as a place of worship, and to objects or structures attached to their exterior or within their curtilage to the extent that these are not listed in their own right. Where such objects or structures are listed in their own right, they will be fully subject to normal listed building control. My right hon. Friend and I came to the view that this was the most appropriate method of demarcation, taking into account the need to minimise duplication of control with the internal systems of the denominations concerned and, in relation to tombstones, the concerns expressed about possible inconvenience for the bereaved.

To ensure reasonable parity of treatment between exempted and non-exempted bodies, we propose directions to bring within conservation area control tombstones, memorials and monuments not covered by the ecclesiastical exemption but below the current control limit of 115 cu m. To minimise any practical inconvenience, this extension of control will relate only to tombstones and so on erected before 1 January 1925.

Special arrangements will apply to cathedrals of the Church of England. In this case, the exemption will cover the cathedral itself and buildings, objects or structures which are located within an area designated by me after consulting the Cathedrals Fabric Commission for England and which fall within a precinct indicated by the Commission under the Care of Cathedrals Measure 1990. It will also cover places of worship elsewhere within the precinct, and tombstones elsewhere within the precinct which are not listed in their own right.

The new arrangements will be summarised in planning policy guidance notes, to be issued in due course. Details of the exempted denominations' procedures will also be circulated to all local planning authorities. Plans showing the designated English cathedral areas have been sent to those local authorities concerned.

As mentioned in the previous statement, our intention is to monitor these arrangements and review them after two years.

The present exemption is also to be continued for the time being for certain categories of ecclesiastical buildings, mainly belonging to the denominations mentioned. My officials are writing to the bodies concerned to invite them to consider how works to such buildings should be controlled in future. These categories include buildings within Church of England peculiars, buildings of religious communities, school and other institutional chapels, and buildings of certain Scottish denominations within England and Wales.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Bovine Immunodeficiency Virus

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to her answer of 4 July, *Official Report*, column *37*, whether an immunodeficiency virus has ever been communicated from cattle to humans; why no tests are done on imported milk; what tests are done on United Kingdom produced non-pasteurised milk; whether bovine immunodeficiency virus has been found in non-pasteurised milk; and what assessment she has made of whether BIV is killed by *(a)* pasteurisation, *(b)* sterilisation and *(c)* ultra heat treatment.

Mr. Soames: There is no evidence that an immunodeficiency virus has been communicated from cattle to humans and there is no evidence that bovine immunodeficiency-like virus affects humans.

Experimental efforts to grow BIV in human cells have failed. Two United States laboratory personnel who accidentally had needle stick injuries with BIV infected cell material some five years ago have shown no signs of illness as a result. In the absence of any risk to human health from BIV, we do not consider it necessary to test milk for the virus. Raw cow's milk produced in the United Kingdom is subject to hygiene and quality checks for example for plate counts, antibiotic residues and added water. In addition, raw cow's milk sold for drinking in England and Wales is subject to strict microbiological standards, for plate count and coliforms, under the Milk (Special Designation) Regulations 1989. We are not aware that BIV has been isolated from unpasteurised milk either here or abroad. It is known that lentiviruses are susceptible to heat treatment. Studies have been commissioned at the Central Veterinary Laboratory on the inactivation of BIV in milk by pasteurisation.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to her answer of 4 July, *Official Report*, column *37*, if she will now require testing of all milk imported from other EC countries to ensure that it complies with EC directive 92/46 on milk hygiene and that it is free of bovine immunodeficiency virus.

Mr. Soames: EC directive 92/46 allows milk to be traded within the EC if it meets requirements in the directive and bears the EC health mark. Under the EC veterinary checks regime, it is the responsibility of the exporting member state to ensure that only products meeting these requirements enter intra-Community trade. An importing member state can carry out non-discriminatory checks at destination unless there is suspicion of an infringement of requirements in the directive, in which case spot checks, including sampling, can be carried out at any stage. However, it would be a barrier to trade and contrary to EC law to check for bovine immunodeficiency-like virus, which is not referred to in the directive.

Intervention Board

Mr. Moss: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how the Intervention Board performed against its targets for 1993-94; and what key performance targets Agriculture Ministers have set the agency for 1994-95.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Intervention Board's performance against its key targets in 1993-94 was as follows:

	1993-94	
	Target (per cent.)	*Performance (per cent.)*
Percentage of claims processed within deadlines	98·0	99·9
Percentage of claims processed correctly	98·5	98·8
Running cost efficiency gains	2·5	4·5
Improvement in productivity	5·0	8·0
Ratio of disallowance to EAGGF funds handled	0·40	0·03
To main expenditure within vote provision, cash and running cost limits	—	Met
New value for money savings in procurement of goods and services	5·0	6·5

In agreement with my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, I have set the following targets for 1994-95:

	Per cent.
Percentage of claims processed within deadlines	98·5
Percentage of claims processed correctly	98·5
Running cost efficiency gains	2·5
Improvement in productivity	6·0
Ratio of disallowance to EAGGF funds handled	0·40
To maintain expenditure within vote provision, cash and running cost limits	—
New value for money savings in procurement of goods and services	5·0

Veterinary Medicines Directorate

Mr. Moss: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when the 1993-94 annual report and accounts for the Veterinary Medicines Directorate is due to be published.

Mrs. Gillian Shepherd: I am pleased to report that the Veterinary Medicines Directorate's annual report and accounts for 1993-94 was published today. Copies are available in the Library of the House

The report charts the continuing success of the directorate as a next steps agency, and I would like to congratulate the chief executive and his staff on their considerable achievements during the year.

Food Stockpile

Mr. Clappison: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the destination of the donation of biscuits from the strategic food stockpile; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: During the past three years more than 30,000 tonnes of high-energy biscuits have been donated from the strategic food stockpile administered by my Department. The biscuits were subject to stringent quality testing prior to release for donation. They were donated to some 20 United Kingdom-based charities to help the starving and homeless victims of serious disasters in more than a dozen countries in Africa and eastern Europe, particularly to help relieve the plight of the civilian population in the former Yugoslavia.

The final 5,000 tonnes of biscuits will be donated to the United Nations World Food Programme through the Overseas Development Administration over the coming months. This is a step towards the liquidation of the strategic food stockpile by March 1996.

The biscuits would provide sufficient food for over 250,000 people for a year. To provide similar aid at today's prices would cost in excess of £20 million and represents a significant contribution to the United Kingdom's response to disaster relief.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Political Talks

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on which dates he met representatives of the Irish Government since 1 September 1993 to discuss political developments in Northern Ireland.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I have held such discussions with the Irish Foreign Minister, Mr. Spring, at six meetings of the intergovernmental conference on 10 September and 3 November 1993, 28 January, 10 March, 25 April and 17 June 1994, during a visit to Dublin on 5 March and in the margins of the opening of the Shannon-Erne waterway on 23 May.

I was also present on 3 and 15 December 1993 and 19 February 1994, when these matters were discussed by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and Mr. Reynolds, the Irish Prime Minister.

Residential Homes

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons are employed on *(a)* a full-time and *(b)* a part-time basis at the residential homes of the Southern area health board; how many in each category at each home are *(a)* Protestants, and *(b)* Roman Catholics; and what is the Roman Catholic/Protestant ratio in each of the employment catchment areas for the three homes.

Mr. Ancram: The table below gives a breakdown of staff by perceived religious affiliation in the three residential homes within the Armagh and Dungannon unit of management which is the only remaining directly managed unit within the Southern board's area.

Type of Employee	*Perceived religious affiliation*			
	Roman Catholic	*Protestant*	*Not known*	*Total*
Full-time	29	22	4	55
Part-time	24	13	7	44

Information on the Roman Catholic : Protestant ratio in each of the employment catchment areas for the three homes is not readily available.

Benefits

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what percentage of the resident population are in receipt of benefits other than retirement pension; and what were the numbers in *(a)* 1964, *(b)* 1971, *(c)* 1981 and *(d)* 1991.

Mr. Ancram: The information requested is provided in the tables:

Recipients of Benefit in Northern Ireland

	Current[1] *Total population = 1,628,000*		*1991 Total population = 1,601,400*		*1981 Total population = 1,637,700*	
	Recipients	*Percentage of population*	*Recipients*	*Percentage of population*	*Recipients*	*Percentage of population*
Housing Benefit	137,621	8	168,000	10	n/a	—
Attendance Allowance	49,237	3	41,400	3	18,300	1
Invalid Care Allowance	18,736	1	10,600	1	700	[2]—
Disability Living Allowance	67,080	4	n/a	—	n/a	—
Disability Working Allowance	159	[2]—	n/a	—	n/a	—
Mobility Allowance	n/a	—	17,000	1	6,900	[2]—
Child Benefit *(Children)*	488,372	29	459,700	29	482,600	31
One Parent Benefit	30,890	2	26,400	2	20,800	1
Family Credit	19,952	1	15,300	1	n/a	—
Family Income Supplement	n/a	—	n/a	—	10,700	1
Income Support	222,621	14	203,700	13	n/a	—
Supplementary Benefit	n/a	—	n/a	—	161,600	10
Industrial Injuries Benefits	9,574	1	10,200	1	8,200	[2]—
Sickness Benefit	4,183	[2]—	3,898	[2]—	18,100	1
Invalidity Benefit	87,813	4	58,800	4	32,600	2
Severe Disablement Allowance	14,334	1	13,400	1	n/a	—
Maternity Allowance	893	[2]—	500	[2]—	14,085	1
Guardian's Allowance/CSA	100	[2]—	100	[2]—	400	[2]—
Unemployment Benefit	14,595	1	18,900	1	41,200	3
Widows Benefit	11,129	1	12,800	1	15,100	1
Non-contributory Invalidity Pension	n/a	—	n/a	—	10,200	1

[1] Most recent information available—mainly May 1994.
[2]— denotes less than 0·5.

Benefit	*1971 Total population = 1,540,400*		*1984 Total population = 1,450,000*	
	Recipients	*Percentage of population*	*Recipients*	*Percentage of population*
Family allowance (children)	308,100	20	270,100	19
Widows' benefits	15,100	1	15,900	1
Guardians allowances, orphans' pensions and children's allowances	290	[1]—	320	[1]—
Supplementary benefit	108,395	7	n/a	n/a
National assistance allowance	n/a	n/a	58,324	4

Benefit	1971 Total population = 1,540,400 Recipients	1971 Percentage of population	1984 Total population = 1,450,000 Recipients	1984 Percentage of population
Insured persons absent from work due to:				
Sickness	42,000	3	35,000	2
Industrial injury	1,400	[1]—	1,100	[1]—

[1] Denotes less than 0·5. per cent.

NHS Trust Hospitals

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list by wave *(a)* the number of non-executive directors of NHS trust hospitals and *(b)* the number of chairs of NHS trust hospitals, by salary band.

Mr. Ancram: Information on appointments to HSS trusts in Northern Ireland is set out in the table:

	Non-executive directors	Chairmen Band 1 £19,285	Band 2 £17,145	Band 3 £15,125
Wave 1	5	1	—	—
Wave 2	43	3	4	2
Wave 3	[1]14	—	1	2

[1] One non-executive director post remains to be filled.

Birth Statistics

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many sets of *(a)* twins, *(b)* triplets, *(c)* quadruplets, *(d)* quintuplets and *(e)* sextuplets were born in Northern Ireland in each year from 1990 to 1993; what was the total number of maternities in Northern Ireland in each year; and how many multiple births of each type in each year were conceived as a result of (i) in-vitro fertilisation, (ii) gamete intra-fallopian transfer and (iii) other forms of assisted conceptions.

Mr. Ancram: The information requested is set out in the table.

	1990	1991	1992	1993[1]
Sets of				
(a) Twins	267	315	258	293
(b) Triplets	5	6	8	9
(c) Quadruplets	—	—	—	—
(d) Quintuplets	—	1	—	—
(e) Sextuplets	—	—	—	—
Maternities	25,338	26,058	25,425	24,828
(i) IVF[2]				
(a) Twins	12	11	[4]—	[4]—
(b) Triplets	2	1	[4]—	[4]—
(ii) GIFT[3]				

[1] Provisional.
[2] These figures are the results of IVF by year of conception.
[3] GIFT was available in Northern Ireland in only 1986 and 1987.
[4] Not known.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

UN Agencies

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals the United Nations Secretary-General has made in respect of moving the UN Relief and Welfare Agency and other agencies; what sites he has suggested; and what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on this.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Secretary-General has proposed moving UNRWA's headquarters from Vienna to Gaza. We will discuss this proposal with other donors represented on UNRWA's advisory commission. We have seen no proposals to move other agencies.

Burma

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will now make special representations to the Burmese Government for the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: With our European Union partners, we will underline our very serious concern about Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's continued detention on the occasion of the fifth anniversary of her house detention.

East Timor

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what communications he has received from the retired Australian diplomat James Dunn in relation to loss of life in East Timor; what reassessment he has made of the situation there; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We can find no record of any communication from Mr. Dunn in the last three years. Research of earlier files would involve disproportionate cost.

Middle East

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on developments on the Jordanian track of the middle east peace process.

Mr. Hurd: We warmly welcome the recent decision by Jordan and Israel to initiate detailed discussions in the region on the elements of an eventual peace agreement. We similarly welcome King Hussein's decision, communicated to members of Jordan's Parliament on 9 July, that he and other Jordanian leaders should hold direct talks with Prime Minister Rabin and other Israeli leaders. I understand that discussions on border, security and water issues will begin on 18 July and that Foreign Minister

Peres plans to meet the Jordanian Prime Minister and the United States Secretary of State, on the Jordanian side of the border on 20 July, to discuss economic issues.

Kuwait

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects an announcement to be made by the Kuwaiti Government in respect of orders for United Kingdom ships; and what size and type of vessel is involved.

Mr. Aitken I have been asked to reply.

The Kuwaiti Government is currently considering bids for eight 42m fast patrol boats from British, French and German shipyards. Vosper Thornycroft are a leading contender.

I am unwilling to speculate when an announcement is likely to be made as the Kuwaiti Minister of Defence has recently stated that the bids are still under consideration.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Export Credits Guarantee Department

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the total value of claims and recoveries to the Export Credits Guarantee Department in each of the last five years; and how much of each of these was in relation to defence exports.

Mr. Needham: The total value of claims and recoveries to the Export Credits Guarantee Department in each of the last five years was as follows:

	Claims £ million	*Recoveries £ million*
1989-90	912·9	229·1
1990-91	967·5	224·9
1991-92	954·1	187·2
1992-93	734·3	157·1
[1]1993-94	517·5	177·0

[1] Provisional.

ECGD does not record claims and recoveries by industry sector. It is thus not possible to provide the breakdown which the hon. Gentleman has requested.

Brewing Industry

Mr. Hanson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what consultations he has held with representatives of regional breweries with regard to the tie system and public house management.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Neither my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade nor I have recently had discussions with the regional brewers about the tie or public house management. However, my officials are in regular contact with individual regional brewers and Independent Family Brewers of Britain, which represents many local brewers, on a number of issues of concern to the brewing industry.

I am aware that some brewers are concerned that the EC Commission may bring forward proposals to amend or rescind regulation 1984/83, which concerns beer supply agreements. The regulation is due to expire at the end of 1997 and the EC Commission has said that it will not begin to review it until 1996 at the earliest. The Government will, of course, take into account the views of all interested parties when considering any proposals that the Commission may bring forward during that review.

Mr. Hanson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the effect of a revision of the tie system on employment prospects in regional breweries.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Regional brewers have benefited greatly from the guest beer provision of the 1989 beer orders, which has enabled many to sell their cask-conditioned beer in tied pubs owned by the national brewers. They have also been able to acquire pubs sold by national brewers who were obliged to reduce the size of their tied estates to comply with the provisions of the beer orders.

Directors' Fees

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, further to his letter dated 11 July 1985, concerning pay of directors in answer to the written question from the hon. Member for Great Grimsby, whether he will now publish his letter, dated 11 July 1985, with the two enclosures, concerning the emoluments of the chairmen and highest-paid directors of large industrial and commercial companies.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The letter was published on 25 July 1985, *Official Report*, columns *730-32*.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, further to his letter dated 11 July 1985 about the pay of directors of plcs in answer to the written question from the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (1) whether he will publish a table showing the same information for the most recent years for which corresponding figures are available;

(2) whether he will bring the two tables concerning the emoluments of chairmen and highest paid directors of plcs enclosed with his letter up to date with the full figures for 1983 as mentioned there together with those for subsequent years.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The information requested is not readily available. It ceased to be compiled from 1990, and obtaining information for 1983 to 1990 from archive data could be achieved only at disproportionate cost.

Electricity Supply

Mr. Spellar: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what direct benefits will accrue to the United Kingdom from the liberalisation of the electricity market in the European Union.

Mr. Eggar: Liberalisation of electricity markets will put downward pressure on electricity prices and will help to provide a level playing field in electricity supply in the European Union, particularly for energy-intensive industries. The opening of markets will create new investment opportunities for the United Kingdom electricity companies which do not exist at present.

Local Authorities (Contracting Out)

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade which local authorities have been approached by his Department for their views on the contracting out of

trading standards departments and/or environmental health enforcement; what proposals were made by those authorities; and what position his Department took on such proposals.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 13 July 1994]:* My officials approached the trading standards departments of the City of Westminster and the London boroughs of Wandsworth and Bromley. None of the authorities is proposing to contract out its trading standards function; however, the London borough of Bromley is considering contracting out some trading standards work. My Department has noted the position and continues to monitor developments.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Compensation Recovery Unit

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what are the major reasons for the increase in the amounts recovered by the compensation recovery unit between 1990-91 and 1993-94;

(2) if he will provide a breakdown of the main sources of income from the compensation recovery unit;

(3) from how many asbestosis victims the compensation recovery unit recovered money in 1993-94; and what were the amounts involved.

Mr. Hague: The administration of the compensation recovery scheme is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Tony Worthington, dated 14 July 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Questions asking *(a)* the main sources of income for the Compensation Recovery Unit *(b)* from how many asbestosis victims the Compensation Recovery Unit recovered money in 1993-94 and *(c)* what are the major reasons for the increase in the amounts recovered by the Compensation Recovery Unit between 1990-91 and 1993-94.

During the financial year 1993-94, £81·9 million was recovered by the Compensation Recovery Unit (CRU). The main sources of this income were as follows:

£ millions

Benefit	*Amount*
Invalidity Benefit	35·2
Statutory Sick Pay	16·7
Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit	9·2
Income Support	5·8
Reduced Earnings Allowance	5·5
Sickness Benefit	3·5
Disability Living Allowance	2·8
Mobility Allowance	1·1

The remaining £2·1 million was made up of the following benefits:

Unemployment Benefit, Attendance Allowance, Constant Attendance Allowance, Retirement Allowance, Family Credit, Severe Disablement Allowance, Disability Working Allowance and Exceptionally Severe Disablement Allowance.

During the same period the number of asbestosis cases where recovery was made by the CRU was 157 and the total amount recovered in relation to these cases was £408,665.

There are two main reasons for the increase in the amounts recovered by the CRU between 1990-91 and 1993-94:

firstly, the number of claims notified to the CRU has increased significantly over the years by some 49 per cent. since 1991;

secondly, the Compensation Recovery legislation only relates to accidents or diseases which occurred on or after 1 January 1989. Settlements which occurred in 1990-91 resulted in recovery of benefits which had been paid for one or two years only. As the more protracted claims come to settlement, up to five years of benefits are now being recovered.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Child Support Formula

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what consideration he has given to changing the child support formula so that children from the first and second families of the absent parent and any stepchildren for whom he or she may be caring are all treated equally when a maintenance assessment is carried out.

Mr. Burt: It is a basic principle of child support that, once his or her own personal living costs are met, the first duty of a parent is the support of his or her own children. Where an absent parent has stepchildren in his current family, the stepchildren's natural father has prime responsibility for their support.

However, although the main child support formula does not treat stepchildren as the absent parent's own by making allowance for their living costs, their needs are taken into account when the protected income calculation is made. This ensures that the absent parent and his family will remain significantly above income support levels after the payment of child support maintenance. The changes which we introduced in February increased this protection and will be particularly helpful to absent parents with step-families.

Bronchitis and Emphysema

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claims of disablement benefit in respect of chronic bronchitis or emphysema have been made by persons currently on income support benefit since September 1993; how many of these claims have been successful; and in which circumstances it can be financially advantageous for those suffering from chronic bronchitis or emphysema to be successful in claiming disablement benefit.

Mr. Scott: The information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Industrial injuries disablement benefit is payable in addition to other incapacity and disability benefits, but is taken into account in assessing entitlement to income-related benefits.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps he will take to ensure that those in receipt of chronic bronchitis or emphysema disablement benefit receive this payment as compensation for a prescribed disease or illness which they have suffered.

Mr. Scott: The industrial injuries scheme provides non-contributory, non means-tested, tax-free benefits on a no-fault basis to workers disabled by industrial accidents or prescribed diseases. Industrial injuries disablement benefit in respect of chronic bronchitis and emphysema, as prescribed, is payable on this basis.

Housing Expenditure Cuts

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will publish an estimate of the effect on social security expenditure and tax revenues of

reductions in Department of the Environment housing expenditure between 1992-93 and 1993-94; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hague: The information is not available. The link between reductions in Department of the Environment housing expenditure and social security expenditure and tax revenues is not direct and is affected by the complex interaction of a number of factors.

Rent Rebate and Rent Allowance

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table setting out for every year since 1988-89 how rents paid by claimants of *(a)* rent rebate and *(b)* rent allowance, divided between those claimants who are housing association tenants and those who are private sector tenants, have risen relative to the retail prices index; how much of the increase in spending on each of these benefits is accounted for by such increases above inflation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hague: The available information is in the table[1].

Year	Rent Rebate		Rent Allowance				RPI
	Eligible Rent[2]	Percentage increase	All Tenants		Housing[3] Association	Other Private	
	£		Eligible Rent[2] £	Percentage increase	£	£	Per cent.
May 1988	18·84	—	21·32	—	—	—	4·2
May 1989	20·57	9·2	24·29	13·9	—	—	8·3
May 1990	23·62	14·8	29·42	21·1	—	—	9·7
May 1991	27·29	15·5	35·75	21·5	—	—	5·8
May 1992	30·48	11·7	41·67	16·6	3[illegible]	48·57	4·3

Data Sources: The Housing Benefit Management Information System annual one percent sample of May in each year and the Employment Gazette, which provides figures based on the increase in the Retail Price Index from May of the previous year to May of the year shown.
[1] Figures on the extent to which increases in spending on rent rebate and rent allowance are due to increases in rents over inflation are not available.
[2] Data on rent paid is not available, therefore, the information relates to the amount of rent eligible for Housing Benefit.
[3] Discrete information for Housing Association tenants was not collected before 1992.

Family Credit

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will publish a table setting out the number of people who have taken up the disregard in family credit to meet part of the cost of child care, as announced in the Budget, divided between *(a)* male and female claimants and *(b)* those who were already in work before the introduction of this reform and those who have moved from unemployment into paid employment since its introduction; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will publish an estimate of the number of people who have taken up the disregard in family credit to meet part of the cost of child care, as announced in the Budget; what his estimate is of the average additional amount of family credit which they will each receive; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: We plan to introduce the child care disregard from 4 October 1994. Our best estimates are that about 150,000 families will benefit from it, of whom about 100,000 will already be in paid work and about 50,000 will move into work of 16 hours or more. The extent of additional help will depend in individual cases on earnings, on the cost of the child care and on whether family credit is received alone or in combination with housing benefit and council tax benefit.

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table setting out his estimates of the cost in 1994-95 of the disregard in family credit to meet part of the cost of child care, as announced in the Budget, as it affects *(a)* expenditure on family credit, *(b)* total expenditure on social security, including any offsetting reductions in spending on other benefits and *(c)* the public sector borrowing requirement, including any offsetting reductions in spending in other areas and any increase in tax revenues; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: The full-year effects of the proposed child care disregard in family credit, housing benefit, council tax benefit and disability working allowance, to be introduced from October 1994, are expected in the longer term to be as follows:

	£ million pa
(1) Increase in Family Credit expenditure	+250
(2) Savings on other benefits, mostly Income Support	−190
(3) Net increase in Social Security expenditure	+60
(4) Offsetting increases in Tax and NI revenue	−30
(5) Net increase in Public Sector Borrowing Requirement	+30

Pensions

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how work will progress on his proposals for the new requisite benefits test for contracted-out salary related occupational pension schemes as set out in his White Paper "Security, Equality, Choice: The Future for Pensions" published on 23 June.

Mr. Hague: A technical consultation paper is being issued today. The paper seeks views on the detailed criteria of our proposals for the new requisite benefits test, including definitions of pensionable salary and the role of scheme actuaries. It is being issued to a number of interested parties and is available to others on request. I have arranged for copies to be placed in the Library.

TREASURY

Public Sector Assets

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Cunningham), of 30 June, *Official Report*,

column 678, if he will allocate the public sector assets to broad areas of spend, distinguishing between the Government and non-governmental public sector in cash and real terms for the years specified.

Mr. Portillo: Table 8.2 of the "Statistical Supplement to the 1992 Autumn Statement", Cm. 2219, provided a detailed breakdown of public sector asset creation by spending sector and function between 1987-88 and 1992-93. Table 1.8 of the "Statistical Supplement to the Financial Statement and Budget Report 1994-95", Cm. 2519, provides a similar breakdown of public sector capital spending, on a national accounts definition, between 1988-89 and 1996-97. Annex A to chapter 5 of the "Financial Statement and Budget Report 1994-95" explains the relationship between asset creation and the national accounts definition of capital spending.

The table gives a breakdown of public sector capital spending, on a national accounts definition, in real terms between 1989-90 and 1996-97.

Public sector capital by spending sector and function, 1989-90 to 1996-97 in real terms[1]

£ million

	1989-90 outturn	*1990-91 outturn*	*1991-92 outturn*	*1992-93 outturn*	*1993-94 estimated outturn*	*1994-95 plans*	*1995-96 plans*	*1996-97 plans*
Central Government Own								
Defence	663	566	638	649	707	700	−100	500
Overseas services including overseas aid	85	90	124	147	174	100	100	100
Agriculture, fisheries, foods and forestry	173	633	497	429	454	200	200	200
Trade, industry, energy and employment	797	750	604	531	625	700	700	700
of which: Regional and general industrial support	500	395	313	224	264	300	300	200
National roads	1,824	2,254	2,142	2,196	2,278	2,100	2,000	2,000
Other transport	68	35	33	36	43	—	—	—
Housing	1,206	1,813	2,194	2,559	2,044	1,600	1,500	1,500
Other environmental services	232	221	240	404	448	300	300	200
Prisons	450	527	451	355	293	300	200	200
Other law, order and protective services	255	278	277	294	278	300	200	200
Education	541	576	633	629	842	800	1,000	1,100
National heritage	160	180	200	191	170	200	500	500
Hospital and community health services	1,671	1,769	1,589	1,402	1,064	500	600	500
Other health and personal social services	142	152	163	185	135	100	100	100
Social security	372	332	353	356	386	300	300	200
Miscellaneous	510	629	655	419	498	500	400	400
Total central government	9,148	10,802	10,793	10,781	10,442	8,800	8,100	8,600
Local Authorities								
Agriculture, fisheries, foods and forestry	43	55	46	9	33	—	—	—
Trade, industry, energy employment	15	9	12	9	26	—	—	—
Local roads	1,279	1,106	1,215	1,283	1,494	—	—	—
Other transport	246	174	139	186	180	—	—	—
Housing	2,635	1,414	1,966	1,688	1,460	—	—	—
Other environmental services	1,257	1,211	1,334	1,370	1,579	—	—	—
Law, order and protective services	376	304	331	359	361	—	—	—
Education	1,038	916	914	904	902	—	—	—
National heritage	510	383	301	234	296	—	—	—
Personal social services	228	201	172	166	205	—	—	—
Total local authorities	7,627	5,773	6,430	6,208	6,536	5,500	5,000	4,750
Public Corporations								
Electricity industries	2,600	2,487	788	542	426	300	100	100
British Rail	685	1,031	1,337	1,523	1,067	800	700	600
Other nationalised industries	2,146	1,236	1,066	1,366	1,396	1,200	1,200	1,300
Other public corporations	772	1,097	1,356	1,705	2,243	2,800	2,700	2,700
Total public corporations	6,204	5,851	4,547	5,136	5,133	5,200	4,800	4,800
Allocation from the reserve	—	—	—	—	—	300	600	900
plus national accounts adjustment	1,204	450	628	1,076	1,003	900	900	900
Total public sector	24,183	22,876	22,398	23,201	23,114	20,750	19,500	20,000

[1] 1992-93 prices.

Pensioners (Income Tax)

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimates he has, for the latest tax year, of the number of people over retirement age *(a)* who pay no income tax at all, *(b)* who pay income tax only at the 20 per cent. rate, *(c)* who pay more than (i) £100, (ii) £500, (iii) £1,000 and (iv) £3,000 in income tax in the year.

Mr. Dorrell: Provisional estimates for 1994-95 are:

	Numbers (millions)
(a) Non-taxpayers aged 65 or over	6·2
(b) Taxpayers aged 65 or over liable only at 20 per cent.	1·1

	Numbers (millions)
(c) Taxpayers aged 65 or over with liabilities of	
(i) over £100	2·7
(ii) over £500	1·8
(iii) over £1,000	1·2
(iv) over £3,000	0·4

Trade Statistics

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) when he intends to restore the monthly return of trade statistics reporting British trade on a comprehensive basis;

(2) what are the reasons for the delay in the publication of United Kingdom trade figures with individual EU countries and with the EU as a whole; and when he hopes to be able to publish these figures on a monthly basis.

Mr. Nelson: The Central Statistical Office restarted publication of monthly estimates of the total value of the United Kingdom's visible trade with the world, including figures for trade with the European Community, on 11 October 1993. Since then, it has published aggregate details for trade with the European Community for every month, including details for trade with individual countries, 10 weeks after the end of the month. This information is available on the Central Statistical Office database, which can be accessed through the Library of the House. The full detailed statistics for every month are made available approximately 14 weeks after the end of the month through marketing agents appointed by Customs and Excise. It is planned to reduce this delay in publication to 10 or 11 weeks by the end of March 1995.

Comparable statistics for trade with countries outside the European Community are available six weeks after the end of a month. This difference in the availability of the two sets of statistics is due to differing systems of collection. The statistics on trade with European Community countries are not released until response from industry is such that the statistics are of an acceptable quality.

House Builders Federation

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last met the House Builders Federation; and when he next expects to meet it.

Mr. Portillo: The Chancellor last met the House Builders Federation on 22 September 1993. My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans at present for further meetings with the Federation.

EU Contributions

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest estimate of the United Kingdom's gross contributions to the European Union in 1995, after rebate; and what he expects will be the gross contribution in 1994.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 11 July 1994]:* The Government's latest estimate of the United Kingdom's gross contributions to EC institutions for the calendar year 1994 is set out in the "Statement on the 1994 Community Budget" Cm. 2486, which was published in March this year. The Government's estimate for the calendar year 1995 will be published in next year's statement.

"The Arts and Compulsory Competitive Tendering"

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects to respond to the report "The Arts and Compulsory Competitive Tendering" commissioned from the consultants Positive Solutions Ltd.

Mr. Brooke *[pursuant to his reply, 13 July 1994, c. 599]:* I have been asked to reply.

Last year, I commissioned Positive Solutions to undertake a study of management practice in local authority arts facilities and ways in which it might be improved.

The consultants have produced a thorough report, reflecting extensive consultation with local authorities, arts organisations, the commercial sector and others: a copy is being placed in the Library. Taken with the recent Arts Council survey of local authority expenditure on the arts, it shows that local authorities are very significant supporters of all forms of arts provision, both through direct assistance of artists and entertainers and through the provision of facilities for arts events either in purpose-built venues or in other general purpose facilities. I am pleased to pay tribute to local authorities' work in ensuring a high quality and innovative arts sector, accessible to all.

The report shows that there have been significant improvements in local authorities' management of arts facilities. Since the Audit Commission's report on arts and entertainment in 1991, greater attention is now paid to such matters as the definition and communication of arts policies and the control of expenditure against agreed plans and targets.

Nevertheless, there is general agreement that performance varies greatly between authorities and that there remains considerable scope for management improvements. There is also further scope for authorities to encourage the growth of private sector competition in the longer term.

I therefore propose to review with local authorities a detailed programme of voluntary mechanisms for implementing management improvements where they have not already been adopted. Specific areas to cover include identification of a client-side function within authorities; development of performance indicators similar to those developed by the Audit Commission for other areas of local authority services; establishment of service level agreements; monitoring of performance against agreed performance targets; mechanisms for effective consumer feedback; and scrutiny of staff terms and conditions. In addition, as means of promoting competition I shall explore with local authorities mechanisms to encourage them to introduce efficiencies of scale through cluster management and to exercise customer choice within the internal market of their facilities.

I shall aim to conclude this review by the end of 1994-95, with a view to implementing its conclusions from the following year. I would propose to assess the progress which authorities have made on this voluntary basis in two years' time.

I am confident that the resulting changes will improve management standards in arts facilities and be to the benefit of users, artists, local authority staff and local taxpayer alike.

HEALTH

Police Surgeons

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the standard of treatment given by police surgeons to detainees compared with standard national health service treatment.

Mr. Sackville: Arrangements for the provision of services of police surgeons are a matter for individual police authorities. I understand that police surgeons are predominantly national health service general practitioners. There is no reason why the standard of treatment given by police surgeons to detainees should be any different from that given to NHS patients.

Trust Membership

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list by wave *(a)* the number of non-executive directors of NHS trust hospitals and *(b)* the number of chairs of NHS trust hospitals by salary band.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information on the numbers of trust chairmen by salary band is not available centrally. The number of chairmen and non-executive directors of national health service trusts by wave is shown in the table.

	Chairmen	*Non-executive directors*
First Wave	49	246
Second Wave	91	458
Third Wave	136	668
Fourth Wave	143	707

Surgical Cases

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what proportion of patients admitted for day case surgery in *(a)* England, *(b)* each regional health authority and *(c)* each hospital or trust between January and March for (i) inguinal hernia repair, (ii) arthroscopy of the knee, (iii) cataract extraction and (iv) laparoscopy with sterilisation had their condition successfully treated by that surgical intervention;

(2) what proportion of patients admitted for surgery in *(a)* England, *(b)* each regional health authority and *(c)* each hospital or trust between January and March in (i) general surgery, (ii) urology, (iii) trauma and orthopaedics, (iv) ear, nose and throat, *(v)* ophthalmology, (vi) oral surgery, (vii) plastic surgery and (viii) gynaecology whose condition was successfully treated by that intervention.

Mr. Sackville: The information is not available centrally. General practitioners and local health authorities are encouraged to collect information on outcomes at local level to judge the quality of service provided. The Department has a range of initiatives aimed at developing and promoting methods to support this function. These are described in a leaflet on the work of the central health outcomes unit, copies of which are available in the Library.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what percentage of patients admitted to hospital in *(a)* England, *(b)* each regional health authority and *(c)* each hospital or trust between January and March for surgery subsequently died before discharge in (i) general surgery, (ii) urology, (iii) trauma and orthopaedics, (iv) ear, nose and throat, (v) ophthalmology, (vi) oral surgery, (vii) plastic surgery and (viii) gynaecology;

(2) what percentage of patients admitted to hospital in (i) England, (ii) each regional health authority and (iii) each hospital or trust between January and March for *(a)* acute myocardial infarction, *(b)* congestive heart failure, *(c)* pneumonia/influenza, *(d)* stroke, *(e)* sepsis, blood poisoning, *(f)* hip replacement/recontruction, *(g)* prostatectomy, *(h)* gall bladder removal, *(i)* initial pacemaker insertion, *(j)* maternity, *(k)* angioplasty, *(l)* coronary artery bypass graft and *(m)* all admissions, subsequently died before discharge;

(3) what percentage of patients were admitted to hospital in *(a)* England, *(b)* each regional health authority and *(c)* each hospital or trust between January and March 1993 for surgery who lived for not less than (A) 90 days, (B) 180 days and (C) one year after their operation in (i) general surgery, (ii) urology, (iii) trauma and orthopaedics, (iv) ear, nose and throat, (v) ophthalmology, (vi) oral surgery, (vii) plastic surgery and (viii) gynaecology;

(4) what percentage of patients admitted to NHS hospitals between January and March subsequently died before discharge in hospitals with *(a)* 1 to 49, *(b)* 50 to 99, *(c)* 100 to 299, *(d)* 300 to 499, *(e)* 500 to 999 and *(f)* 1,000 plus beds.

Mr. Sackville: The information is not available in the form requested. Information by regional health authority in England on the percentage of patients in the acute sector who died in hospital was published in table 17 of the Department of Health statistical bulletin entitled "NHS Hospital Activity Statistics: England 1981 to 1991-92". A copy is available in the Library. Post-operative deaths which occur after patients have been discharged from hospital are not linked to the hospital records.

Consultants (Choice)

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of NHS patients referred to hospital between January and March were given a choice of consultant;

(2) what proportion of NHS patients *(a)* requested and *(b)* were granted a second medical opinion following a diagnosis by a consultant between January and March.

Mr. Sackville: The information is not available. The patients charter includes the right for a patient, when his or her general practitioner thinks it necessary, to be referred to a consultant who is acceptable to the patient; and to be referred for a second opinion if the patient and the GP agree that this is desirable.

Out-patient Consultations

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what proportion of patients attending accident and emergency departments in *(a)* England, *(b)* each regional health authority and *(c)* each hospital or trust between January and March were treated by an accident and emergency consultant;

(2) what proportion of patients attending out-patient clinics in *(a)* England, *(b)* each regional health authority and *(c)* each hospital or trust between January and March were seen (i) by consultants and (ii) by other health staff.

Mr. Sackville: The information is not available centrally. It is for individual consultants to make professional judgments about how their case load is shared with other members of their team.

Accident and Emergency Departments

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list each hospital accident and emergency department which restricted access to patients at any time *(a)* in 1993-94 and *(b)* in the first three months of 1994-95; and if she will indicate the number of occasions on which access was restricted in each case.

Mr. Sackville: Information on the opening hours of individual accident and emergency departments is not available centrally. Every health authority is required to purchase accident and emergency services which meet the needs of all patients who need these services.

Angiontensin-converting Enzyme Inhibitors

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was *(a)* the expenditure and expenditure per head of population on general practitioner prescribed angiontensin-converting enzyme inhibitors in each region and family health services authority area in 1992-93, *(b)* the number of prescriptions per head in such areas and *(c)* the cost per prescription of such inhibitors in such areas.

Dr. Mawhinney: The available information will be placed in the Library.

Cold Surgery

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of patients admitted for cold surgery in *(a)* England, *(b)* each regional health authority and *(c)* each NHS hospital or trust between January and March were (i) NHS patients of fundholding GPs, (ii) NHS patients of non-fundholding GPs and (iii) private patients in (1) general surgery, (2) urology, (3) trauma and orthopaedics, (4) ear, nose and throat (5) ophthalmology, (6) oral surgery, (7) plastic surgery, (8) gynaecology and (9) all specialties.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is not available in the form requested.

Patients Charter

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the cost of producing each copy of the patients charter "Hospital and Ambulance Services Comparative Performance Guide"; how many were printed; and what was the total cost of distribution.

Dr. Mawhinney: Some 150,000 copies of the patients charter "Hospital and Ambulance Services Comparative Performance Guide" were produced, at a unit cost of £1·63. The total cost of distribution was £42,000.

Health Authority Mergers

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her policy on merging health authorities when there is not strong local support for mergers.

Dr. Mawhinney: Ministers take into account a wide range of local views and the best interests of patients before deciding upon any proposal to merge health authorities.

Children in Care

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many children are being held in local authority care as of 8 July whose parents are foreign nationals serving a prison sentence or being held on remand in custody in prisons in England and Wales.

Mr. Bowis: No information is held by the Department concerning the nationality of parents of children looked after by local authorities. It is estimated that, at 31 March 1992, the latest year for which figures are available, a total of 240 children in England were looked after because one or both of their parents was in prison.

Personal Social Services

Mr. Clappison: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what further steps she intends to improve standards in the personal social services.

Mr. Bowis: In accordance with plans previously announced, the Department is today issuing an invitation to tender for a project concerned with the definition of some possible standards of conduct and practice for those engaged in social services. We intend to use the outcome of this project to extend discussion of the social services issues raised in the final report of the General Social Services Council action group published by the National Institute for Social Work in 1994.

I am placing a copy of the tender invitation in the Library.

Multiple Births

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many sets of *(a)* twins, *(b)* triplets, *(c)* quadruplets, *(d)* quintuplets and *(e)* sextuplets were born in England and Wales in each year from 1990 to 1993; what was the total number of maternities in England and Wales in each year; and how many multiple births of each type in each year were conceived as a result of (i) in-vitro fertilisation, (ii) gamete intra-fallopian transfer and (iii) other forms of assisted conceptions.

Mr. Sackville: The latest available figures for England and Wales are:

Type of birth	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
Twins	7,934	8,160	8,314
Triplets	201	208	202
Quadruplets	10	10	8
Quintuplets	—	2	1
Sextuplets	—	—	—
Total number of maternities with multiple births	8,145	8,380	8,525
Total maternities	701,030	693,857	683,854

Source: Office of Population Censuses and Surveys.

Information on multiple maternities is not yet available for 1993.

Information on the number of multiple births attributed to assist reproduction is not available. However, some information on multiple pregnancies for 1990 and 1991 is published in the first and second annual reports of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority and in earlier reports of the HFEA's predecessors, the interim licensing authority. Copies are available in the Library.

Information relating to 1992 will be published later this month in the next annual report of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority.

Birth Weights

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his answer of 3 December 1993, *Official Report*, columns *799-800*, what further research her Department has funded in response to the proposals for collecting data about children who were very low birthweight babies in the Audit Commission's report, "Children First".

Mr. Sackville: Government-funded research into neonatal intensive care and issues surrounding low birth weight continues to be carried out by the Medical Research Council, which receives its grant in aid from the office of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. In addition to the research work reported in my earlier reply to the hon. Member of 3 December, *Official Report*, columns *799-800*, the national perinatal epidemiology unit is developing a full-scale project proposal on the detection of trends in morbidity and disability among seven-year-old children of different birth weights. The Department is also examining, through its public health information strategy a project to improve information on maternal and child health to support the Department's public health needs.

Research Units

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 30 June, *Official Report*, column *674*, what plans she has to evaluate the first pilot research centre announced on 21 February; and what criteria and methods will be used in the evaluation.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Department's director of research and development will establish a steering group to oversee the work of the centre. Its terms of reference will include advising on the delivery of the research programme, its scientific quality and its continuing relevance to policy and practice, together with the effectiveness of the dissemination of research findings. In addition, the steering group will undertake formal reviews of the work of the centre based on the receipt of an independent peer review at particular points during the contract period and advise on action arising from the reviews.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 30 June, *Official Report*, column *674*, what plans she has to establish any further research centres.

Dr. Mawhinney: I shall make an announcement in due course.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what autonomous powers NHS trusts have to determine geographical catchment areas within the district covered by a health authority which has a contract with the trust from which patients will be exclusively drawn; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: None.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the latest regulations or guidance which govern decisions as to the appropriateness of a person to serve as the chair or non-executive of an NHS trust.

Dr. Mawhinney: The National Health Service Trusts (Membership and Procedure) Regulations 1990.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to instruct national health service trusts to produce and publish separate audited accounts for their commercial activities; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: All national health service trusts publish annual accounts, as far as possible, in line with best commercial practice and the Companies Acts. We have no plans to instruct them to produce and publish any additional and separate audited accounts.

Epsom District General Hospital

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions she has had with Epsom district general hospital over the treatment of patients with a history of mental illness.

Mr. Bowis: None.

Royal Free Hospital

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions she or officials of her Department have had with *(a)* officials from the Royal Free hospital, London, *(b)* officials from Camden and Islington district health authority and *(c)* representatives of general practitioners in Camden and Islington regarding the decision of the Royal Free hospital to restrict routine admissions to patients of general practitioners practising within the area covered by the former Hampstead health authority; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: None.

Medicines Control Agency

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether she has started her review of the Medicines Control Agency.

Mr. Sackville: A review of the agency status of the Medicines Control Agency has now started. As a next steps agency, the performance of the MCA will be evaluated and MCA activities will be subjected to the normal prior option tests set out in the 1993 "Next Steps Review", Cm. 2430, copies of which are available in the Library. Comments and contributions from those with an interest in the MCA and its work would be welcome and should be sent by 23 September 1994 to Kate James, MCA Review Team, Room 360C, Skipton house, 80 London road, London SE1 6LW.

Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what changes she has authorised in the access arrangements to the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys' computers.

Mr. Sackville: The British Computer Society reviewed the confidentiality and computing arrangements for the

1991 census, and its report was published in a White Paper in 1991, Cm 1447, copies of which are available in the Library. The society's report commended the arrangements that had been made to secure the processing of the census, but also recognised that significant changes to computer access mechanisms and procedures would take place in the 1990s. The Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys also recognised that advances in information technology would provide opportunities to improve the availability of the wide range of statistical information which it holds. The society's report had recommended a further review after the main census processing was complete. In 1993, the Registrar-General commissioned such a review from Insight Consulting, who are independent security consultants. In the light of their report, I have agreed, in principle, that information which OPCS would normally provide to central Government agencies by other means —and only that information—may also be directly accessible to them on the OPCS mainframe computer. For other users, information may be directly accessible only from a separate computer not connected to the OPCS mainframe.

In addition, the Registrar-General has engaged Secure Information Systems Ltd. to advise on technical and management issues. With their help, arrangements are being put in place to guard against unauthorised access to personal information held on OPCS's computers.

I have also agreed that, if the results of market testing require this, and subject to the passage of the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill, data managed by OPCS may be processed by contractors, either on OPCS's computers or elsewhere. Any such contractors will be subject to the same stringent confidentiality requirements as OPCS's own staff.

The Registrar-General and I are confident that the precautions taken will enable OPCS to provide a welcome increase in the availability of information while continuing to manage the data in its care in accordance with best practice, to maintain security and confidentiality of those data, to meet fully the provisions of data protection legislation, to honour the guarantees of confidentiality of personal information, and to comply with its published statement of policies on the security and confidentiality of personal information.

WALES

Cardiff Bay Development Corporation

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how much the Cardiff Bay development corporation spent on legal fees in each year in the period 1983 to 1993;

(2) how many legal actions were initiated by the Cardiff Bay development corporation which were *(a)* discontinued and *(b)* settled out of court for each year in the period 1983 to 1993.

Mr. Redwood: I will arrange for the chief executive of the corporation to write to the hon. Member and for a copy of his letter to be placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his oral statement of 7 July, *Official Report*, column *465*, what consultations he has had with the relevant local authorities in relation to the winding up of the Cardiff Bay development corporation; and what proposals he has made for independent arbitration in relation to the value of the land and other assets to be transferred to the local authorities when no agreement can be reached between the local authorities and the corporation.

Mr. Redwood: The Welsh Office will be consulting local authorities about this after the reorganisation of local government has been implemented.

Redundant Hospitals

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales for what reasons the selling price of redundant national health service hospitals is not made publicly available after completion of the sale.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Details of individual land and property sales are commercially sensitive and may impact on future potential sales. In some instances, the purchaser and vendor may agree a confidentiality clause in the sale contract.

Agricultural Schemes

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the cost in 1993 in Wales of payments under *(a)* the sheep annual premium, *(b)* the suckler cow premium, *(c)* the beef special premium, and *(d)* the hill livestock compensatory allowances; and what is his estimate of the cost in 1994.

Mr. Redwood: The information is as follows:

	1993 Estimated outturn £ million	*1994 Provision £ million*
(a) Sheep Annual Premium	125·7	121·7
(b) Suckler Cow Premium	17·1	21·5
(c) Beef Special Premium	16·0	20·82
(d) Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances	32·0	28·9
Total	190·8	192·92

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the cost in 1993 in Wales of payments under *(a)* the environmentally sensitive area scheme, *(b)* the nitrate sensitive area scheme, *(c)* the farm and conservation grant scheme, *(d)* the pilot beef and sheep extensification schemes, *(e)* the woodland grant scheme, *(f)* the farm woodland premium scheme, *(g)* the orchard grubbing scheme, *(h)* the optional five year set-aside scheme, *(i)* the habitat scheme, *(j)* the moorland scheme, *(k)* the countryside access scheme and *(l)* the organic aid scheme; and what is his estimate of the cost in 1994.

Mr. Redwood: The information requested is in the table:

£ million

Scheme	*Expenditure 1993-94*	*Expenditure forecast for 1994-95*
(a) Environmentally Sensitive Area Scheme	1·541	6·399
(b) Nitrate Sensitive Area Scheme[1]	—	—
(c) Farm and Conservation Grant Scheme	6·200	6·900

Scheme	Expenditure 1993-94	Expenditure forecast for 1994-95
(d) Pilot Beef and Sheep Extensification Scheme	0·027	0·027
(e) Woodland Grant Scheme	1·200	1·300
(f) Farm Woodland Premium Scheme	0·057	0·204
(g) Orchard Grubbing Scheme	nil	nil
(h) Optional Five Year Set-Aside Scheme	0·349	0·405
(i) Habitat Scheme	nil	0·500
(j) Moorland Scheme	nil	nil
(k) Countryside Access Scheme	nil	nil
(l) Organic Aid Scheme	nil	0·170

[1] This scheme is not applicable to Wales.

Health Promotion Authority

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received in relation to the publication of the district auditor's report of April 1994 into the allegations of travel expenses fraud and public and private work recompense procedures at the Health Promotion Authority for Wales; what proposals he has to respond to the district auditor's recommendations; and what response he has made to the district auditor's request for legal advice on the application of the guidelines on privately negotiated fees and contracts arising from work done in Health Promotion Authority time.

Mr. Redwood: The only representations that I have received concerning the publication of the district auditor's report have been from the hon. Gentleman. The district auditor made a number of recommendations to the authority. I understand that the authority has accepted all these recommendations and either has already implemented them or are in the process of doing so.

My Department provides legal advice to the Health Promotion Authority for Wales and as part of this function obtained counsel's opinion on the points raised by the district audit service. This was provided to the authority on 27 May 1994.

Management Costs

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to announce the final outturn for the management costs line in his departmental costs for the year 1993-94; and if he will list each of the management cost reduction initiatives he has undertaken in each quarter of that year and the savings estimates for the consequences of each of them *(a)* in 1993-94 and *(b)* in a full year.

Mr. Redwood: The Welsh Office appropriation accounts for 1993-94, including details of administration costs, are due to be published by the National Audit Office in October. The Welsh Office is committed to improving its cost-effectiveness, and efficiency savings of at least £3·8 million—5·5 per cent. of running costs—were secured in 1993-94. A breakdown of these savings is not available in the form requested, but the main gains reflect the absorption of new work, improved purchasing procedures and the rationalisation of accommodation.

Tourism

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairman of the Wales tourist board in relation to the number of hotels and other tourist enterprises in receipt of loans from the board who requested suspension of repayments in each of the years from 1988 to 1993; and how many suspended repayments during that period before recommencement were for *(a)* one year or less, *(b)* one to two years, *(c)* two to three years and *(d)* more than three years.

Mr. Redwood: None on these specific matters. The information requested is as follows:

	Number
(i) Requests for suspension of loan repayment:	
1988	Nil
1989	Nil
1990	Nil
1991	Nil
1992	4
1993	1
(ii) Length of time before recommencement	
(a) 1 year or less	4
(b) 1-2 years	1
(c) 2-3 years	Nil
(d) More than 3 years	Nil

Mid-Wales Development Grant

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his oral statement of 7 July, *Official Report*, column 464, what consultations he has had with the Welsh local authority associations in relation to the transfer of the Mid-Wales development grant to the relevant local authorities.

Mr. Redwood: My officials will be contacting the local authority associations soon.

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has for strengthening the guidelines for the formation and conduct of joint venture boards established to further the urban regeneration aims and objectives of the Welsh Development Agency and other parties; and what representations he has had in relation to the confidentiality of information supplied by private companies to joint venture boards chaired by agency personnel.

Mr. Redwood: Operational guidelines for the Welsh Development Agency are kept under review and I have recently approved revised guidelines covering its urban development function. I have received representations about the agency's involvement with the Cynon Valley joint venture and the confidentiality of information supplied by private companies. These matters are being considered as part of the investigations put in hand by the agency.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairman of the Welsh Development Agency concerning the use of letters of comfort or their telephoned equivalent by agency staff involved with joint venture boards to assist third parties in the acquisition of land for urban regeneration purposes.

Mr. Redwood: *I have had none.*

Local Government (Wales) Bill

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the date of the interim meeting with the Office of Parliamentary Counsel for the purpose of drafting amendments to clause 44 of the Local Government (Wales) Bill *[Lords]*.

Mr. Redwood: I have nothing to add to my replies of 26 May, *Official Report*, column *235* and 28 June, *Official Report*, columns *516-11*.

DEFENCE

Plutonium

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) of 4 July, *Official Report*, columns *82-83*, which reactors were the source of the plutonium for the test.

Mr. Aitken: The military reactors at Calder Hall and Chapel Cross.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) of 4 July, *Official Report*, columns *83-84*, regarding the use of plutonium from the United Kingdom in the United States of America, whether any undertaking was given by the United States Government in 1964 that plutonium produced in the United Kingdom from civil reactors would not be used in United States of America experimental nuclear explosive devices.

Mr. Aitken: The assurance was that plutonium from United Kingdom civil reactors would not be used for weapons purposes. We understand the term "weapons purposes" in this context to include experimental nuclear explosive devices.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what occasions since 1964 his Department has requested British Nuclear Fuels, or its division within the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, to co-process weapons-grade plutonium from electricity board reactors along with that arising from the dedicated military reactors at Calder Hall or Chapel Cross.

Mr. Aitken: We have no record of ever having made such a request.

Helicopters

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many *(a)* RAF and *(b)* RN Sea King and Wessex search-and-rescue helicopters are expected to be available in *(a)* 1995, *(b)* 1996 and *(c)* 1997;

(2) how many *(a)* RAF and *(b)* RN Sea King and Wessex search-and-rescue helicopters were available, serviceable or being serviced on 1 January 1994 and how many are expected to be available, serviceable or being serviced on 31 December 1994;

(3) how many *(a)* RAF and *(b)* RN Sea King and Wessex search-and-rescue helicopters were available, serviceable or being serviced in 1993.

Mr. Hanley: For the RAF the total number of SAR helicopters available, serviceable or being serviced, were as follows:

	1993	*1 January 1994*	*31 December 1994*
Sea King	17	17	17
Wessex	17	16	11

On current plans, the RAF will have the following numbers of SAR helicopters deployed in the United Kingdom:

	1 April 1995	*1 April 1996*	*1 April 1997*
Sea King	17	23	23
Wessex	9	6	Nil

A total of five Sea Kings are normally made available by the Royal Navy for the search and rescue task. As SAR is not a primary task of RN helicopters, however, future availability cannot be determined with any precision.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what instructions or protocols govern RAF Wessex search-and-rescue helicopters missions at night or in bad weather; and how they differ from those in respect of the RAF Sea King search-and-rescue helicopters.

Mr. Hanley: I will write to the hon. Member.

Redundant Military Sites

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what obligations his Department have to clean up redundant military sites before disposing of them.

Mr. Hanley: There is no statutory requirement fully to restore land offered for sale. It is my Department's policy, however, to seek to identify instances of contamination on sites allocated for disposal and this information is made available to prospective purchasers and will be taken into account in agreeing the sale price. Decontamination work is generally limited to the removal of ordnance and other contaminants such as explosives, radioactive and microbiological materials on which a civilian contractor could not be expected to have appropriate expertise.

Proof and Experimental Establishments

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what considerations his Department has given to the environmental impact of siting an ammunition demilitarisation and disposal facility at the proof and experimental establishment, Shoeburyness.

Mr. Aitken: The facility has received accreditation by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution. The local authority was also consulted and supplied with all relevant information including transport movements, noise data and meteorological analysis.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what studies his Department has done of the cost in terms of *(a)* infrastructure and *(b)* recruitment at transferring the NATO small arms regional test centre from proof and experimental establishment, Pendine.

Mr. Aitken: The European regional test centre uses facilities which are required for national purposes. There

would be no separately identifiable costs were it to transfer with other small arms work. A decision on the location of the ERTC is for the NATO authorities.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total revenue and operating cost of proof and experimental establishment, Pendine, in the financial year 1993-94.

Mr. Aitken: Gross operating costs at proof and experimental establishment, Pendine in financial year 1993-94 were £7·157 million. Receipts over the same period totalled £2·259 million.

Salisbury Plain and Otterburn

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which regiments that use multiple-launch rocket systems and AS90s are likely to train with them on *(a)* Salisbury plain and *(b)* Otterburn; where the regiments will be based; where their multiple-launch rocket systems and AS90s will be stored; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: There is one AS90 regiment at Tidworth and one at Topcliffe. MLRS regiments are based at Catterick and Larkhill and it is intended that a further regiment will be based at Ouston from late 1995 when it returns from Germany. Equipment will be collocated with these regiments.

It is planned that they will conduct their AS90 and MLRS training at Salisbury plain, Otterburn and Catterick.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is the remit for the environmental impact assessment for his Department's proposals for Otterburn; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what arrangements he is making for consultations with *(a)* statutory organisations, *(b)* voluntary organisations and *(c)* individuals concerning his Department's proposals for Otterburn; what are the stages of this consultation process; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: It is our intention to appoint independent consultants in August to carry out a full environmental impact assessment in accordance with the provisions of Department of Environment circular 15/88, to consider the effects of our proposals for Otterburn. This is expected to take approximately four months to complete. As part of the EIA, the consultants will seek the views of the local planning authority, statutory bodies, and other interested parties. In addition, my officials will provide briefings to voluntary organisations. The formal consultation process is a matter for the local planning authority, after submission by my Department of a notice of proposed development.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to develop dry training at Otterburn in the future; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: While the proposals which I announced on 23 June, *Official Report,* columns *250-51,* will not involve an increase in dry training at Otterburn, the pattern of dry training carried out there is likely to change. In addition, we are currently considering our overall requirement for dry training in the United Kingdom.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he intends to conduct a public inquiry into his Department's proposals for developments at Otterburn; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: My Department's proposals for the development of the Otterburn training area will be submitted to the local planning authority, for its consideration in accordance with the provisions of the Department of Environment circular 18/84. If the local planning authority raises objections to the proposed developments, the matter will be referred to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment to determine whether a public inquiry should be held.

Military Training

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what review has been conducted concerning the future military training requirements in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The structure and content of training for all three services is kept under constant review to ensure that it meets present and future operational requirements. For example, I announced on 7 July, *Official Report,* column *263,* a wide review of how and where Army-sponsored training is conducted.

In addition, in accordance with recommendations contained in the 36th report of the Committee of Public Accounts dated 26 April 1993, my Department is carrying out a study to compare the requirement for Army training land with existing capacity. This study is due to be completed shortly.

Rocket Systems

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the regiments which use *(a)* AS90s and *(b)* multiple launch rocket systems; how many are attached to each regiment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The 1st Regiment Royal Horse Artillery and 3rd Regiment Royal Horse Artillery are equipped with AS90. Each regiment currently has 24 guns, which will rise to 32 guns in 1995. Only 24 guns will be manned during peace time for training.

The 5th Regiment Royal Artillery, 32nd Regiment Royal Artillery and 39th Regiment Royal Artillery are to be equipped with the multiple launch rocket system. Each regiment has 18 launchers.

McCarthy and Sons (Torquay)

Mr. Allason: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if McCarthy and Sons (Torquay) Ltd. is eligible to participate in his Department's contracts.

Mr. Aitken: Provided that McCarthy and Sons, Torquay, meet the MOD's contract terms, including security requirements, there is no reason why the company should not be eligible to bid for MOD contracts.

F3 Tornados

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his letter of 22 June, when he expects to commence civil legal action against Brecom in relation to the Airwork damage to the F3 Tornados at RAF St. Athan.

Mr. Aitken: Work to investigate the damage caused by Airwork and to compile the technical and cost evidence necessary to support a claim is not yet completed. It will be some time therefore before the appropriate action to prosecute a claim for compensation can be commenced.

Ministry of Defence Police

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when Sir John Blelloch's inquiry report was received by his Department.

Mr. Hanley: The report was received by officials on 1 July 1994.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) when a copy of the report of Sir John Blelloch was sent to his Department's Police Federation for consultation purposes;

(2) if he will list those to whom the report of Sir John Blelloch has been circulated for consultation purposes since its receipt by his Department.

Mr. Hanley: Sir John Blelloch's report has been circulated widely both within my Department and within other interested Government Departments. Copies have also been sent to the Association of Chief Police Officers, to staff associations representing the MOD police including the Defence Police Federation and to trades unions representing the MOD guard service. These were provided on 14 July. Copies have also been placed in the Library of the House. Consultation on specific proposals will be undertaken in due course in the normal way.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if it is his intention in relation to the consultation timescale and procedure for the report and recommendations of Sir John Blelloch, to follow the practice of the Home Secretary in consulting on the report of Sir Patrick Sheehy in respect of allowing the Police Federation to be consulted fully prior to decisions being taken at ministerial level;

(2) if he will publish the report and recommendation of Sir John Blelloch into the future of his Department's police.

Mr. Hanley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth) on 14 July, *Official Report*, columns 760-61.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what requests have been received from his Department's Police Federation about advancing the consultative procedure in respect of the contents of the report and recommendations of Sir John Blelloch.

Mr. Hanley: The Defence Police Federation wrote to the Department on 4 July 1994 requesting an early copy of the report by Sir John Blelloch. It was provided with a copy of Sir John's report on 14 July 1994.

Defence Postal and Courier Services Agency

Mr. Lester: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what key performance targets have been set for the Defence Postal and Courier Services Agency for the financial year 1994-95.

Mr. Hanley: The Defence Postal and Courier Services Agency has been set the following key targets:

1. Review the assessment of Military Core Capability and Report by 1 July 1994.
2. Increase the Agency's efficiency by making 0·5 per cent. saving against 1993-94 outturn net operating costs.
3. Improve the percentage of mail moved by the MOD Mail Service that meets Quality of Service standards by 0·5 per cent. against target.
4. Complete Phase 2 of the DPCS Market Testing Plan.
5. Following the necessary consultations, implement the Mail 2000 recommendations, and report progress by 31 March 1995.

SCOTLAND

NHS Staff

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the latest figures and list for each of the last four years by region the number of *(a)* doctors, *(b)* nurses, *(c)* midwives, *(d)* health visitors, *(e)* administration and clerical staff and *(f)* managers.

Mr. Stewart: The information requested is shown in the tables. It should be noted that tables *(c)* and *(d)* are extracts from table *(b)*.

(a) Hospital and Community Medical Staff; by health board: at 30 September

	Number			
	1990	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
Scotland	7,302	7,312	7,475	7,441
Argyll and Clyde	434	424	436	463
Ayrshire and Arran	340	347	368	384
Borders	95	95	100	106
Dumfries and Galloway	179	185	191	193
Fife	281	314	320	312
Forth Valley	284	289	297	277
Grampian	739	756	769	759
Greater Glasgow	2,087	2,035	2,064	1,984
Highland	254	256	258	250
Lanarkshire	483	487	514	500
Lothian	1,349	1,318	1,349	1,396
Orkney	17	17	17	17
Shetland	15	17	15	20
Tayside	649	669	665	694
Western Isles	18	17	24	24
CSA	78	81	81	78
State Hospital, Carstairs	—	5	7	9

(b) Qualified Nursing staff; by health board: at 30 September

	Number			
	1990	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
Scotland	42,459	43,011	43,123	42,344
Argyll and Clyde	3,055	3,159	3,220	3,188
Ayrshire and Arran	2,394	2,493	2,436	2,422
Borders	799	791	829	842
Dumfries and Galloway	1,310	1,336	1,349	1,365
Fife	2,436	2,497	2,513	2,604
Forth Valley	2,294	2,338	2,473	2,329
Grampian	4,566	4,586	4,709	4,160
Greater Glasgow	9,042	8,850	8,642	8,534
Highland	1,809	1,831	1,843	1,798
Lanarkshire	3,954	3,970	3,809	3,758
Lothian	5,979	6,053	6,073	6,162
Orkney	175	184	188	201
Shetland	175	192	187	188
Tayside	4,117	4,128	4,241	4,154
Western Isles	285	284	280	324
CSA	69	53	58	63
State Hospital, Carstairs	—	266	273	252

(Qualified nursing staff) of which:
(c) Midwives; by health board: at 30 September

	Number			
	1990	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
Scotland	3,051	3,357	3,393	3,426
Argyll and Clyde	272	321	343	338
Ayrshire and Arran	154	277	261	262
Borders	45	43	42	43
Dumfries and Galloway	105	104	103	113
Fife	179	195	203	207
Forth Valley	155	177	205	208
Grampian	312	323	337	317
Greater Glasgow	673	710	666	671
Highland	158	164	164	163
Lanarkshire	277	298	300	315
Lothian	398	427	441	452
Orkney	9	9	8	9
Shetland	12	11	10	10
Tayside	280	280	292	302
Western Isles	22	18	18	16

(Qualified nursing staff) of which:—
(d) Health Visitors; by health board: at 30 September

	Number			
	1990	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
Scotland	1,612	1,585	1,533	1,519
Argyll and Clyde	124	132	127	127
Ayrshire and Arran	118	111	98	99
Borders	27	26	25	26
Dumfries and Galloway	35	31	30	29
Fife	122	117	123	123
Forth Valley	91	90	92	86
Grampian	175	174	171	161
Greater Glasgow	309	301	276	266
Highland	54	50	49	54
Lanarkshire	174	173	166	171
Lothian	237	241	238	237
Orkney	6	5	5	4
Shetland	8	8	7	6
Tayside	124	116	118	121
Western Isles	8	10	8	9

(e) Administrative and Clerical Staff (excluding managers); by health board: at 30 September

	Number			
	1990	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
Scotland	16,918	17,459	18,363	18,914
Argyll and Clyde	1,338	1,351	1,491	1,496
Ayrshire and Arran	865	895	960	981
Borders	252	265	285	291
Dumfries and Galloway	421	458	477	494
Fife	778	824	853	969
Forth Valley	672	704	755	785

	Number			
	1990	1991	1992	1993
Grampian	1,569	1,657	1,722	1,705
Greater Glasgow	3,692	3,742	3,891	3,975
Highland	595	631	658	666
Lanarkshire	1,184	1,204	1,247	1,313
Lothian	2,652	2,659	2,697	2,855
Orkney	26	25	28	29
Shetland	48	51	56	61
Tayside	1,460	1,516	1,623	1,569
Western Isles	53	58	75	79
Common Services Agency	1,313	1,394	1,518	1,613
State Hospital, Carstairs	—	24	27	33

(f) Administrative and Clerical Managers; by health board: at 30 September

	Number			
	1990	1991	1992	1993
Scotland	1,069	1,312	1,677	2,094
Argyll and Clyde	78	81	105	124
Ayrshire and Arran	52	58	90	114
Borders	17	19	24	28
Dumfries and Galloway	29	36	49	53
Fife	62	76	82	110
Forth Valley	52	60	69	92
Grampian	100	135	178	207
Greater Glasgow	169	221	273	345
Highland	39	50	70	85
Lanarkshire	66	65	80	116
Lothian	119	135	184	275
Orkney	5	6	6	6
Shetland	6	8	8	8
Tayside	102	112	138	147
Western Isles	9	11	12	19
CSA	164	237	302	356
State Hospital, Carstairs	—	2	7	9

Child Mortality Rates

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list child mortality rates for each assigned social class within each health board area.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 11 July 1994]:* Mortality rates are not available. The table shows the number of children who died for each assigned social class within each health board area. Children whose parents' occupation is unknown are shown in the "not stated" column.

Deaths of persons aged 0-15 by social class and health board area
Scotland 1993[1]

		Social class						
	Total	I	II	III (non manual)	III (manual)	IV	V	Not stated
Scotland	665	21	95	34	166	83	54	212
Borders	9	—	5	—	—	1	—	3
Dumfries and Galloway	20	—	3	1	6	4	1	5
Fife	41	1	3	4	14	6	6	7
Forth Valley	34	2	6	2	7	5	1	11
Grampian	50	—	9	3	14	9	4	11
Highland	32	4	5	33	6	1	3	10
Lothian	93	4	12	8	22	8	7	32
Tayside	49	1	3	1	10	9	4	21
Orkney Islands	1	—	—	—	—	1	—	—
Shetland Islands	2	—	1	—	—	1	—	—
Western Isles	4	—	—	—	2	—	1	1
Argyll and Clyde	58	3	7	4	13	2	8	21
Ayrshire and Arran	51	1	4	1	19	7	3	16
Greater Glasgow	150	3	24	4	38	18	10	53
Lanarkshire	71	2	13	3	15	11	6	21

[1] Provisional.

Redundant Hospitals

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland for what reasons the selling price of redundant national health service hospitals is not made publicly available after completion of the sale.

Mr. Stewart: In Scotland the selling price of NHS and other property is publicly available when the purchaser's title is recorded in the general register of sasines or the land register, as required by law. It is for the NHS body managing the transaction to decide, in the light of the circumstances, whether price details can be released at an earlier stage, bearing in mind the fact that information on property disposals may be commercially sensitive.

Police

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if it is his intention to give evidence to the Home Office's review of police care and ancillary tasks; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Home Office review relates only to England and Wales. Further work will be undertaken by the Scottish Office, including consultation with interested parties in Scotland, once the Home Office review has been completed.

NHS Trust Hospitals

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list by wave *(a)* the number of non-executive directors of NHS trust hospitals and *(b)* the number of chairs of NHS trust hospitals, by salary band.

Mr. Stewart: The information requested is as follows:

Remuneration £	*Number of Non-executive Directors*	*Number of Chairmen*
NHS Trust first wave		
5,000 per annum	10	—
17,145 per annum	—	1
19,285 per annum	—	1
Second wave		
5,000 per annum	75	—
15,125 per annum	—	1
17,145 per annum	—	6
19,285 per annum	—	8
Third wave		
5,000 per annum	110	—
15,125 per annum	—	1
17,145 per annum	—	11
19,285 per annum	—	10

NHS Trusts

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what changes were made to the allocations to any of the trusts, directly managed units or other areas in Lothian for capital building programmes or for revenue during the past eight months.

Mr. Lang: The information requested spans two financial years. Revenue allocations are subject to numerous revision by the management executive during the course of a financial year. The original 1993-94 revenue allocation to Lothian health board was £358·175 million. By November 1993 it had been adjusted to £401·554 million and by March 1994 stood at £406·533 million. The original 1994-95 allocation was £364·805 million and is currently £419·642 million.

Lothian health board's original 1993-94 capital allocation for its building programme, including provision for its directly managed units, was £24·429 million. Changes to the allocation by the management executive were limited to projects that had a total cost of more than £1 million. These accounted for £12·708 million of the 1993-94 capital allocation. By November 1993 and March 1994, that sub-allocation stood at £11·202 million and £10·002 million respectively.

The West Lothian NHS trust was the only trust in Lothian in 1993-94. Its opening capital was £3·080 million and its business plan income forecast was £63·639 million. At November 1993, there had been no change to the capital allocation and by 31 March 1994 the allocation was £2·896 million.

The 1994-95 allocations for all Lothian NHS trusts currently remain as notified to them on 8 February 1994.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what changes there were in the capital revenue allocations to the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh or to the priority services unit in Lothian in the past eight months.

Mr. Lang: The Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh and the Edinburgh priority services unit were directly managed units under Lothian health board until 1 April 1994. Lothian health board's initial 1993-94 capital allocation included specified project provision of £2·245 million for the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh and £4·065 million for the Edinburgh priority services unit. Lothian health board was responsible for the financial management of the specified projects, although allocation adjustments for underspends on projects with a total cost of more than £1 million were subject to Scottish Office approval. Details of the allocation changes for the Royal Infirmary and the priority services unit projects with a total cost of more than £1 million, as approved by the NHS executive, are set out in the table.

The 1994-95 capital allocations for both the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh NHS trust and Edinburgh Healthcare NHS trust currently remain at the levels notified to them by the Scottish Office on 8 February 1994.

Table to show changes to 1993-94 capital allocations for projects with a total cost of £1 million or more

£ million

	Opening allocation	*Final Approval*
Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh		
Liver Transplant Unit	0·170	0·246
Dental Hospital	0·700	0·243
Residential Nurses Homes	0·000	0·657
Edinburgh Priority Services Unit		
Royal Edinburgh Ward Upgrade	0·765	1·235
Gogarburn Hospital	2·000	2·110
Royal Edinburgh Hospital	1·000	1·424

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what was the capital allocation for all trusts, directly managed units and other areas in Lothian for the financial years 1993-94 and 1994-95;

(2) when the capital building programme allocation to Lothian health board was determined for the financial years 1993-94 and 1994-95.

Mr. Lang: Lothian health board was notified of their capital building programme allocation for 1993-94 in a letter dated 20 December 1992, and a letter dated 17 December 1993 for 1994-95. The allocations for all other health boards were notified on the same dates.

The capital allocation letter for health boards covers their hospital building programme, equipment and information technology provision. The letters for NHS trusts, issued on 16 February 1993 and 8 February 1994 respectively, provided their overall external financing limit and included details of the capital provision used in calculating the limit.

The information requested on capital allocations is set out in the table.

1993-94 Allocations to:		*Current 1994-95 Allocations*
	£	£
Lothian Health Board (Gross allocation)	24,429,000	4,969,000
West Lothian NHS Trust	2,096,000	2,003,000
East and Midlothian NHS Trust	—	1,368,000
Edinburgh Healthcare NHS Trust	—	5,416,000
Edinburgh Sick Children's NHS Trust	—	1,472,000
Royal Infirmary NHS Trust	—	6,673,000
Western General Hospitals NHS Trust	—	6,166,000

Lothian Health Board

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many meetings took place between Geoffrey Scaife, chief executive of the health service in Scotland, and officials of Lothian health board this year; what were the dates and times of those meetings; if he will make available the minutes of those meetings; and what action was taken as a result of those meetings.

Mr. Lang: The chief executive of the NHS in Scotland meets regularly with representatives of all health boards, both individually and collectively in a variety of settings. Since the beginning of this year the chief executive has met Lothian health board representatives on six occasions to discuss a wide range of issues. Formal minutes of the meetings were not taken as a matter of course, any decision or action required being dealt with by subsequent correspondence.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the Treasury rules with regard to capital expenditure and revenue expenditure programmes in the health service in Scotland; and whether all expenditure by Lothian health board within the last eight months was within these rules.

Mr. Lang: The NHS in Scotland is subject, like other public sector bodies, to the relevant rules and guidance set out in "Government Accounting" a copy of which is in the Library. The expenditure of Lothian health board is subject to annual statutory audit which provides a check on its regularity and propriety. The board's annual accounts for 1993-94 have still to be audited.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish minutes of the meetings at which capital allocations to trusts, directly managed units and other areas were discussed between Lothian health board and the Scottish Office.

Mr. Lang: There were no formal meetings between the Scottish Office and Lothian health board to discuss the capital allocations to either the board and its directly managed units or the Lothian NHS trusts. Allocations are determined by the management executive on the basis of details submitted by the board and, in the case of NHS trusts, the capital proposals in their annual business plans. Account is taken of the relative service priorities for the NHS as a whole, individual health boards' purchasing intentions and agreed strategic objectives.

Shipping Services

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he intends to *(a)* publish and *(b)* announce his response to the consultants' report on the future of shipping services to the northern and western isles; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: I have recently received the report of KPMG Management Consulting on subsidies for shipping services in the highlands and islands and I am studying carefully its conclusions and recommendations. However, it is too early for me to say when I will be in a position to announce any decisions in response to the report. The report contains a considerable amount of commercially sensitive information which was made available to the consultants on a strictly confidential basis, and would not therefore be suitable for publication. I shall, however, give consideration as to whether it would be possible to publish the main findings and conclusions of the report without breaching commercial confidentiality.

Planning

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he plans to publish his consultation paper on the review of the Scottish planning system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: I have today published a consultation paper on the review of the Scottish planning system. Copies will be placed in the House Libraries.

Under the banner of the citizens charter, my general aim is to stimulate discussion on ways in which the effectiveness, efficiency and responsiveness of the system can be improved. This is the first step in a wide-ranging review which will help to set the agenda for the development of the planning system in the years ahead.

The review will not address the underlying structure of the present system or the Government's proposals for local government reform in Scotland; its focus will be on matters of procedure and practice. In that context, my specific aim is to assess the adequacy of the decision-making process in terms of its openness, fairness, consistency, speed and accountability to all interests; the extent to which current procedures help or hinder that process; the degree to which development plans and development control promote development and conservation objectives and in so doing add to the quality of the natural and built environment; and the adequacy of the arrangements for monitoring the decision-making process and for measuring the achievement of objectives, targets and standards of service.

The consultation paper poses a number of questions to assist those who may wish to comment. However, there is no pre-determined agenda; the Government will welcome comments on any aspects of the system. Thereafter the outcome will be made public, and the Government will indicate how they propose to take matters forward.

I should make it clear that no significant changes will be introduced until after the reorganised authorities are firmly in place. However, the review is designed to pave the way for any longer-term changes that may be necessary to achieve the high standards now set by the citizens charter. That means a more responsive and efficient system to give the public, developers and Government alike confidence in the plan-making and decision-making process, in the quality of the outcomes, and in the standard of service that is being provided.

Mental Illness

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many former patients discharged from compulsory detention by way of *(a)* the Mental Welfare Commission exercising its powers under the Mental Health (Scotland) Act 1984, *(b)* appeals granted by a sheriff or *(c)* the Secretary of State accepting a recommendation by the Mental Welfare Commission, over the past seven years have been subsequently subjected to a compulsory detention order; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 13 July 1994]:* This information is not held centrally.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland in how many cases during the past seven years of a patient having a restriction order placed upon his or her detention the Mental Welfare Commission has recommended to the Secretary of State that such an order be lifted; of these, how many were accepted by the Secretary of State; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 13 July 1994]:* One. The Commission's recommendation was considered as part of the process which led to the patient's conditional discharge.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many patients have been discharged from compulsory detention by way of an appeal to a sheriff in each of the past seven years; in how many such hearings before a sheriff the patient was represented by a lawyer; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 13 July 1994]:* This information is not held centrally.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many patients have been discharged from compulsory detention by way of the Mental Welfare Commission exercising the appropriate power it has under the Mental Health (Scotland) Act 1984 in each of the past seven years; of such discharges, how many were brought about by a request from a patient to have his or her detention reviewed by the Commission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 13 July 1994]:* The numbers of patients so discharged are as follows:

Year	*Number*
[1]1993-94	0
[1]1992-93	1
1991	2
1990	0
1989	5
1988	3
1987	5

[1] The Commission's annual report statistics are now produced on a financial year basis.

The Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland has no record of the number of these cases which were brought about by a request from a patient to have his or her detention reviewed.

Electro-convulsive Therapy

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland for which ailments electro-convulsive therapy is recommended; what guidelines are issued to hospitals and consultant psychiatrists concerning the use of electro-convulsive therapy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 13 July 1994]:* Electro-convulsive therapy is most commonly used to treat severe intractable depressive illness. It is very occasionally used to treat acute schizophrenia.

ECT is covered by the consent to treatment provisions of the Mental Health (Scotland) Act 1984 and guidance on these requirements is contained in "Notes on the Act", in the "Mental Health (Scotland) Act 1984 Code of Practice", which includes as an annexe guidance produced by the Mental Welfare Commission and in the NHS Executive's booklet "A Guide to Consent to Examination, Investigation, Treatment or Operation".

Guidelines on "The Practical Administration of ECT" were published by the Royal College of Psychiatrists in 1989. The observance of these guidelines is recommended in the training of all doctors administering this form of treatment.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what records are kept by the Scottish Office concerning the frequency of the employment of electro-convulsive therapy by hospitals and consultant psychiatrists in each of the past 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 13 July 1994]:* This information is not recorded centrally.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what advice and guidance is normally given to a psychiatric patient or members or his or her family or others with an interest in his or her welfare concerning to the employment of electro-convulsive therapy and his or her right to refuse electro-convulsive therapy in favour of an alternative form of treatment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 13 July 1994]:* The principles of the general law of consent to treatment for physical disorders apply to any proposed treatment for a voluntary patient's mental disorder, and the doctor is required to explain to the patient, before he signs a consent form, the nature, purpose and likely effects of the treatment, and why he should consent to it. In the case of electro-convulsive therapy, the explanation given should clearly indicate that the treatment can be refused and that the patient may withdraw his consent at any time, even before the first treatment is given. The doctor should also make himself available to answer any questions that the patient, or their carer, may have about the treatment. A leaflet produced by Royal College of Psychiatrists also provides answers to questions about ECT commonly asked by patients.

The position of detained patients is regulated by part X of the Mental Health (Scotland) Act 1984. In the case of ECT, the Act requires the consent of the patient and the certification by a medical practitioner—either the responsible medical officer or a practitioner appointed by the Mental Welfare Commission—that the patient is capable of understanding its nature, purpose and likely effects and has consented to it; or, alternatively, the certification by a medical practitioner appointed by the Mental Welfare Commission, other than the RMO, that the patient is not so capable but that, having regard to the likelihood of alleviating or preventing a deterioration in the patient's condition, the treatment should be given.

In certain circumstances ECT may be given without consent or a second opinion in cases of urgency, for example where it is immediately necessary to prevent a serious deterioration in the patient's condition, or to alleviate serious suffering or to prevent the patient from being a danger to himself or others.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he has taken to satisfy himself that those psychiatric patients who have undergone electro-convulsive therapy over the past 20 years have suffered no long-term deleterious effects from such treatment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 13 July 1994]:* Research by Weeks, Freeman and Kendell, 1980, found no long-term deleterious effects from electro-convulsive therapy.

Later research—Freeman and Cheshire, 1986; Benbow, 1988; Malcolm, 1989; and Cheshire, Freeman and Chiswick, 1991—indicated a high level of patient satisfaction with the results of treatment. The Royal College of Psychiatrists also reports that more than eight out of 10 patients respond well to ECT treatment, making it the most effective treatment for severe depression, and that most patients recover their ability to work and lead a productive life after their depression has been treated in this way.

A sub-group of the CRAG/SCOTMEG framework for action working group on mental illness is currently considering ECT and its report in the form of "good practice" guidelines is expected in the autumn.

Firearms (Deaths)

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many murders were committed in Scotland in each of the last three years for which figures are available; and of these, how many persons were killed by *(a)* shotguns, *(b)* handguns and *(c)* other firearms.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 13 July 1994]:* The table details the number of recorded homicides in Scotland and shows the number of recorded homicides involving firearms, broken down by type of weapon use, 1990 to 1992.

	1990	*1991*	*1992*
Homicides	81	89	137
Homicides involving firearms of which:			
(a) shotgun	0	3	5
(b) handgun	3	0	0
(c) other	*0*	*4*	*1*
Total	*3*	*7*	*6*

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people charged with causing the death of another person by the use of a firearm of any description in Scotland had authority to possess that firearm in each of the last three years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 13 July 1994]:* Information on persons charged with causing the death of another person by the use of a firearm and the authority to possess a firearm is not collected centrally. However, information is available on homicides involving firearms recorded by the police and the authority of the accused to possess a firearm. The table details that information.

	1990	*1991*	*1992*
Homicides involving firearms	3	7	6
Cases where the accused held a valid firearm certificate	1	1	0

Contracts

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland on what occasions in the last 10 years he or a Minister in his Department has given a direction to civil servants to award a contract against the advice of the civil service; what was the subject matter of the contract and its value; and when it was awarded.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 8 July 1994]:* Inquiries throughout my Departments have not identified any such occasion.

Health Service Properties

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what estimate he has made of the cost of undertaking all the identified backlog in repairs and in maintenance of health service properties.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 11 July 1994]:* The responsibility for management and maintenance of the health service estate in Scotland rests with provider units, and it is for them to make estimates of this kind. However, the latest annual survey estimate is that at 31 March 1993 the appropriate expenditure required to improve the physical condition of the essential estate was £270 million including backlog maintenance and other work.

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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

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Bills 1R = first reading, 2R = second reading, Money res = money resolution, Comm = Committee stage, Rep = Report stage, 3R = third reading, amendt/amendts = amendment/amendments, * = matter taken formally, without debate.

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